



Kirkcaldy - Its Cinema and Its Theatres



Coming Next

Now that the intermission is over - welcome to part two of Object 45. Here, in the main, we tend to look at halls and theatres built after the passing of the 1909 Cinematograph Act. Consulting the *Kinematograph Year Book* of 1914 seemed a sensible place to start. This was the astonishing initial effort aimed at bringing every aspect relating to film making, equipment and cinemas into one volume. Although referred to as the 1914 edition it covered the year 1913. If the reader can locate the volume on-line it is well worth a look.

The section on cinemas in Kirkcaldy while not complete in every detail listed:-

- The Pavilion – seating 1,000 and under the management of Dr. Walford Bodie.
- The Hippodrome – only the name was included.
- Green's Picture-dome – only the name was given.
- Pathhead Picture House – seating for 800 and owners are listed as Overs and Mackie.
- The Kings – seating given as 2000.
- The Port Brae – seating is 600.
- St. Clair Cinema – seating 200.

Green's Picturedome

GREEN'S PICTUREDROME,
TOWN HALL, LEVEN.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Monday,
November 21, 22, 23, and 25.

NO SHOW ON ABOVE DATES,
The Hall being otherwise engaged.

TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, Nov. 26, 27,

SHANGHAIED

Produced by Nordisk Coy., Producers of "Dead Man's Child," "The Black Chancellor," &c.

POPULAR PRICES—

AREA.	BALCONY.	FRONT BALCONY.
2d	4d	6d

TWICE NIGHTLY — 7 and 9. Doors Open, 6.45 and 8.45.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PICTURES for CHILDREN, at SATURDAY MATINEE.
Prizes to Boy and Girl for Best Essay on Educational Picture.

Turning firstly to *Green's Picturedome* we find several suggestions that this was a Kirkcaldy Cinema. Sadly, this is a misconception. *Green's Picturedome* operated from the Town Hall in Leven and an advertisement to evidence this is shown from the *Leven Advertiser and Wemyss Gazette* of the 16th May 1912. The issue seems to have arisen from a small article in the *Kinematograph Weekly* of the 23rd May 1912, where it was reported that the Manager of *Green's Picturedome* had left his post to start on his own account in

Buckhaven. The address was given as Kirkcaldy but it should indeed be Leven. This is verified by a snippet carried in the same newspaper of the 16th May where the departure of Mr J.D. Forsyth is confirmed. There were no other cinemas advertising in the area so the Regent and the Troxy must have been well into the future. So, despite the efforts of the *Kinematic Year Book* – Kirkcaldy could not claim this cinema as its own.

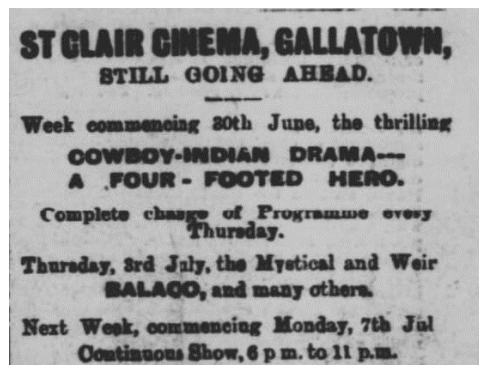
The St. Clair Cinema

We now turn to the *St. Clair Cinema* which apparently seated 200. This one did not last long with its first being mentioned in 1913 and by the end of the following year it met with the fate of so many of Kirkcaldy's buildings – never mind cinemas!

The Kinematograph Weekly of the 13th March 1913 advises that the *St. Clair Cinema* in Gallatown will open shortly – that at least gives a starting point. On another page we find the suggestion that it will seat 500 and has a Gaumont Chrono installed and that James Cororkin is the part owner and manager. A quick check reveals that the Chrono is a type of projector.

In *The Stage* of the 13th May 1913 an unnamed medal winning violinist is seeking work in the Glasgow area. The address for any response is the St. Clair Cinema – more on that below.

The Fife Free Press on the 28th June finally has an advertisement for films starting from the 30th June – that first advert is reproduced here,



By the 22nd November the cinema is using a slogan of “*The Little Cinema with the Big Reputation*”. On top of that the advertisement mentions that the owners are *the St Clair Picture Company* and communications should be addressed to Messrs Cororkin.

By the 27th December 1913 we have a number of musical Cororkins advertising as a band to provide dance music. They are Miss Cororkin (Pianist) – William Cororkin (Flautist) and Patrick A. Cororkin (Violinist). Responses to the St. Clair Cinema or 11 Pottery Street.

What is certain is that the *Fife Free Press* in its December the 13th issue paid the cinema the following compliment:- *undoubtedly the cinema bears out its great reputation for pictures, for cleanliness and for steadiness they are hard to beat.*

**ST CLAIR CINEMA, GALLATOWN,
KIRKCALDY.**
The Little Hall with the Big Reputation.
Proprietors—
The St Clair Moving Picture Company.
Communications to Messrs Crorkin, Gallatown.
Continuous Show every Evening from 6 to 10.30
Pictures changed Three Times Weekly.
Monday, 23rd February, Programme includes
a Grand Two-Part Drama, entitled—
THE BANZIA.
Wednesday, 25th February, Programme in-
cludes a splendid Picture in 4 Parts, secured
at great cost, entitled—

Saturday the 21st February 1914 was the last advertisement which could be traced in the *Fife Free Press*. It is reproduced here for interest. No explanation can be offered for this turn of events – did the cinema continue without newspaper advertisements? – we will never know.

The last mention of this cinema was in a report carried by the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of Monday the 14th December 1914. It seems that after the cinema had closed on the previous Saturday a passer-by had noticed flames and the fire brigade was called. However, this was a wooden building and was well ablaze prior to the Brigade's arrival. The article mentioned that the flames could be seen as far away as Lochgelly. The building was destroyed. The article mentioned that an adjoining rag-store had been saved. The article suggested that the fire had its seat in the projector room.



KIRKCALDY PICTURE-HOUSE GUTTED BY FIRE.
The St Clair Cinema Picture House, Kirkcaldy, was completely gutted by fire late on Saturday night.
The performance was over, and the premises, situated in Rosslyn Street, were closed, when a passer-by noticed flames through a window to the rear of the building. The Fire Brigade was immediately called, but ere it arrived the hall, which was a wooden structure, was firmly caught and doomed. An adjacent ragstore was in danger, but the brigade managed to protect this.
The flames leapt to a great height, and could be seen for many miles around. At Lochgelly, twelve miles away, the blaze was distinctly seen.
It is thought that the fire originated in the operator's box, but no cause can be assigned for the outbreak. The damage will amount to about £400.

A little research suggests that there was a rag-store at number 46B Rosslyn Street owned by a John Duncan – this may or may not give a clue to the cinema's location – which sadly is not annotated on the 1913 Ordnance Survey Map of the area.

So what happened next? We learn that James Cororkin emigrated to America from Liverpool in 1915. Some/all of the children went with him – Jane was mentioned as a talented pianist. The William and Patrick mentioned above were also on the ship together with another son named James. So, the dance band will be seeking no more engagements in Kirkcaldy! Astonishingly, the family moved to Illinois which is nothing in itself – but to St. Clair County!!

It was rather irritating that we could not establish who the directors of the *St. Clair Picture Company* were nor, for that matter, those behind a later name to appear in the adverts – the *St. Clair Moving Picture Company*. We must presume the former included James Cororkin but that is as far as our guesswork can take us. So in conclusion it appears to be a family business where the members of the family were talented musicians. No trace could be found of any advertisement for the night the theatre burnt down but one thing is certain and that is the cinema never reopened after the fire.

Scotland's First Purpose Built Cinema

The Hippodrome in Bo'ness is possibly the first to be built in Scotland but it is certainly confirmed as the oldest surviving cinema in the country. Plans drawn by the architect Matthew Steele still survive and it is protected by having a Category A listing from Heritage Environment Scotland. The cinema opened in 1912 with the final film being shown in 1975. It became a bingo hall prior to its closure in 1980 when it was abandoned to the elements and the vandals.

The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust became involved in 2002 (The restoration of The Merchant's House is another of their projects). It was determined that it should be reinstated as a cinema and with the help of grants was restored between 2006 and 2008. Many of the original features were saved and restored – these included original toilet signs – oak panelling and original cast iron radiators. On completion it was handed over to Falkirk Council who oversaw the installation of projection and sound equipment prior to its re-opening in 2009. It is now run by Falkirk Community Trust. When we wrote about Law's Close/The Merchant's House some years ago – reading about the cinema restoration brought the King's Theatre in Kirkcaldy into sharp focus. Let us hope that the foyer – the only listed part of the building can be saved and restored.

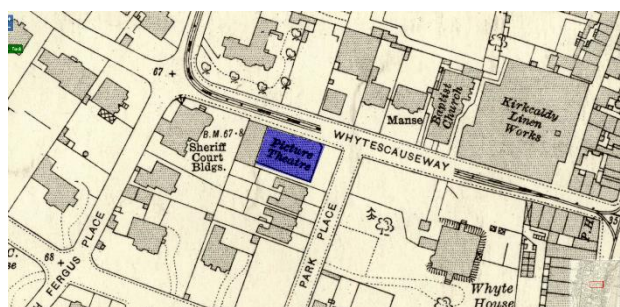
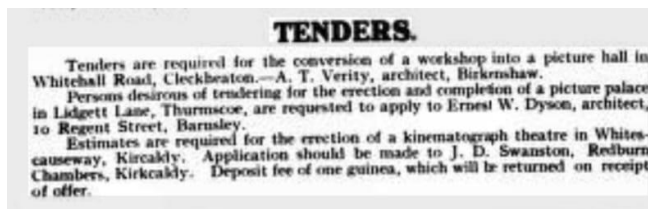
HIPPODROME,
BO'NESS.
—
IN ADDITION to the already S.ong
Programme,
MADDISON'S TROUPE
OF
PERFORMING
TERRIERS
Will Appear on
THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY.
Usual Matinee on SATURDAY, at 3.30.
COME AND SEE THE RAG-TIME DOG.

The Hippodrome may well have been purpose built as a cinema but the *Linlithgowshire Gazette* of the 21st March 1913 was advertising an appearance by *Maddison's Troupe of Performing Terriers* – apparently rag-time dogs! By October of 1914 films were certainly being screened as Part 5 of *The Adventures of Kathlyn* was being advertised. That

said it was accompanied by a novelty act – *The Musical Burglars*. What this evidences is that the *Port Brae Cinema* and *Kirkcaldy* were not that far behind the *Hippodrome*.

The Palace

We now turn to the *Kinematograph Weekly* of the 24th October 1912 where tenders are being sought for the construction of a Kinematograph Theatre in Whytescauseway, Kirkcaldy. The architect placing the advert is J.D.Swanston of Redburn Wynd in the town. He is of course the same architect who had brought the King's Theatre into existence in tandem with William Williamson.



The Fife Free Press of the 10th May 1913 was reporting that *The Palace* would be opened that afternoon by Baillie Wright and it gave some details of the building, including its measurements, fixtures and fittings. It was situated on what had been open ground in Whytescauseway. A map

showing the site is reproduced here. It would seem that this was a speedy construction given that tenders had only been sought some 7 months previously.

The cinema was built on the cantilever principle which gave uninterrupted viewing. It sat in a site approximately 16.5 by 22 metres and could accommodate 1,000 persons. The seats were of the tip-up variety and upholstered in mole coloured corduroy. The decoration of the hall was mainly in white and gold. The whole of the stage was said to be *large enough to accommodate any music hall turn which would be touring in the provinces*. The article mentioned that *several leading attractions had already been secured*.

Unusually, all the contractors involved are listed and the names are reproduced for interest. Five Kirkcaldy companies were involved - two of

The contractors for the work were:—Builder—Mr John Summerville, Dunfermline; joiner—Messrs J. Stewart and Sons, Dundee; iron and steel work—Messrs P. and W. M'Lellan, Glasgow; plumber—Mr R. Dougall, Pathhead; asphalt work—Messrs Turner Bros., Rochdale; slater—Messrs J. Lawson and Son, Kirkcaldy; plaster work, Messrs C. Neaves and Son, Leven; glazier work, Messrs Haxton and Co., Kirkcaldy; heating — Messrs Barnet and Morton, Kirkcaldy; fireproof curtain — Messrs Barnet and Morton, Kirkcaldy; electric installation—Messrs J. B. Robertson and Co., Edinburgh; decorator—Mr J. Mathewson, Carnoustie; gas engine—Messrs Crossley Bros., Glasgow; furnishing and upholstering—Messrs Wright and Son, Kirkcaldy.

which continued to trade for many years on the High Street – Barnet and Morton alongside Haxton and Co. who were glaziers.

We learn that a special feature was a sizeable and spacious lounge, with large opening windows, and a substantial open air tearoom is provided below the tower. The building featured the installation of both gas and electricity and the front was decorated with white Portland cement which was termed an elegant design.



The newspaper also carried a significant advertisement relating to both the opening and what was billed as a special attraction – without advising what the special attraction was! The Manager was A.P. Casey and we covered this gentleman, his pigeon loft, and his death, in Part One. The motto of the cinema was *Education - Refinement - Cosy and Comfortable*. The advertisement is reproduced here – again for interest.

The following week, the *Fife Free Press* carried a report of the successful opening by Baillie Wright. The final cost of the building was said to be between £4,000 and £5,000. Baillie Wright spoke of the handsome building which had made such a wonderful transformation to that part of the street. He also praised the gentlemen who had taken on the project especially as there were other such houses in the locality but he accepted cinemas had taken a great hold on the public. What he failed to disclose, as did the *Fife Free Press* articles, was just who the gentlemen were!

At the conclusion of the performance the invited guests, of whom there were several hundreds, were entertained with tea *being daintily served* by Mr Fred Gibson, confectioner, High Street, Kirkcaldy. This is not the Raith Rover's centre forward who featured in the teams only appearance in the Scottish Cup Final that same year.

By the 28th June 1913 the *Fife Free Press* is able to provide evidence that equipment was already in place to screen films. From Monday the 30th June an expensive engagement was taking place in the shape of Florence Yayman and a supporting cast. This was clearly variety based but the foot of the advert shows that the Saturday was hosting films in the evening but



also making mention of a children's matinee at 3.00pm.

Saturday the 13th August 1919 reflected the consequences of the Great War in the pages of the *Fife Free Press*. An advertisement had been placed by the *Scottish Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors* with the aim of raising funds to provide a treat for the widows and children of local men who had made the supreme sacrifice. The treat was to be held in Maxton Park by the kind permission of Mr C. Maxton on the 6th September at 3.00pm. Mr Maxton lived in Balsusney House on which the Museum and Library now stand. The park is now the War Memorial Gardens. Included in the list of collections were:- The Opera House, The Palace and the Port Brae Cinema - £6:15:00. The collection at Starks Park has raised £9:09:06.

THE PALACE			
WHYTESCAUSEWAY,		-KIRKCALDY.	
MANAGER,			Wm. BELL
RE-OPENING MONDAY, 31st December.			
MONDAY,	Continuous from 6.30 to 10.30		
SPECIAL NEW YEAR PERFORMANCES.			
TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY,	2.30, 4.30, 6.30 and 8.30
THURSDAY AND FRIDAY,	Matinees at 3
SATURDAY,	3, 5, 7 and 9
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 31st Dec., 1923, 1st, and 2nd Jan., 1924.			
Murette Taylor in PEG O' MY HEART			
SHOWING ALL WEEK.			
CHARLES CHAPLIN in THE PILGRIM			
A season from start to finish.			
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, 3rd, 4th, 5th Jan.			
Helena Chadwick in QUICKSAND			
PRICES (Including Tax), 5d, 9d, 1/-, 1/3			
Children under 12 Half-Price, except Saturdays and Holidays, after 5 p.m.			

On Monday the 31st December 1923 the Palace was re-opening with a programme of films covering the full week. The *Fife Free Press* advertisement is reproduced here and the name which springs out is Charlie Chaplin, now a Hollywood star. A little research was carried out on the main attraction *Peg of My Heart*. It transpires that this was a 1922 American film which was remade in 1933 but what is interesting is that the star was Laurette Taylor

not Murette Taylor as billed. This necessitated establishing why the cinema was re-opening. The answer came in the *Fife Free Press* of the 29th September. The notice simply advised the theatre was being closed for extensive refurbishment.

Interestingly, an advert for the *Palace Ballroom* in Hunter Street was adjacent to the above. It revealed that the players of Raith Rovers and Leicester City would be entertained in the ballroom the following Monday. That is a tangent and in true 50 Object's fashion it was followed up. The game was played on the Monday and was a benefit match for Rover's Bill Collier. Raith won by 5-1 and the team featured Dave Morris and Alex James. The crowd was 6,000.



Leicester City featured a former Raith great in the shape of John 'Tokey' Duncan. Duncan had spent three seasons with the Rovers including 1921-22 when the team achieved their highest ever finishing position in the league – 3rd. An earlier manager – Peter Hodge, had moved to Leicester City coming back to take 'Tokey' and also his brother Tom down south. Interesting side issue and John Duncan is well worth a wee google. Tom had a relatively short life dying at 40.

It is perhaps prudent to once again revisit the formation of *Kirkcaldy Entertainments Ltd* where their Prospectus featured on the front page of the *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd March 1924. This was the formation of a fresh company, albeit with some of the same directors as the selling company, to take over; The Opera House, The Port Brae Cinema and The Palace. The sellers were the *Scottish Cinema and Variety Theatres Ltd*. The theory was to allow local people the ability to invest in their local cinemas but maintaining the advantages offered by being part of the large Maxwell controlled group. As we know the group

ultimately became part of the A.B.C. chain. In many ways the fortunes and ownerships of all three cinemas mentioned were entwined from 1924 onwards.

While we have no idea what the 1923 renovations were, we are back on stronger ground when the *Fife Free Press* of the 31st August 1929 is consulted. Here, the fact that a second cinema in the town is to screen talkies is revealed. It is of course *The Palace* and the newspaper article gives some details. The equipment installed is the R.C.A. Phototone system acknowledged as the most popular in use at the time. The fact that the hall was built as a variety theatre indicated that the acoustics should be excellent. The cinema remained in the hands of Kirkcaldy Entertainments Ltd and the name of the manager, James Mair, was revealed. The opening film was to be Jack Holt starring in *The Donovan Affair*. The advert with the new strap



line - *The House of Talkies Supreme* is shown here. It is quite interesting to see that the adverts for the stable of cinemas under the control of Kirkcaldy Entertainments Ltd almost comes as one – with each cinema immediately following the other.

The Donovan Affair was an American film with Charles Jack Holt as the star. He was author Margaret Mitchell's preference to play Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind* but she had no say in the choice and so – enter Clark Gable. Holt however has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

However, the adage *that everything comes to he who waits* was proved correct again. *The Fife Free Press* of the 4th November 1939 was announcing the re-opening of the *Palace* the following Monday at 2.00pm. The report gave some details including the refurbishment in 1929. It transpires that this was a complete transformation from a variety theatre to a cinema. “The dressing rooms and other relics of its variety days had disappeared to make way for a permanent cinema”. So from 1929 The Place dealt in films only.

This latest 1939 transformation had seen – an increased amount of space at the entrance – the stairway widened – new seating throughout which gave more leg room and carpeted throughout. These alterations had reduced the capacity to 800. Added comfort came by way of a new heating and ventilation system. A B.T.H. Sound system plus a new screen completed the improvements. Apparently the sound system name stands for British Thomson-Houston.

The advert for the first offering is reproduced here and it features Claire Trevor. That said *Stagecoach* is best known for the fact it was John Wayne's breakthrough film. Andy Devine of the raspy, crackly voice played the stagecoach driver - Buck. We doubt, if at one time, any western was ever made which did not include Andy Devine in the cast! The same is probably true of Chill Wills, he of the rough, deep voice. Another bit of trivia – he formed the *Avalon Boys Singing Quartet* in 1930. His is the deep voice on Stan Laurel's rendition of *The trail of the Lonesome Pine* from *Way Out West* in 1937 . Having just mentioned *Gone With the Wind* – we note that Thomas Mitchell who starred in that film was also in *Stagecoach*

playing the drunken Doc. Boone. The trivia these narratives provide!

The Fife Free Press of the 5th January 1946 carried the story of the *Palace* being destroyed by fire on the night of the 29th/30th December. Five appliances attended coming from Kirkcaldy, Cowdenbeath and Methil, but it was all to no avail. All that could be done was to save the adjoining buildings.

When the fire was brought under control it was found that every seat was destroyed, the balcony had been burnt out and the roof had collapsed. Only the four walls and part of the dome remained. There was simply nothing which could be done and ultimately the building was brought down. The damage was estimated at £10,000. It was a simple matter to trace the last advertisement for the Palace. Neither *Tom Brown's Schooldays* featuring Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Freddie Bartholomew or *Tarzan and the Amazons* which of course featured Johnny Weissmuller were shown as they were starting their run after the date of the fire.

Sir Cedric was a huge figure on both stage and screen and he too has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He played Sherlock Holmes in a radio production of *The Speckled Band* where Finlay Currie played Dr Watson. Sir Cedric's son, Edward Hardwicke, played Watson in the Granada Television series between 1986 and 1994 while Jeremy Brett played Holmes in the series.

That really is the end of the story of the Palace – it simply went up in flames and vanished forever. The site for many years was a car park whose boundary walls were the last remnant of the Palace cinema.



Pathhead Halls Cinema

Conventional wisdom suggests that a cinema operated from the Pathhead Halls commencing in 1923. However, this does not appear to be the case as research has shown that a venture by the name of *The People's Mirror* was operating from the hall from at least July 1919.

There can be no question that a Mr T. S. McKay had used the halls intermittently for entertainment purposes as early as 1911, so it is no great leap of faith to assume that it was he who started the cinema in an annexe of the hall around 1913. As late as 1924 he styled himself as owner, booking manager and manager. The *Messrs. Overs and Mackie of the Kinematic Year Book* get one mention in 1913 and it certainly has nothing to do with operating a cinema. *The Fife Free Press* of the 23rd April 1913 reported that a Minute of Agreement was being considered between the Hall Committee and the applicants. The applicants wished to instal electric light in the hall and then make alterations to the gallery. When the alterations were completed they would become the property of the Council. *Overs and Mackie* were seeking a three year lease at £200 per annum. For all their work, at the expiry of the lease, they would be paid £24! There is one thing certain and that is they were never mentioned again. No – wrong!

After Councillor Reekie's address, a short musical programme was submitted, and a suitable presentation made to the oldest couple in the hall, who were Mrs Goodsir, Pottery Street, Gallatown (84), and Mr Chas. Reekie (83), uncle of the Chairman.

Rev. Wm. Wyllie addressed the meeting, and after a splendid exhibition of cinematographic pictures by Messrs Overs and Mackie the company dispersed after the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

They were found in a *Fife Free Press* report on the Annual Pathhead Old Folk's Festival which appeared in the 21st December 1912 edition. Councillor Reekie had given a very interesting address on old Pathhead after tea had been served to

around 70 people. A presentation was made to the two oldest individuals in attendance – Mrs Goodsir of Pottery Street (84) and Mr Charles Reekie (83). This was followed by some musical entertainment and rounded off by a display of cinematograph pictures – by Messrs Overs and Ovens.

The Fifehire Advertiser of the 5th July 1917 carried an advertisement for the following week's offering. *Salvation Joan* was a 1916 silent film which is now lost. Charlie

THE PEOPLE'S MIRROR
PATHHEAD HALLS,
COMMERCIAL STREET

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE,
FROM 6.30 TO 10.30 P.M.

The People's Popular Photo-Play House.—(Public Opinion).

ENORMOUS ATTRACTIONS
Week Commencing Monday, 9th July
EDNA MAY, THE FAMOUS ACTRESS,
IN
"SALVATION JOAN."

CHARLIE CHAPLIN AS
THE FIREMAN.

ANNA NILSSON IN
WHO'S GUILTY?

Chaplin was appearing in the *The Fireman* and by this time he was a huge star. While the advert is included here for interest, once again, it seems distasteful to have any adverts on a page where the deaths/obituaries of fallen heroes are being revealed.

The PEOPLE'S MIRROR
 PATHHEAD HALLS, COMMERCIAL STREET.
 SOLE LESSEE, T. S. MCKAY.
 Continuous Performance Nightly from 6.30 to 10.30. Saturday Matinee at 3 p.m. and from 6 to 10.30.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 7th, 8th and 9th May.
 A Stall Production
The Eleventh Hour
 By ERNEST H. DEHL, featuring Madge White
 SUPPORTED BY SERIAL AND COMEDY PROGRAMME

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, 10th, 11th, and 12th May.
 Special Exclusive Production
Love, Honour, and Behave
 A Super Comedy Attraction.
 Supported by Serial, Comedy, and Interest Programme.
 PRICES AS USUAL SATURDAY MATINEE AT 3 P.M.

This situation, in terms of films, continued until 5th May 1923 when the last advertisement we could trace for *the People's Mirror* appeared in the *Fife Free Press*. The films on show were *The Eleventh Hour* and *Love, Honour and Obey*. The advert continued mentioning that Mr. T. S. McKay was the sole lessee and there was no mention of any pending change of ownership at that point.

There was then a gap until the *Fife Free Press* carried an advertisement for *The Cinema, Pathhead Halls*. This appeared in their edition of the 10th November that year. The screenings were *Drums of Destiny* followed by *Trooper O'Neil*. This latter film was a silent western featuring *Buck Jones*. Jones went on to become one of the leading men in westerns along with Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson and Ken Maynard. Westerns fell out of favour during the change from silent to talkie films as recording outdoors had not yet been perfected. We know that Mr. McKay has now handed over operations in the Pathhead Hall to *Scottish Cinema and Variety Theatres Ltd*. They in turn leased the franchise to Arthur Dent who employed a Manager – Mr R. Scott.

THE CINEMA, Pathhead Hall,
 COMMERCIAL STREET.

Lessee ————— Mr ARTHUR DENT

Continuous Nightly from 6.30 to 10.30. Saturday 6 to 10.30. Matinee at 3, doors Open at 2.30.
 Week Commencing Monday 12th November, 1923.

SHOWING FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY—MONDAY 12th, and TUESDAY 13th.
MARY MILES MINTER in "Drums of Destiny."
 A thrilling dramatic romance of the African Jungle.

Reginald Denny of Leatherpusher fame in Never Let Go	Brownie the Dog in Why Dogs Leave Home
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The Latest Interest Pictures changed mid-week. Entire change of Pictures Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.
TROOPER O'NEIL An exciting drama of the North West Mounted Police, featuring—CHARLES (BUCK) JONES.

The 1913 Kinematic Year Book had suggested that *Messrs Overs and Mackie* were the owners. What is certain is that the Pathhead Halls which were opened in 1884 were the property of Kirkcaldy Town Council – therefore it could only have been the contract to supply films and the equipment which could possibly have changed hands.

In fact the *Fife Free Press* were able to announce on the 18th July 1931 that

the Town Council has granted a 7 year lease at £300 per annum to Mr F.W. Carlow from South Queensferry. By the November of that year the same newspaper carried an advertisement revealing that the cinema was under new management – this was F.W. Carlow and as we shall see his brother.

PICTURE HOUSE, PATHHEAD,
COMMERCIAL STREET. *Under New Management.*

TALKIES.

Week Commencing MONDAY, 9th November.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, for 3 Days.
WALLACE BEERY and MARIE DRESSLER in
MIN AND BILL
Romance, drama, comedy and action.

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, for 3 Days.
WILL ROGERS in
THE YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT
Adapted from the famous novel by Mark Twain.
Comedies, Variety and News. Continuous—6.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.

PICTURE—Balcony chairs 50s including taxi. Area, 7d including taxi. Children, 4s including taxi. Children's Matinee, Saturday, at 2.30 p.m. Admission, 2s.

It also had a new name – *The Picture House*. The film on show was *Min and Bill* which starred Wallace Beery and Marie Dressler. Wallace Beery was no small beer having won an Academy Award in 1931 for Best Actor. He was one of MGM's biggest stars – in 1932 his contract ensured that he was always paid one dollar

more than any other actor in the Group – making him the highest earning star – through time he was replaced in that exulted position by Clarke Gable. His brother Noah Beery Snr. was also an actor and his son Noah Beery Jr. may well be remembered as playing James Garner's father in the television series – *The Rockford Files*.

Carlow had added sound to the *Picture House* of the British Thomson-Houston type. The last advertisement for this cinema appeared in the *Fife Free Press* on the 26th August 1939. There was nothing to suggest that this would be the last performances in the theatre but the hall's film shows were under huge pressure from the new purpose built cinemas – the *Rio* and the *Carlton*. The final advertisement is reproduced here – and perhaps the audience having to sit through *Jeanette McDonald* and *Nelson Eddy* in *Sweethearts* was the final straw. This writer well remembers the torture his mother inflicted by dragging him to see them in *Rose Marie*! He still has a morbid dislike of most musicals but is in the early stages of recovery. Point to ponder – no Kirkcaldy cinema which screened films starring Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald remains open – coincidence?

Picture House, *Pathhead, Kirkcaldy*

To-night—John Carroll in **I AM A CRIMINAL**. Also—Dave Willis in **ME AND MY PAL**

Mon. & Tues.—**Jeanette McDonald and Nelson Eddy** in **SWEETHEARTS**—
A feast of music and song

Wed. & Thurs.—**NEXT TIME I MARRY**, with Lucille Ball and James Ellison.—A roaring race to Reno for a divorce that neither one wanted. Also George O'Brien in **BORDER "G" MAN**.

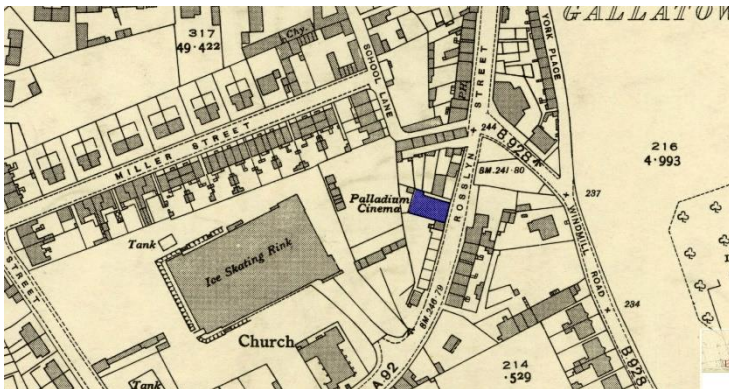
Fri. & Sat.—**TORCHY BLANE IN CHINATOWN**, with Glenda Farrell and Barton McLane in another thrilling "Torchy" story. Also—**HONOUR OF THE WEST**, with Bob Baker.

In fact Mr Carlow and his brother appear to have seen the writing on the

wall as early as May 1936 when the *Fife Free Press* announced that a new company had been formed – *Cinema Holdings(Kirkcaldy) Ltd.* The directors were Frank William Carlow of 23 Macindoe Crescent and William Fairley Carlow of 11 Haig Avenue. The brothers became an important part of the town's cinematic history – becoming involved in the construction of two cinemas with each brother managing one. From Frank Carlow's 1976 obituary we learn that the brothers arrived in Kirkcaldy in 1931, meaning they came with the express intention of running the Pathhead Halls Cinema, before moving on to greater things. We have as yet been unable to establish when they left the Pathhead Halls presumably staying till their new venture was ready.

So that it seems was the end of the *Picture House* in all its various guises but the Pathhead Halls are still standing – which for a Kirkcaldy cinema is impressive.

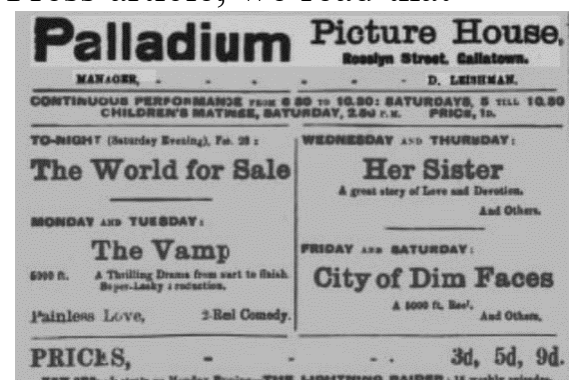
The Palladium



It is the ever reliable *Fife Free Press* which on the 24th January 1920 gives us the starting point. That said, there have been previous suggestions that this was simply the *St. Clair Picture House* in a new guise. That is a categoric no! *The Palladium* was housed in what had been the original Gallatown Church

with a suggested capacity of 450. That in 1883 had been replaced by a new larger building which for many years stood in part of the Ice-Rink car park facing Rosslyn Street. The original building became the church hall prior to eventually becoming a cinema. Reverting to the Press article, we read that the building is almost ready to screen films, which will be high class and that the opening will take place shortly. The owners are the *Palladium Pictures Ltd* and the manager is one Mr D. Leishman. The first night's drawings are to be given to charity.

The first advert which could be traced appeared

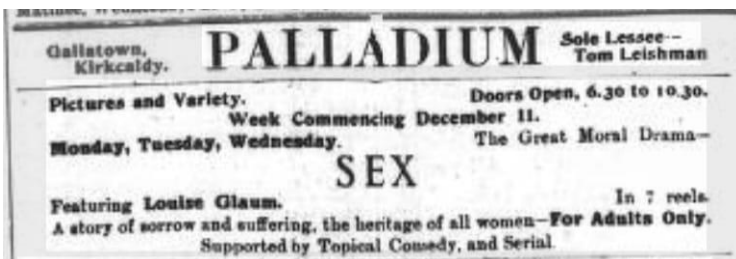


in the *Fife Free Press* of the 28th February 1920. The full advert is reproduced here and *The World for Sale* seems to be the first film screened. By the 28th March, *The Fife Free Press* is waxing lyrical in these terms “The Palladium Cinema, Rosslyn Street, by its comfortable interior and especially by the unique character of its pictorial programme is winning the appreciation of its many Gallatown patrons”. Mr Leishman and his assistants are given high praise as “not without obstacles, they have from the first made their presence felt among their competitors for public patronage in the community”.

The enterprise of the manager was highlighted by the fact that *Riddle Gawne* featuring W.S. Hart was showing during the next week. W.S. Hart was beloved by the ladies of the time as a strong, silent man – well, he would be – it was a silent movie!

W.S. Hart was the best known and probably the best actor in Westerns during the silent era. Eventually he was overtaken in that role by Tom Mix. Hart died in 1946 and he too has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

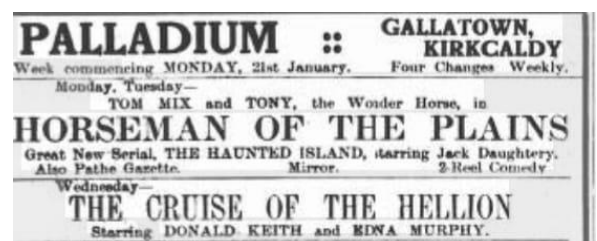
A random look at the adverts landed on the *Fife Free Press* of the 9th December 1922. The lessee is named as Tom Leishman and surely he has to



be a relation of D. Leishman. What is astonishing is that the film is entitled *Sex* and it is billed as a great moral drama – *a story of sorrow and suffering, the heritage of all women!* It will be shown

using 7 reels and is for adults only. The star was Louise Glaum. She was a talented actress who specialised in playing vamps. In *Sex* she played Adrienne Renault and it seems the plot was a morality story on the evils of marital infidelity and the wild lifestyle of New York actors. In America, in some states, it was not shown by the title but altered to *Sex Crushed by the Earth*.

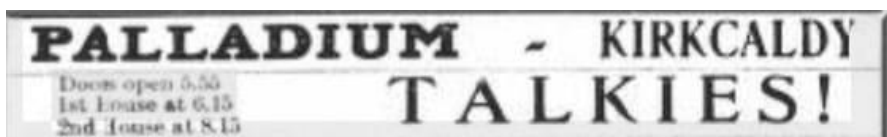
Moving on at random we find on the 16th July 1929 that *the Fife Free Press* indicates that the aforementioned Tom Mix and Tony, the Wonder Horse, are appearing in *Horseman of the Plains*. The advert indicates that there are



four changes of programme per week – which for a small cinema is impressive.

In their edition of the 7th March 1931 *The Fife Free Press* advertisement informs readers that heating has been installed in the Palladium and that patrons may have no fear of the cold spell. The cinema is still showing silent films with the current feature being *Dangerous Curves* with Clara Bow.

However, by Saturday the 12th September that same year, *The Fife Free Press* were able to advertise that the Palladium was featuring talkies. The



film was *The Big House* featuring Wallace Beery and Chester Morris. The

plot was built around a riot by 3,000 prisoners maddened by prison brutality. It would seem that the installation had taken place during July, as working backwards *Way out West* featured on the 3rd August. This film had William Haines as the star and was a comedy western. Again it is suggested that the sound system was of the British - Thomson-Houston variety.

In the *Fife Free Press* of the 17th November 1945 the Palladium still had its own advertisement which was for *A Place of our Own* which starred James Mason and Margaret Lockwood.

Certainly by the 30th August 1947 the cinema had new owners and this was the *Glen Cinema Group*. The *Fife Free Press* advertisement shows that, side by side, in the one advert are the programmes for the Palladium and the

Normand in Dysart, we have to assume that the Glen Group was running both cinemas in tandem with the Normand



Hall being utilised in Dysart. The group logo is reproduced here for interest. Cary Cooper was starring in the Palladium in *Along Came Jones* while James Mason and Phyllis Calvert featured at the Normand in *They were Sisters*.

By the 9th of July 1949 while remaining in the same format only one cinema was screening films and that was the Normand. The advert mentioned that

the Palladium was closed for redecoration and renovation.

It certainly seems for a lengthy spell that this situation continued but when we reach the 19th April 1952 both cinemas are once again showing films.

We reach the end of the road on the 17th July 1954 when the Fife Free Press carries the report of a discussion at a Council meeting. It was noted that the owners of the Palladium were negotiating a sale. This would all fit in with the *Kinematic Year Book* for 1954 being the last year an entry appeared. This, in reality, would cover the year 1953 so the assumption must be made that the decision to stop showing pictures and sell the building was taken in the first half of 1954.

From this writer's memory, it became a carpet store after its closure and the building seems to have been demolished in 1990.

The Rialto/Gaumont/Odeon

KIRKCALDY KINEMA LIMITED
(Incorporated under the Companies Acts, 1908 to 1917).

Share Capital, - - £15,000
DIVIDED INTO
15,000 Ordinary Shares of £1 each.
£5,000 7½ per cent. Mortgage Debenture Stock.

THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND BANK, LIMITED, KIRKCALDY,
are authorised as Bankers of the Company, to receive applications a par for
15,000 Ordinary Shares of £1 each.
100 Mortgage Debentures of £50 each.
PAYABLE AS FOLLOWS:-

	SHARES.	DEBENTURES.
On Application,	5/-	£5
On Allotment,	5/-	£5
On 1st August, 1924,	5/-	£50
On 1st November, 1924,	5/-	£50
	20/-	£50

DIRECTORS.
JAMES BOGIE, Outfitter, 13 Swan Road, Kirkcaldy.
GEORGE J. WHYTE, Solicitor, Kirkcaldy.
THOMAS ORMISTON, F.R.S.S., Westgarth, Motherwell,
Managing Director.

NORTH OF SCOTLAND BANK, LIMITED, Kirkcaldy.

SOLICITORS.
GIBSON & SPEARS and DOW & SON, Kirkcaldy.
ALEX. L. WRIGHT & CO., Motherwell.

AUDITORS.
BOWAN THOMSON & ANDERSON, C.A., 134 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

ARCHITECTS.
WM. J. BLAIN, F.R.I.B.A., 14 St Vincent Street, Glasgow.
WILLIAM WILLIAMSON, F.R.I.B.A., Royal Bank Buildings, Kirkcaldy.

BROKERS.
MICKEL McPHERSON & CO., 220 High Street, Kirkcaldy.
Members of the Association of Provincial Stock and Share Brokers, (Incorporated).

JOINT SECRETARIES AND REGISTERED OFFICE.
H. W. MICKEL and E. M. McPHERSON, 220 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

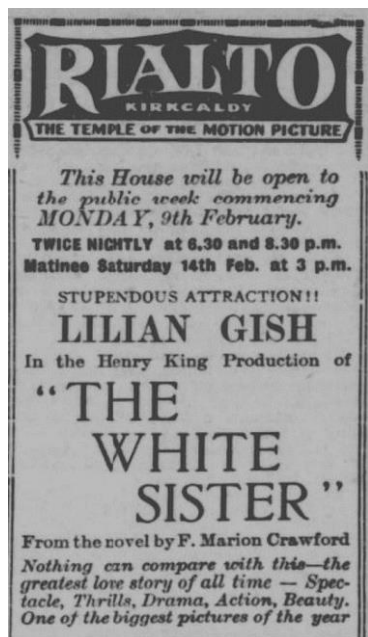
The *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd March 1924 is the starting point for this cinema. On the front page was a Prospectus entreating the public to invest in *Kirkcaldy Kinema Ltd*. This was a mixture of local men and an experienced hand from Motherwell. The directors were disclosed as James Bogie, an outfitter from the High Street, whose business was very successful and operated from the premises recently vacated by Wilkie's. George J. Whyte was a local solicitor, while Thomas Ormiston, who hailed from Motherwell, was another lawyer. Ormiston had however been active in the cinema business and had built up a significant number of outlets, which were known collectively as the *Ormiston Circuit*.

The intention was to purchase the premises from 198-210 High Street to construct a cinema. One of the shops in the run would be turned into an entrance with an arcade leading to the cinema itself which would be built behind the High Street and reaching towards the Esplanade. The other shopping outlets would continue trading as normal. The map reproduced

here shows the intended site. £20,000 was to be raised with £15,000 in £1 shares and 100 debentures each on offer at £50. Debentures offer a degree of security as they normally are supported by a preferential charge on the heritable assets. The architects were to be Mr W.J.Blain and Kirkcaldy's own William Williamson. It was anticipated the site would be purchased for £6,500 with the construction costs estimated at £15,000.



The part Mr Ormiston would play was to be quite significant. He had agreed to act as the Managing Director for a period of 5 years and would then be available for re-election. He was clearly experienced as he held the same position with 15 other cinemas. This meant that he was able to secure the best films on what were described as advantageous terms. As the story unfolds we will see that re-election was never required.



While there is very little detail on the actual building what is known is that by the time the *Fife Free Press* was published on the 31st January 1925 the cinema was ready for opening. The opening ceremony was scheduled for the 9th February with the first film being *The White Sister* featuring Lillian Gish. The advertisement is reproduced here. Gish was one of the greatest stars of the silent era and was unusual in that she carried on as such into the talkie era. She was described by the paper as *the greatest emotional actress in the world in the greatest role of her distinguished life*. The cinema strap line was *The Temple of the Motion Picture*.

It was Provost Kilgour who opened the cinema and in his remarks he remembered seeing animated pictures in the Corn Exchange in 1897. He was presented with a rose bowl, in the form of an ancient quaich, by Mr Blain. Mr Ormiston then spoke about the quality of the films which would be screened before introducing the Resident Manager – a Mr Buccleuch. The ceremony ended with a screening of *The Four Seasons*.

The article concluded with a list of the firms involved in the construction

with a significant number being local firms. The list taken from the newspaper is reproduced here. Many are still well known names although most are no longer in operation – however, Thomson Brothers is still active in the town.

The following are the contractors:—
 Mason work, Robert Gilchrist & Son, Ltd., Glasgow; joiner, Bogie & Nicol, Ltd., Kirkcaldy; plaster work, Geo. Rome & Co., Ltd., Glasgow; electricity, W. C. Martin and Co., Ltd., Kirkcaldy; heating and ventilating, J. L. Saunders & Co., Ltd., Glasgow; painting and decorating and decorative glass, J. & W. Guthrie, and Willis, Ltd., Glasgow; chairs, H. Lazarus & Sons, London; slater work, Wm. Currie, Kirkcaldy; flooring and furnishings, Brodie and Cooper, and Barnet & Morton, Kirkcaldy; steel work, Thomson Bros., Kirkcaldy; plumber work, Laing & Co., Kirkcaldy. Messrs J. Blain, Glasgow, and W. Williamson, Kirkcaldy, were the architects.

In the *Fife Free Press* of the 28th March 1925 we see J.H. Logan

advising the public that he is opening a confectioner's shop at the entrance to the Rialto. While the shop was normally entered from the High Street – when the cinema was open, service could be obtained through a window in the Arcade. If some older male readers think they know the name – they would be correct. Jimmy Logan played in the Raith Rovers team which reached the Scottish Cup Final in 1913 – the result will be ignored! In 1914, along with other team members, he joined the 16th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Scots – often known as McCrae's Battalion. He was badly wounded on the first day of the Somme Offensive

but did eventually recover. He started the war as a Private and ended it as a Captain. As previously mentioned, when Peter Hodge left Raith Rovers for Leicester City in 1919, it was James H. Logan who took over as manager and he presided over some of the best seasons in the Club's history. He died in Edinburgh in 1961.

Also reached from the Arcade was the famous Rialto Tea Rooms and the advertisement for their opening is shown here. These rooms were more than simply a tea room. The cinema's lengthy opening hours meant that the rooms were used for many afternoon and evening functions by individuals, groups and societies. It was most certainly a well used, popular and extremely useful meeting place. Very few establishments of 2024 could be described as serving dainty teas!

OPENING NOTICE.

J. H. LOGAN,
BEGBS to intimate that he has
 OPENED a CONFECTIONER
 SHOP at the entrance to the
"Rialto" Picture House,

And by personal attention to business and featuring quick service, quality, variety, moderate price, etc., trusts he may receive a share of public patronage.

Shop entrance by door direct from High Street (next door to Mr Barclay, Tobacconist). Service may be obtained through window in the Arcade when the Theatre is open.

J. H. LOGAN,
 CONFECTIONER, HIGH STREET,
 KIRKCALDY.

Opening Announcement.

RIALTO TEA ROOMS
 240 High Street, KIRKCALDY
 (Entrance Picture House Arcade).

Dainty Teas
Quick Service
Excellent Cuisine.
ICES.

Cultivate the habit of Dining out.

Private Room may be reserved for Afternoon Teas, etc., on application to the Manageress.

The Fife Free Press on the 6th June 1925 carried an unusual announcement within the Rialto advertisement. It would seem that an early form of air conditioning had been installed – we are told that the cinema is *now scientifically ventilated – always opposite to the weather - cool and refreshing when hot and warm and comfortable when cold.*

The same newspaper on the 24th October 1925 mentions an added attraction to the Rialto Tea Rooms in the shape of The Harold Jennings Trio playing

on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. It would seem that the cinema music was normally played by *Harold M. Jennings and his Orchestra* in the days before the talkies – so it was no surprise that Jennings added those engagements to his schedule – the earliest form of background music? This was a tangent and so it had to be explored. We found Jennings in the capacity of Musical Director in the *Morley Street Cinema* in Bradford in 1916. It seems clear that he must have applied for the same post when the



Rialto was opened and was obviously successful. The orchestra was a permanent fixture certainly up until October 1929 by which time they were known the Riassaql1tonians.

The Fife Free Press of the 24th March 1928 carried a small paragraph intimating that the Rialto and another 20 cinemas had been acquired by *Denman Picture Houses Ltd* who were what was termed a new combine. In fact, it was an offshoot of the long established *Gaumont-British*

KIRKCALDY CINEMA CHANGES HANDS

We observe that the Rialto Picture House, Kirkcaldy, along with about another twenty cinemas, has been acquired by the Denman Picture Houses, Ltd, a new combine.

Picture Corporation. The owners of British Gaumont were the Ostrer Brothers and it was they who offered shares via a prospectus in Denman Picture House Ltd to raise 2 million pounds. The purpose of the new company was to purchase or acquire a majority stake in 96 theatres on the British mainland. The new company would work in close collaboration with *Gaumont-British* with many of the directors holding executive positions in both.

Gaumont–British had been founded in 1898 as the British subsidiary of the French *Gaumont Film Company*. However, in 1922 it became independent when Isidore Ostrer secured control. Gaumont soon became the leading and largest chain in the United Kingdom and by 1928 controlled 180 cinemas. This figure was soon extended by the activities of Denman and just over a year later the chain numbered 300 – of which Kirkcaldy's Rialto was one. The Prospectus listed all 96 cinemas to be purchased with the vast majority in England. The Scottish cinemas only started at number 86 and the last mentioned sat at number 96 – yes, Kirkcaldy's Rialto! We note that Thomas Ormiston features as a director in the Prospectus. That said the senior names mentioned included the Chairman and a number of Directors from Gaumont-British, which in the circumstances would be expected. At this stage we need to emphasise that the Rialto's name did not change at that point. It only became the Gaumont in 1950.

The talkies arrived at a third Kirkcaldy cinema when the *Fife Free Press* of the 14th December 1929 carried an advertisement for Monday next and the whole of the following week. This was for the All singing, All dancing and All talking - *Movietone Follies of 1929*. The full advertisement is shown here for interest. The film starred Sue Carol, Sharon Lynn, Dixie Lee and Lola Lane. The plot surrounded George Shelby trying to dissuade his sweetheart from embarking on a career on the stage. He buys the theatre with the intention of firing her but on the first night she is a huge success.....change of mind!

Rialto
KIRKCALDY.

Continuous performance daily from 2.30 to 10.30 p.m.
Reduced Matinee Prices every day till 4.30.

Week commencing MONDAY, 10th December, and ALL WEEK.

The REAL Talkies.

WILLIAM FOX Presents
MOVIE TONE FOLLIES of 1929
ALL SINGING DANCING TALKING

Starring: Sue Carol, Sharon Lynn, Dixie Lee and Lola Lane
David Rollins, David Percy, Stephen Feczak

Here's the entertainment treat of a lifetime—the first Film Follies.

Also
SOUND COMEDY and BRITISH MOVIE TONE NEWS (The Talking Topical).
Prices of Admission.

	BOX SEATS	BALCONY	BACK STALLS	FRONT STALLS
EVENING	2/- Children, 1/-	1/3 Children, 9d	1/- Children, 6d	6d No Half Price
SPECIAL REDUCED MATINEE PRICES TILL 4.30.				
	BALCONY Children, 9d	1/-	STALLS Children, 3d	6d

We had another random look at the early talkies in the Rialto and the *Fife Free Press* of the 28th December featured the first offering for 1930 which was *Broadway*. This was advertised as the first £300,000 all talking picture. Glen Tryon and Evelyn Brent were the main artists but the supporting cast was described as powerful. The film had been made as both a talkie and a silent film but, without question, it was the sound version

Rialto
KIRKCALDY.

Continuous performance daily from 2.30 to 10.30 p.m.
Reduced Matinee Prices every day till 4.30.

WEEK COMMENCING MONDAY, 30th DECEMBER.

Stupendous New Year Attraction!

SEE and HEAR
THE FIRST £300,000 ALL TALKING PICTURE,
"BROADWAY"
(The ONE and ONLY).

The most imitated play ever pictured, with the ORIGINAL play dialogue, with songs that you'll never forget, with drama that will hit your heart.

Featuring a powerful cast, headed by
GLENN TRYON, EVELYN BRENT,
and **MERNA KENNEDY.**

which was screened. Again we have included the advertisement.

It was at this point that we realised/remembered that at this time the travel firm of A.T. Mays (Shipping & Travel) Ltd., were operating from the Rialto Arcade. They were certainly more than just a travel agent – they also promoted work opportunities in countries such as Australia and Canada and were heavily involved in shipping and selling advance tickets for railway journeys.



The *Fife Free Press* of the 25th May 1935 was picked at random and the advert clearly states that the Rialto is now a Gaumont British Theatre. The film was *Marie Galante* which starred Spencer Tracy and Ketti Gallian. Spencer Tracy was one of the

greatest actors of Hollywood's Golden Age. He was nominated 9 times for the Academy Award for best actor. He was the first actor to win the award twice and one of only two men to win it consecutively – the other being Tom Hanks. The last member named on the cast list was Jay C. Flippen. He was playing a minor role here but he became a seriously significant character actor. He starred alongside James Stewart in five films and another three with John Wayne. Very few, who google him, will not immediately recognise the face, if not the name.

Our random search next landed on the *Fife Free Press* of January 31st 1949. 1950 was to start with Abbot and Costello in *Meet the Ghosts*. Two of the supporting cast were cinema greats – Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi. Bud Abbot and Lou Costello were an American comedy duo who were at the height of their fame in the 1940s and 1950s. During the Second World War they were the highest paid entertainers in the world. Chaney was a superb horror film actor and he featured on an American postage stamp portraying one of his most famous characters – The Wolfman. Lugosi was another who specialised in horror – especially playing Dracula. On his death in 1956 he was buried in



one of his Dracula capes and rings.



It was mentioned earlier that the Rialto underwent a name change in 1950. Saturday, the 25th October 1952, *The Fife Free Press* carried an advert for *Clash by Night* allowing the inclusion of a film under the Gaumont name. Amongst the stars were Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Ryan and Marilyn Monroe. Stanwyck was an excellent actress with firm views. When making *To Please a Lady* she refused to have her African-American maid live in a

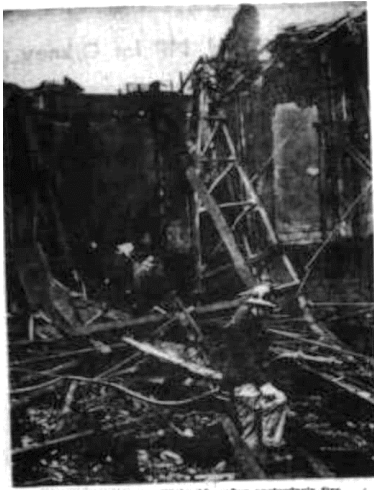
different hotel for African-Americans only. She triumphed and the maid stayed in the same hotel as the cast and the crew. She had been orphaned aged four and came up the hard way. Ryan was an accomplished actor who may be remembered in *Bad Day at Black Rock* and the *Dirty Dozen*. This film was the first where Marilyn Monroe's name appeared above the film's title.

In 1962 the *Gaumont* underwent another name change – this time to the *Kirkcaldy Odeon*. There was some tinkering with the auditorium and it now seated just over 1,000.

It was the *Leven Mail* of the 19th December 1962 we turned to, to find an advertisement in the new name. The film being advertised was *The Miracle Worker* which featured Anne Bancroft and also introduced Patty Duke. The film was a critical success and Anne Bancroft won an Academy Award for best actress and Patty Duke an Academy Award for best supporting actress. Both had played the same roles on the stage before the film and Anne Bancroft was nearly overlooked for the film part in favour of Elizabeth Taylor.



The Scotsman on the 27th December 1974 was one of the first daily papers to carry the story that in the early hours of Boxing Day the Odeon Cinema



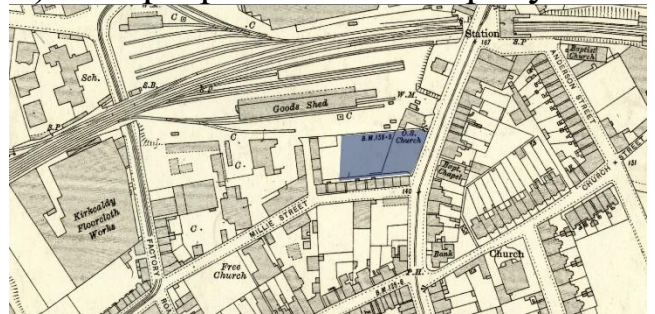
The Odessa Cinema, Kirkcaldy, after yesterday's fire.

Kirkcaldy cinema is destroyed by fire

had been destroyed by fire. The police had discovered that the rear door had been opened and there were signs that there had been an intruder. The fire was discovered by a policeman in the early hours of the morning and the fire was fought by 50 firemen, 10 pumps, a snorkel and a control unit, but all to no avail. For the first time the cinema had been closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The Provost, John Kay, had hoped that the well used cinema would be rebuilt – as we all know that never transpired. Kirkcaldy was left at that point with one cinema – the A.B.C.

The Rio

This was one of the two cinemas which led to the demise of screenings in the Pathhead Halls and the Palladium. We start with an article in the *Dundee Courier* of the 15th January 1938. This is in relation to a company being formed named the *Rio Cinema Company (Ltd)*. The purpose of the company was quite simple – to acquire from Peter Crerar and Thomas Gardener the site at St. Clair Street on which had been erected the *Rio Cinema*. The ground and adjoining buildings were to be included with the intention to carry on a business of exhibiting moving pictures.



Crerar (1882-1961) was an interesting character from the Crieff area. He had built up a substantial coach building business in the town and also operated a pleasure steamer on Loch Tay. The steamer was hauled by a steam tractor from Perth Harbour to Loch Tay. He moved into the cinema business when he built the *Crieff Cinema* in 1924. Over the years he added cinemas in Auchterarder, Glasgow, Dunfermline, and of course Kirkcaldy, amongst others.

We have seen this before – Crerar and Gardener had already built the cinema and were now recovering the costs via a share flotation. The capital was stated to be £20,000 in £1 shares. The directors of the new company were

Peter Crerar 1 Dollerie Terrace, Crieff.

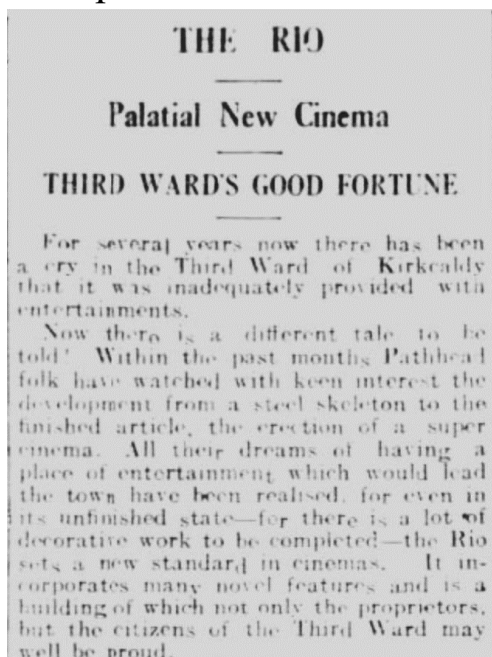
Thomas Gardener Westerlee, Anstruther.

James Menzies Innesmohr, Crieff.

Alexander Young Mayfield, Kelty.

The first three were listed as Cinema proprietors with Young described as a Contractor. The cinema is already complete having been opened the previous year.

The trail can be picked up by referring to the *Fife Free Press* of the 6th February 1937. From the article we learn about both the cinema and the opening ceremony. The cinema was built on the site of a wood yard. The opening ceremony took place on Monday the 1st February and without question it satisfied the long standing cry that the Third Ward was inadequately provided for in terms of entertainment.



The article noted that for some months Pathhead folk had been watching with interest the development from a steel skeleton to the finished article of a super cinema. The interest was so keen that on the evening of the opening 2,000 people were awaiting admittance at 6.00pm. All did not secure entry as much of the balcony had been reserved for the owner's guests. The reporter suggested that – *The Rio sets a new standard in cinemas* plus suggesting that the building *created a strong sense of modernity*.

Mention was made of the many details featured in the design. The entrance hall was described as being particularly pleasing with space and accommodation. The wood panelling was said to lend considerable dignity. There was also a cloakroom in the entrance hall. A novel feature was that the pay-box was of the latest type and provided the automatic delivery of the tickets. Two sets of staircases led to the auditorium. Downstairs provided seating for 1,300 organised in such a manner that all patrons had an

unobstructed view.

Upstairs led to the balcony which had two entrances – one for the dearer seats at the front and another leading to the less expensive seats at the rear. The cinema could seat 2,055 persons so the balcony accommodation was for 755. What was clear was that no effort had been spared in providing comfort with particular attention having been paid to adequate leg room throughout the cinema.

The interior decoration was described as attractive and dignified with particular praise for the fact the decor would harmonise with the special lighting system which had been installed. This seems rather complicated but it was controlled from the operator's box and allowed a great variety of hues to be brought into operation providing delightful effects. The system was a combination of ingenious electrical apparatus in the wings, a special coloured foundation curtain on the stage, plus footlights. It was termed a Holophane System and the Rio was the first cinema in Scotland to have it installed. It transpires that this was a company who pioneered the use of prismatic optics and scientific illumination in the 1890s. That was enough for us – google will take you to the history!

The heating was thermostatically controlled which led to a uniform temperature. Not unexpectedly, the projectors were the top of the range and an R.C.A. High fidelity sound system was installed.

It was Thomas Gardener who was in charge of the opening ceremony and he paid tribute to the architects and the contractors. It seems that many were local firms and the work had been done to the owner's entire satisfaction.

Provost Wilson then spoke and he had to start by admitting he did not know this part of the town as well as he perhaps should. But he did speak well and some of his words struck a chord. Harking back to Part 1, where we covered entertainment in the early days, the Provost's words resonated:-

“The faculty of the community, in the question of its entertainment, has undergone a great change in the last 25 years. Prior to the picture house individual amateur effort was supreme, but that has gone and modern life now requires a much higher grade of entertainment. It requires perfect talent and also the production of it done very artistically. Nothing less will be

tolerated. It is probably the breathless speed at which we live nowadays that is intolerant of the earlier conditions”.

The Provost was delighted that what had been an eyesore had been converted in this way and suggested that steps would soon be taken to transform St. Clair Street into one of the great through-ways in the town. The Provost then declared the cinema open.

The records used were very difficult to read but here we believe are a list of the local contractors involved:-

Excavating, concrete and brickwork – Fraser of Millie Street. (they would not have far to travel!)
Gas fitting and plumbing – James Blyth of Institution Street.

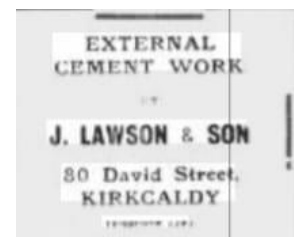


Plaster and cement work – William Paris.

External plaster work - John Lawson and Sons, David Street.

Joiner work – Bogie and Nicoll.

Glazier work – Haxton and Sons of the High Street.



We noted that all the lighting was in the hands of Holophane of London. One trade which would be frowned on today is the Asbestos work carried out by Turner Asbestos Cement of Glasgow.



The opening offering was *Laughing Irish Eyes* which had Phil Regan as the star. Regan started work as a detective with the New York Police Department. His singing was heard at a party and he was signed to *C.B.S. Radio* and his career blossomed from there. He reached a low point in 1972 when he was jailed for attempted bribery. William Gilmore wrote in the *Brooklyn Eagle* when

reviewing *Laughing Irish Eyes* that Regan had *astonishingly good looks and an extraordinary pleasing tenor voice*. Here is a little throwaway – at the 1949 Inauguration of President Harry S. Truman, it was Regan who sang the National Anthem. (an earlier version of Michael Buble?)

The full programme for the following week is shown here. The main film was based on the first Perry Mason novel and starred Warren William and Winifred Shaw. The film, *The Case of the Velvet Claw*, was released in 1936. Warren William had had a lengthy career in both the silent and the talkie eras and he also has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Winifred Shaw was born, Winifred Lei Moni, and was one of 13 children. She featured in a number of musicals and, during the Second World War, often joined Jack Benny or Larry Adler touring service camps or Red Cross clubs. Stumbling on this film took this writer back to childhood when Raymond Burr brought the stories to television. Warner Home Video released William's version in a DVD collection of other Perry Mason titles in 2012.



Trying to trace the ownership of the cinema over the years was a tad exasperating and we remain unconvinced that the following is strictly accurate – apologies if we are wrong. We know that Crerar and Gardner formed the company which built the Rio. It opened in February 1937 – fact. *The Aberdeen Evening Express* of the 17th January 1939 mentions that an extraordinary general meeting of *The Caledonian Associated Cinemas* had been held to approve the expenditure of £75,000 on the acquisition of practically all the shares in *Scottish Central Cinemas Ltd*. *The Scottish Central Cinemas*

Scots Cinema Trade Development

An extraordinary general meeting of Caledonian Associated Cinemas, Ltd., will be held in Inverness on February 2 to consider a proposed alteration in the articles of the company and to approve the recent acquisition by the company of 7500 (practically all) issued Ordinary shares of Scottish Central Cinemas, Ltd. at par.

Ltd had in turn been formed in 1938 to acquire:-

- The Regal Cinema and Cafe, Dunfermline*
- The Rio Cinema, Bearsden.*
- The Rio Cinema in Rutherglen.*
- The Mosspark Picture House*
- The Rio in Kirkcaldy.*

The Scottish Central Cinemas Ltd was initially something of a mystery. It was formed in July 1938 to carry on the business of picture house proprietors. The capital was £47,000 with two directors – a Thomas Hood Wilson Alexander – a surgeon from Moray, and Robert Wotherspoon, an Inverness solicitor. The address was given as Royal Bank Buildings, Drummond Street, Inverness.

Scottish Central Cinemas, Ltd., is a private company formed last year with a nominal capital of £47,000 divided into 32,000 6 per Cent. Cumulative Preference shares of £1 each, 14,750 Ordinary shares of £1 each, and 500 Deferred shares of 1/- each.

Fast forwarding we find that at the Annual General Meeting of the *Caledonian Associated Cinemas Ltd*, which was reported on in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, of the 17th May 1939, that the Chairman of the meeting was the self-same Dr. T. H. W. Alexander F.R.I.C.S., J.P. with Robert Wotherspoon being re-elected to the Board.

It would appear that either Alexander and Wotherspoon had taken up most of the shares in the Rio, or they had simply bought the cinema from Crerar and Gardener very soon after the Rio opened. Without question, *The Scottish Central Cinemas Ltd* was nothing other than a subsidiary of *Caledonian Associated Cinemas Ltd*.

On checking the formation of the *Caledonian Associated Cinemas Ltd* which took place in 1935 we find that two of the directors are Alexander and Wotherspoon and the address – Royal Bank Buildings, Drummond Street in Inverness! The business was astute enough to hire Alexander Boyne King (1888 - 1973) as their Booking Manager and through his astute dealings from having 9 cinemas in 1935, it had risen to 49 by 1950. King was knighted in 1944.



Our random choices of cinema's offerings which had been lucky until now saw a change of luck. *The Fife Free Press* of the 22nd May 1942 advertised *The Flight Lieutenant* which was a fairly forgettable film which starred Pat O'Brien in the lead with a young Glenn Ford playing his son. In

fairness O'Brien made over 100 films and, if anything, Ford became an even bigger star. The critic in the *New York Times* considered it a dreary father-

and-son tale.

The Fife Free Press of the 11th January 1953 landed on the British comedy – *Top of the Form*. It was a tale of a bookmaker taking over as the headmaster of a school and explored the adventures incurred in getting the pupils through their exams and then on a free trip to Paris. Ronald Shiner, the star, was a comedian who found his way into films with great success. He had a number of jobs before entering the entertainment business – one of these being enrolled in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Some of the cast certainly rose to prominence including; Ronnie Corbett, Alfie Bass and Melvyn Hayes.



The chain certainly continued operating, as the company were still active in 1979, when the Rio was burnt to the ground. That year the *Caledonian Associated Cinemas Ltd*, still in Inverness, had entered into a contract with Livingston Development Corporation to build a £500,000 entertainment complex at Almondvale.

However, The Rio was no longer part of the chain having been bought, we believe, by the Dundee group *J.B. Milne Theatres Dundee*. Looking at the advertisements in the *Leven Mail* as far back as 1959 showed J.B. Milne having a presence in *The Palace* in Methil, *The Regal* in East Wemyss and *the Troxy* in Leven. The Rio advert on the same page clearly stated it remained a Caledonian cinema.

Pleasurama take-over

Pleasurama have acquired **Glencoe Securities Ltd.**, the group who own the **Raith Ballroom**, the **Carlton Bingo Hall** and the **Burma Ballroom** in **Kirkcaldy, Fife**.
At the **Raith**, there are adjoining premises for development as a public house, and there is an adjoining small hotel at the **Burma Ballroom**.

The Thanet Times, in their edition of the 24th December 1968, reports that a local company, *Pleasureama*, had taken over the Kirkcaldy based firm of *Glencoe Securities Ltd*. This firm contained at least three local men as directors – Peter Visocchi, Mario Caira and Bert Caira. The purchase included the Raith Ballroom, the Carlton Bingo Hall and the Burma Ballroom.

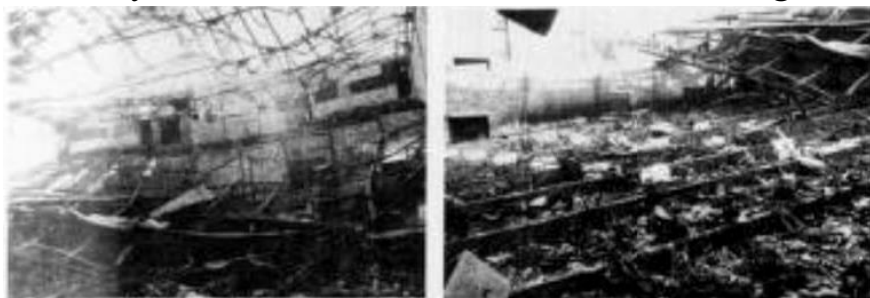
However, the three were soon back in action as reported by the *Scotsman* on the 11th March 1970. They had bought the entire operation of *J.B. Milne*

Theatres Dundee. We believe that the Rio was included in the 32 cinemas and bingo halls which were purchased. The purchasers became *Kingsway Entertainments Ltd.* The Rio cinema continued to operate for a few years before being converted into a bingo hall.

In the early hours of Sunday the 21st October a dramatic and gigantic fire engulfed the premises. *The Fife Free Press* of the 26th October carried the full story with several awe-inspiring photographs. The blaze was fought by 50 firemen and took 3 hours to bring under control. For a short space of

Cinema firm takeover by cousins

Three Kirkcaldy businessmen have taken over the chain of 32 cinemas and bingo halls from the Dundee-based firm of J. B. Milne Theatres Ltd., it was announced yesterday. No price was disclosed. The cinemas and bingo halls are in Angus, Aberdeenshire, Banff, Kinross, Perthshire, Ross and Cromarty, and Fife.



RIO BINGO HALL DESTROYED IN EARLY MORNING BLAZE

Kirkcaldy's biggest bingo hall, the Rio Kingsway Social Club in St Clair Street, was completely destroyed when fire swept through the building during the early hours of Sunday morning.

time nearby residents were evacuated. The area across from the Rio was far different from today with a mass of houses/shops sprawling down St. Clair Street. The skeleton left was declared unsafe and demolition commenced on the Tuesday with a number of road closures in operation. In the article, Bert Caira, had

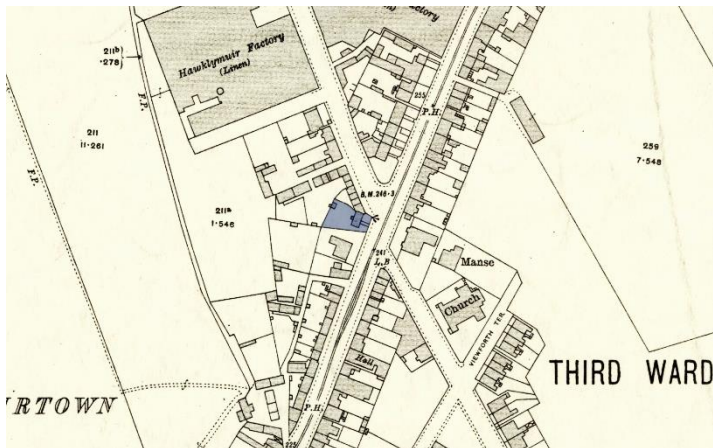
indicated that he was confident that a new hall would arise – he was as good as his word. However, Kirkcaldy's largest cinema and bingo hall were gone forever.

The Carlton

It is *The Courier* of the 16th May 1936 where we start tracing this Cinema's journey. The article tells us that a company by the name of *Cinema Holdings (Kirkcaldy) Ltd.*, has been formed. One director is Frank W. Carlow of 23 Macindoe Crescent who is stated to be a Cinema Operator. The other is William. F. Carlow of 11 Haig Avenue, again a Cinema Operator. We met Mr Frank Carlow at the *Pathhead Picture House* and we now believe that these brothers probably operated *Pathhead* in tandem, although at some point towards the end it seems that William. F. Carlow might have

FLYER'S NEW JOB
NEW manager of Pathhead Halls is the fast-skating **TOMMY DURLING**, Fife Flyers' right-winger. Tommy, who is one of the most popular members of the Kirkcaldy team, has taken up the cinema business as a career since he came to Kirkcaldy.

operated that Cinema himself. However, we also know that Tommy Durling of Fife Flyers was appointed manager of the Pathhead Halls in December 1938 thanks to the Dundee Courier of the 3rd of the month. This would suggest that he stood in for the Carlow's in order that they can give full attention to their new project. The company being formed was to have a capital of £10,000 in £1 shares. The purpose of the company was to operate a Cinema business but no site was mentioned.

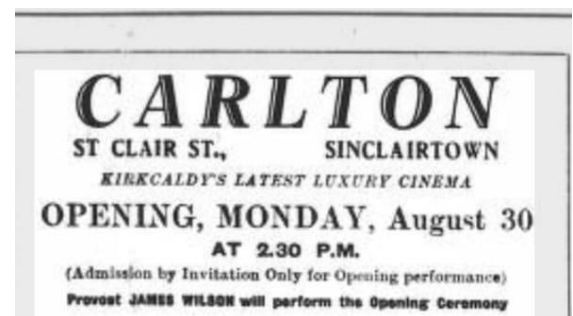


By Saturday, the 20th June 1936, *The Fife Free Press* is able to reveal that the Cinema will be sited at the corner of Park Road and St. Clair Street and will be replacing a condemned building presently standing on the site. The cost of construction will be in the region of £20,000 and the plans involve the building of a suite of flats and shops on Park Road – the Dean of

Guild passed the plans. Seating would be for 1,012 in the auditorium with 412 seated in the balcony.

The same newspaper reported on the 19th December 1936 that an objection to the proposal had been overruled by the Dean of Guild Court. The objection had been raised by Mr T. Leishman who of course was operating the Palladium. Obviously, self protection was a motive but Mr Buchanan was objecting to the houses, the shops and some trees, as well as the demolition of the condemned building. The article revealed that the auditorium would now seat 952 in the auditorium and 450 in the balcony. The building was to have a steel frame with solid brick walls. The cinema was approved but the decision on the remainder was held back for a week. If you are of a certain age you will know that they were built.

The *Fife Free Press* of the 28th August carried details of the new Cinema as well as advising that the building would be formally opened on Monday the 30th by Provost Wilson. The article described the building as “outstanding in architectural design”. The design and general construction was carried out by a Glasgow firm,



Messrs Stellmacs Ltd. The frontage was described as massive and tasteful in design with the entrance hall featuring heavy glass wing doors, a terrazzo floor and brilliant lighting. The decoration of the auditorium “was in various shades of brown and orange and the first time patron would be struck by the spaciousness of the hall and its exceedingly comfortable and restful appearance”. The staircases and balcony also came in for praise with mention made of emergency stairs leading from each side of the balcony to the exits. The acoustics came in for praise, as did the equipment, the ventilation system and the neon lighting.

Once again the prime source of information was difficult to decipher and impossible to reproduce but the local contactors numbered only two. The painting and decoration was carried out by J.C. Rolland of 27 Kirk Wynd (more on him when we come to the Raith) and James Black from the Esplanade executed the plumbing work. Given the main contractors were Glasgow based it is perhaps no surprise that the bulk of the trades were based there.



The opening ceremony was before an invited audience and Provost Wilson spoke well. His speech was heavily laced with the progress of Kirkcaldy over the last 40/50 years. He covered the tramways which had now been replaced by the motor bus. He mentioned the hundreds of motor cars now on the streets and the invention of the wireless now in many homes.

Mention was made of there only being one entertainment hall for many years – the Corn

Exchange and how education had once been the province of the privileged. “These were the conditions they had lived through but he did not think that the younger generation would tolerate what the older generation had to tolerate. In the old days life was a struggle and there was little time for relaxation and there were few attractions offered with which to fill spare time. Nowadays, they had many health-giving, useful and instructive, entertainments. Hours of work were being defined and where possible limited and the hours of leisure had been found to be as important as the hours of work. Now a greater number of halls and places of entertainment are throughout the town. What has caused this change? The multiplication of places of entertainment is the effect of something and not the cause of it.

That something is the demand of the people for a fuller life, a life yielding not merely the daily bread but entertainment, instruction and the benefits of a greater breadth of viewpoint. How better can these wants be satisfied that through the instrumentality of the cinema?

The cinema was declared open and the audience then watched a screening of “*Feather your Nest*” which featured George Formby and Polly Ward. That first advertisement is reproduced here. This was a 1937 British comedy film which featured Formby's signature tune *Leaning on a Lamp-post*. The sound was produced by the R.C.A. Sound System which was said to be the best available and “the high standard of sound reproduction gave the same high quality as the leading theatres in England and America”.



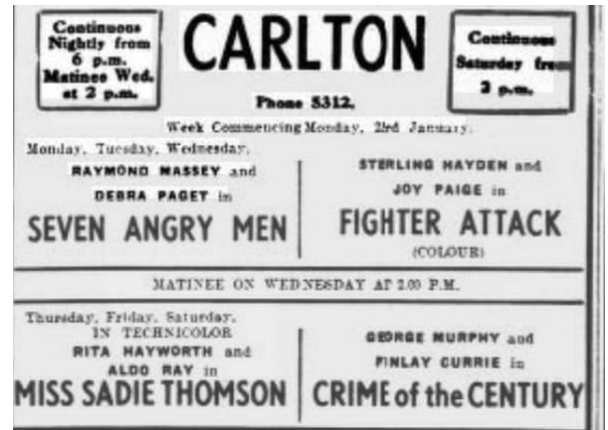
Moving on randomly we land on *The Fife Free Press* of the 27th March 1943. The Carlton and the Raith are both showing the same films the following week. The main attraction is Rita Hayworth, Victor Mature, and Carol Landis in *My Gal Sal* which was billed as a musical

comedy. Strange to relate the voices of both Hayworth and Mature were dubbed for this film. The male lead was originally planned to be played by Don Ameche but Mature won the part. Mature was married five times and was also engaged to Rita Hayworth, while Carol Landis was married four times. The curvy figure of Landis led to her nickname - The Chest. She committed suicide in 1948 allegedly because Rex Harrison, with whom she was having an affair, refused to leave his wife for her.

On the 1st April 1943 at Kirkcaldy Ice Rink – the Scottish All-Stars were playing the Canadian Navy with an advertisement appearing alongside that of the *Carlton*.

The Fife Free Press of the 21st January 1956 was selected at random for our look at the 1950s. The advertisement for the following week is shown here.

The film to comment on is the 1955 release of *Seven Angry Men* – which featured Raymond Massey and Debra Paget. It was a western with a difference in that it featured the story of John Brown – *he of the body lying mouldering in the grave*. Jeff Hunter also featured in the film and he went on to star in what is accepted as one of the finest westerns ever made – *The Searchers*. Massey created a dynasty with his children Anna and Daniel who were both significant actors. Many may recollect Raymond playing Dr Gillespie in *Dr Kildare*. He served in both World Wars and he has not one but two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. One for film and one for television.



Anna and Daniel Massey appeared in one film together – *The Vault of Horror* in 1973. Anna was at one time married to Jeremy Brett and Daniel to Penelope Wilton of *Downton Abbey* fame.

The Cinema was sold in the 1960s and both the *Raith* and *The Carlton* were snapped up by *Glencoe Automatics*. The last film shown in the *Carlton* was screened in August 1962. The company had been hiring the Ice Rink during the Summer to run bingo sessions but this was restrictive hence the decision to purchase the *Raith* as a full time bingo hall. When almost immediately the *Carlton* came on the market this led to a change of plans with *the Carlton* becoming the bingo hall and the *Raith* was converted to the famous ballroom.



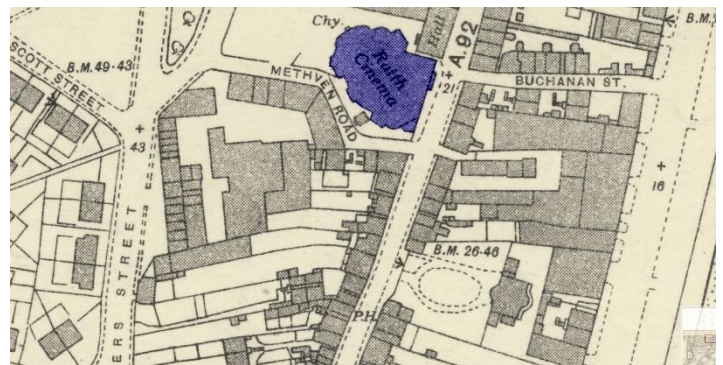
As mentioned earlier *Pleasureama* had bought out *Glencoe Automatics* in 1968 and they were still the owners when, in the early hours of the 23rd of November 1972, the building was consumed by flames which at one point rose 50 feet into the air. Despite the prompt attendance by five appliances from Fife Fire Service nothing could be done to save the building which in the interests of safety had to be demolished almost 25 years from its opening.

Of course, despite the thousands of films which were shown in the hall –

The Carlton is best known as hosting concerts by the Beatles in October 1963. While the Beatles concert certainly took place there are suggestions that others were planned with Gerry and the Pacemakers headlining on the 10th November of the same year. On the 26th November, The Searchers were to provide the headline act. Time has defeated us in trying to establish if the last two concerts did take place. We are certain some of the readers will know for sure.

The Raith Cinema

This in many ways will be the least interesting of these items. The reason is simply that they were sister cinemas. As we work our way through the research we get a clearer picture of how these cinemas came into being and who was behind them. *The Carlton*, as we have mentioned, was a company where the principal figures were the two Carlow brothers. *The Raith* was built on a vacant site on the corner of Links Street and Methven Road.



The starting point in securing clarity of the Raith/Carlton relationship was by reference to the obituary of Frank Carlow which appeared in the *Fife Free Press* of the 16th July 1976. We learn that both Carlow brothers came to Kirkcaldy in 1931. They started showing films in the Pathhead Halls and then *established the two companies to build and run The Carlton and The Raith*. Frank was the Manager of the Carlton with William holding the same position at the Raith. Both brothers hailed from Renton in Dunbartonshire and seem to have been excellent sportsmen. Frank was a sprinter and also played professional football with Partick Thistle and Dunbarton. William played his football at junior level with Duntocher Hibs. Duntocher Hibs produced many players who reached the senior ranks – the most famous being Paddy Crerand of Celtic, Manchester United and Scotland. The article notes that both cinemas were formed by the brothers in conjunction with various partners.

The Dundee Courier of the 8th March 1938 sets us on the track. *Raith Cinemas Ltd.*, were being formed with a capital of £10,000 in £1 shares. The

NEW SCOTS COMPANIES
 The following were among the new companies registered in Scotland this week:—
 Raith Cinemas, Ltd. Capital, £10,000 in £1 shares. Private company to carry on the business of exhibitors of moving pictures, &c. The first directors to be appointed by the subscribers. Subscribers—James Wilson, solicitor, 170 High Street, Kirkcaldy; John Connacher Rolland, decorator, Maryfield, Milton Road, Kirkcaldy.

first directors were given as John C. Rolland of Maryfield, Milton Road, Kirkcaldy, and James Wilson, a solicitor of 170 High Street, Kirkcaldy. This was the offices of Gibson and Spears, a well established

local firm of solicitors. John C. Rolland was involved with the construction of the *Carlton* so the brothers may well have sown the seeds of joining with them at that point, or, as Rolland was also heavily involved in the construction of Dunfermline Ice Rink he may well have had an eye for opportunities himself.

By the 30th July the *Fife Free Press* was carrying an advert for joiners which had been inserted by Thomas Menzies (Builders) Ltd. Applicants were to come to the building site for the cinema. This suggests that Menzies would probably be the main contractor.

On the 22nd September 1938 the *Dundee Courier* reported that a Kirkcaldy man had been badly burned about the face and arms when laying tarmac on the foundations of the cinema. He was David McLean, aged 47 of Balsusney Road.

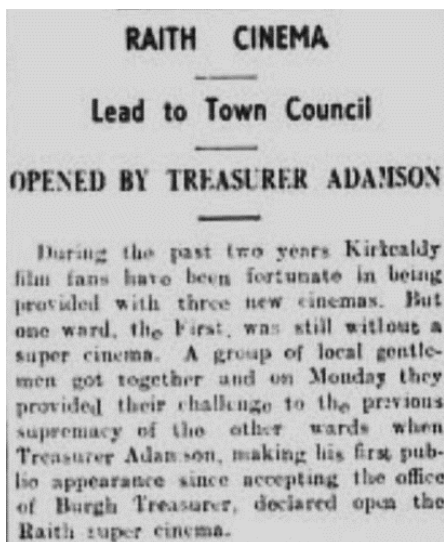
The cinema was certainly built quickly as the *Fife Free Press* of the 3rd of December advised that Provost Wilson would be opening the building on Monday the 5th. This, in many articles, has been taken as gospel but, in fact, it was Treasurer Andrew Adamson who carried out the ceremony. The Provost had to call off due to a bereavement.

The Dundee Courier of the same day in which we unearthed the story of Tommy Durling provided some further information. The brothers had been involved in a cinema in Renton before they came to Kirkcaldy. Mr William Carlow was taking over as Manager at the Raith and clearly he had sufficient experience for the task. It was estimated that the cinema had cost £20,000 to construct.

The Fife Free Press of the 10th December carried a report on the opening ceremony and details of the building. It was described as “having a commanding appearance

“Provost Wilson has delegated to me the very pleasant duty of declaring open the latest addition to the amenities, Raith Cinema, and I would like to say after the lead given by the gentlemen responsible for such a beautiful building, that the Town Council will seriously see the possibilities of restoring this part of the burgh.”

externally, with the interior appointments in keeping with the first impressions, as it is very tastefully decorated, the comfort of the patrons having been a primary consideration and it can be truly said that the people of the First Ward have a building of which they can be proud”.



Treasurer Adamson remarked that “so well educated were the patrons of cinema's today that they expected more than a comfortable seat and a well ventilated hall. They demanded the best in reproduction and the latest type of *Photophone Talking System* which had been installed gave well nigh perfect reproduction”. He also mentioned that the Council may well look at improvements to this part of the town thanks to the splendid new building. He also felt that the inhabitants should thank the gentlemen responsible for initiating the idea of a cinema in Links Street.

George Menzies spoke, on behalf of the builders, giving praise to the fact that the work was completed in six months and also paid tribute to the architect – a Mr McKessock. Treasurer Adamson was presented with a silver salver as a memento of the occasion.

The large audience then saw a screening of *Stepping Toes* with Hazel Ascot. Hazel was a tap-dancing child star of the 1930s billed as the British Shirley Temple. Hazel made two films before abandoning her theatrical career.

The advertisement is shown here which also indicates that Laurel and Hardy will soon be featured.



With our first random choice we landed on the *Fife Free Press* of the 5th April 1947 and the format shows the cinemas advertising together, having the same masthead and showing the same films. The main attraction was *King of the Stallions with Nakoma* as the leader of a pack of wild horses. In this western

both Indians and cowboys wanted the horse who was friendly to neither side. Victor Daniels, known professionally as Chief Thundercloud, was the human star. This was a little unusual as he was known mainly as a character actor. That said, he was the first to play Tonto on screen – the Native-American companion of the Lone Ranger. By the time it came to television the part was played by Jay Silverheels.

On Saturday, the 9th December 1950, *The Fife Free Press* recorded that Mr J. Allan of 120 Links Street, Kirkcaldy, the cinema's projectionist, had been selected to receive the Projectionist's Merit Award from British Gaumont. It seems to be quite a prestigious award.

On Wednesday, the 30th December 1959, the *Leven Mail* carried the advert for the Raith Cinema's offering over the New Year. It was *Green Mansions* which featured Audrey Hepburn, Anthony Perkins and Lee J. Cobb. The advertisement is shown here. The film was a 1959 adventure/romance with Audrey as the star – hardly surprising as she was married to the director at the time – Mel Ferrer. It was Anthony Perkins who, in 1960, played Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Lee J. Cobb is a man who could bring menace and aggressive behaviour to the screen. He played Johnny Friendly in *On the Waterfront* and appeared in the *Virginian* on the small screen.



The Leven Mail of the 25th April 1962 carried the last advertisement for the Raith Cinema which could be traced. It was for John Gavin starring in “*The Imitation of Life*”. However, the item at the foot shows what is about to happen to the *Raith Cinema*. The silver screen is dead – long live the bingo

hall. The Carlow brothers ran the two cinemas from inception until closure – quite a remarkable record.

The *Raith Cinema* has not burnt down. Having been a luxury cinema, an

iconic ballroom and a bingo hall, it still stands today as the Rhema Church. The building remains the last man standing in Kirkcaldy's list of 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 King's Theatre Kirkcaldy was of immense help in terms of the attempts to save the Theatre of that name.

Any opinions expressed in the article do not represent the views of Kirkcaldy Civic Society but that of the article's author.