

Malton and Norton Cinemas

Introduction

Randall Williams was well known throughout Britain as the 'King of Showmen' and in the Stage Newspaper, 19 Nov 1891 it reports that 'his famous Cinematograph will visit Malton during the 'hirings'. This was possibly the first ever moving picture show to have taken place in the town. In 1897 Randall was invited to exhibit his show in London at the Victorian Era Exhibition as part of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and in the November

of that year he brought his Cinematograph and Animated Pictures Exhibition show to Malton, again during the Malton hirings. Randall Williams died in 1898 but the Monte family carried on the show in Randall's name for many years afterwards and they continued to visit Malton where both the Randall William's bioscope and the Monte Williams' Razzle Dazzle show were shown.

The Palace, Norton

In 1904 a three-month theatrical licence was granted to the Thespian Theatre in Bark Knotts' Field [1]. In February 1909 a fierce gale blew the Waterloo Theatre down in the same field, perhaps this was the same theatre but with a name change! [2] On the 15 Nov 1912, many of the country roads around the twin towns were flooded and crowds gathered on Norton Bridge to watch the swirling waters. Looking towards Welham Road they could see the newly-erected picture palace was surrounded by water. [3] On 21st December 1912 Norton Magistrates granted a licence for a 'Cinematograph Hall' on a field, in Welham Road, Norton. The licence was in the name of Mr. Herbert Butler and it became known as the Palace. So, it seems that the first cinema in Norton and Malton stood in Bark Knotts Field where the Clothing Factory was later built.

By 1918, after the war, the Palace had been purchased by Walter Ernest Coldwell. In December 1922 he was advertising 'Wanted – Small Revues,

Pantos, Dramas, Combinations ... COLDWELL. Pal, Norton, Malton [4] In the Daily Mail dated 1 April 1927 it was reported that Coldwell had been a member of the North Riding Constabulary 1906-7 and after leaving the force he married the widow of a licensee in Malton. The inn in question could have been the Crown and Anchor that was on Castlegate near the workhouse as he was landlord there in 1909 and is shown as such in the 1911 census.

There was a fire at the picture palace in the early hours of 1 August 1923 [5]. The Malton Fire Brigade fought the blaze for six hours but the fire had got such a hold that the building was gutted with the exception of the cinema operator's room. The building was still owned at this time by Coldwell but was leased to Messrs. Watson and Weatherby. While it was covered by insurance the Vaudeville Company that were currently the entertainment in situ were not. They lost scenery, property and personal belongings leaving the members with only the clothes they stood up in.

The Majestic Picture Theatre, Norton

TEL. 173

THE MAJESTIC

THE HIGH-WATER MARK
OF MALTON'S ENTERTAINMENTS

THE ONLY CINEMA IN THE DISTRICT WITH T
3 ESSENTIALS—

EXCELLENT PICTURES — DELIGHTFUL MUSIC — COMFORT

NOW SHOWING — **“THE ROLLING ROAD.”**
A Rollicking Story of the Sea.

WEEK COMMENCING MARCH 19TH, 1928

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

“The Woman who Squandered Men”

A remarkable story of an exotic wife who plays with men's affections.
Men were her playthings—she used them relentlessly.

Comedy. — Gaumont Graphic.

ALL THE WEEK!

Special Engagement of
CONNIE DESMOND
The Sweet and Refined Soubrette,
In Songs and Novelty Dances.

EACH EVENING AT 6-50 and 9- p.m. } } COMPLETE CHANGE OF PROGRAMME
THURSDAY.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

MADGE BELLAMY IN
The Reckless Sex

Astounding adventures of a stranded actress and a rich man's son.
A stirring picture with a terrific climax.

Comedy. — Gaumont Graphic.

Music by the Popular Majestic Orchestra.
Musical Director—Mr A. WEBB (VIOLIN).

Continuous Performance from 6-30 p.m. MATINEE, SATURDAY, 2 p.m.
PRICES OF ADMISSION—

5d., 9d. Circle 1/- and 1/3 (including Tax).

Malton Messenger, 17 March 1928

At the time of the fire which destroyed the Palace, the building of the new purpose-built cinema in Church Street, the Majestic Picture Theatre, must have been well under way. These circumstances could have been seen as suspicious as it was later

shown that Coldwell was indeed a dubious character. In 1927 he was given a prison sentence for receiving stolen goods which he sold on the market stall he then ran at Scarborough [6].

The site was previously the show ground of R. Yates & Sons, used for agricultural implements. This cinema was erected by a small private limited company for £15,000, had seating for 800 people and was one of the best equipped in the north. It was officially opened on the 19 November 1923 by Admiral Sir Guy Gaunt, presented by Mr. W E Puckering. Gaunt apologized to a large audience for the fact that when he was asked to open the ceremony two months previously, he had been an MP for Buckrose, now he was only 'Gaunt' but hoped to become an MP once again. He said that he expected the Picture Theatre to run entirely British productions as the British could do a better job of it. The afternoon performance raised £31.13s.5d. for the Malton and Norton Cottage Hospital. [7]

In April 1928 an announcement appeared in the London Gazette stating that the Majestic Picture Theatre (Malton) Ltd could not by reason of its liabilities continue its business and would therefore be voluntarily wound up. [8] It is unclear as to who owned this company. At this stage the Majestic may have been already under the same ownership as the Exchange Cinema in Malton or perhaps the owner(s) of the Exchange cinema bought the Majestic from the receivers as a result of the following advertisements placed by the receivers in 1931. The second advertisement seems more descriptive about the cinema! There may have been activities to try and 'save' the Majestic as it would seem the receivers took 3 years from the resolution to wind-up until advertising the cinema for auction.

NORTON AND MALTON, YORKSHIRE

To Financiers, Cinema Proprietors, Company
Promoters, Speculators, and Others

THE MAJESTIC CINEMA

Pursuant to instructions from R. Crampton, Esq.
(of Messrs. Crampton and Hunter, York), the
Receiver to the Debenture Holders of the Majestic
Picture Theatre (Malton), Ltd. (in Voluntary Liquidation).

To be Sold by Auction by

EDWARD WALKER, F.A.I., at the ROYAL
STATION HOTEL, YORK, on THURSDAY, 23rd
JULY, 1931, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, subject
to Conditions of Sale, all that

EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE AND WELL-BUILT
MODERN (1923)

PICTURE THEATRE

known as

THE MAJESTIC CINEMA

Having a total SEATING CAPACITY for 850 and
Situating midway between
NORTON and MALTON
(with TWO LOCK-UP SHOPS),

Together with the Furnishings, Fixtures and Fittings,
Central Heating Apparatus, Electric Light Installa-
tion, Screens and Scenery.

2 KAYLEE No 6 INDOMITABLE MIRRORARC
MACHINES AND EQUIPMENT.

FLATHER'S GENERATORS, SWITCHBOARDS,
DIMMER

SLIDE LANTERN, Etc.

For Further Particulars apply to

The Auctioneer, EDWARD WALKER, F.A.I., 7 Blake
Street, York.

The Receiver, R. CRAMPTON, Esq., Coppergate
Chambers, York

The Solicitors, Messrs, PUCKERING and COOPER,
National Provincial Bank Chambers, York
Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 4 July 1931

NORTON AND MALTON, YORKSHIRE

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EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE AND WELL-BUILT
MODERN (1923)

PICTURE THEATRE

known as

THE MAJESTIC CINEMA

Built on the American Egg-shaped Principle
having a
SEATING CAPACITY of 850.

And

STAGE ADAPTABLE FOR CONCERT PARTIES

Situating mid-way between Norton and Malton.

The Theatre has, since its erection in 1923, been
Well patronised by the inhabitants of Norton and
Malton and the surrounding districts, covering a very
large area and population.

Silent films have been shown, but should "Talkie"
Pictures be introduced, unquestionably the receipts
Could be materially increased.

The Theatre will be offered together with the whole

Of the Furnishings and Equipment, Fixtures and
Fittings, Central Heating Apparatus, Electric Light
Installation, Screens and Scenery.

2 KAYLEE No 6 INDOMITABLE MIRROR-
ARC MACHINES and the usual ACCESSORIES

FLATHER'S GENERATORS, SWITCHBOARDS,
DIMMER, SLIDE LANTERN, Etc.

Also

All that PIECE OF LAND situate at the back of the
Theatre, reserved for Extension to the Stage should
The occasion arise.

There are ample Exits and Fire Appliances with ex-
cellent water supply from the town mains.

TWO EXCELLENT MODERN LOCK-UP SHOPS with
FRONTAGES TO THE MAIN STREET,
Which are let at remunerative rentals.

The Theatre may be inspected at any time on Appli-
cation to the Manager

For Further Particulars apply to

The Auctioneer, EDWARD WALKER, F.A.I., 7 Blake
Street, York.

The Receiver, R. CRAMPTON, Esq., Coppergate
Chambers, York

The Solicitors, Messrs, PUCKERING and COOPER,
National Provincial Bank Chambers, York

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 11 July 1931

The Exchange Cinema, Malton



'Pay Day' was a 1922 short film written by, starring and directed by Charles Chaplin

Malton Messenger, 6 November 1923

The Palace in Norton was well attended, but Malton did not have a cinema. The popularity of this new entertainment was such that Malton just had to

The Palace, Malton

In September 1932 Raymond Read, manager of the Exchange Picture Hall collapsed and died suddenly in Newbiggin, Malton and the cinemas were left in the hands of his brother Cecil [11]. In 1933 Cecil expanded the Malton cinema, the work being carried out by James Brodie of Pudsey and it was renamed, 'The Palace'. The art deco features that can still be seen today can be attributed to that

Malton and Norton Cinemas from the 1950s

Cecil Read lived at 27 The Mount and died in 1948 leaving £47,000 – a large sum of money at the time. Cecil very generously left in his will, £5 to each employee for every year that they had worked in either cinema. He also left £1 a week, free of tax, to Maurice Potter 'in appreciation of his long and valued services on my behalf.' [12]

In 1949 both cinemas were sold, purchased for £51,250 by Eskay Ltd, a company which owned 14

have a cinema too! In September 1914, it was reported that 'The building of the new Picture House in Yorkersgate, on the site of the Corn Exchange, is now proceeding apace. The demolition is practically complete, and the sites of two cottages have been taken in at the back.' [9]

Attempts had been made to gain a cinematograph licence at least since 1912 and finally three years later this was granted and the cinema was opened as The Exchange Picture Hall on 13 Feb 1915 with the film, "Brewster's Millions" [10] It was one of the early permanent cinemas which became popular at that time especially as they were seen as respectable places for women to go, unlike music halls. After war was declared in 1914, films such as "War Maps" and "Pathe's Gazette" were shown and tickets were 3d, 6d and 1/-.

The owners of the Exchange cinema were brothers Raymond Dawson Read of Broughton Rise in Malton and Cecil Searle Read. The family had a tailors and outfitters business in Saville street and the Market place, established by their father Edward Read (see 1911 census and trade directories).

time. A little more about the design features of the cinema can be seen on the [British Listed Buildings website](#). As well as films, other events were held there such as the first Malton Beauty Queen contest, staged by the Chamber of Commerce in 1934, and various stage productions were performed here.

other cinemas in Derbyshire and Nottingham. The auction took only seven minutes! [13]

The managing director of this circuit was Herbert Elton. Eskay produced joint programmes for the two cinemas showing films such as 'Springfield Rifle' starring Gary Cooper, 'The Crimson Pirate' with Burt Lancaster, and 'Never Let Me Go' with Clark Gable and Gene Tierney.

In 1955 after widescreen cinemascope films with stereophonic sound had arrived the Palace was fitted with a 30ft screen but this seemed to herald the death knell of the Majestic as in the same year it was finally declared unviable and closed, later demolished and eventually replaced by a petrol station.

In the 1960s Star Cinemas and Associated Companies took over the remnants of the Eskay Circuit and in 1980s the Palace closed as attendances had gradually declined as the new multi-screen cinemas started to appear in the larger towns.

For a while The Palace became a bingo hall, then in 1987 the ground floor was converted into 'The

Lanes' a small shopping mall and a smaller cinema was constructed in the old upper circle. In 1998 the cinema closed once again but it was refurbished with two screens and opened its doors once again in 2002 by Jeremy Powell; the Worldwide Shopping Mall was opened by Malcolm Chalk. Today they both still thrive and the cinema enjoys three screens although one is exceedingly small seating about 12 people.

The freehold of the building is owned by Fitzwilliam Estate and the long leasehold 1933-2032 is owned by Tulip Ltd, a property company owned by an Iranian family based in Teheran with managing agents in London.

Article appearing in the Malton Messenger just before the opening of the Exchange Picture Hall

Malton Messenger, 6 February 1915

All local lovers of the cinematograph will learn with interest that the new Exchange Picture Hall at Malton (pending an order from the Malton magistrates on Saturday, the 13th inst.), is to be opened on Monday, February 15th. For months past, workmen have been engaged on the deconstruction of the premises so well known as the Corn Exchange. As result of their labours, a complete transformation has been effected, and those who were familiar with the cold and cheerless conditions of the old building would hardly recognise it in its altered and comfortable appearance. The transformation is, indeed, striking, as the Corn Exchange was renowned for its coldness and forbidding aspect, and was regarded as something in the nature of a 'white elephant.' The corn merchants would have none of it, at Martinmas it was given a wide berth by the majority of the farm servants, and it was relegated to the use of politicians of all shades of opinion, and for the holding of jumble sales or occasionally a poultry and cat show. Now it is pleasing to see the building performing a useful work in the town once more. The work of restoration has been complete in every respect and no expense has been spared. Fortunately, the alterations have not been confined to the interior, and the external improvements are a decided acquisition to the appearance of Yorkersgate. The heavy forbidding front has given place to an attractive facade, which, when illuminated, will prove a brilliant site. The entrance is charmingly arranged, being fitted with a mahogany front with swinging doors, whilst the floor is paved with black and white marble tiles, and the decorations of the entrance hall are tastefully carried out in white and gold. The interior presents a scene of luxury and comfort, and fully justifies the opinion of being one of the most up-to-date picture houses in Yorkshire. The screen is situated at the street entrance of the building, and the floor is sloped sufficiently to allow of a clear view being obtained from any part of the house. Seating accommodation is provided for 500 persons, and tip-up seats, upholstered in red velvet, are provided. The proscenium is carpeted, and the decorations of the walls and ceiling are executed in taste and harmony, and are a credit to the contractors. The exits are six in number. The hall can be cleared in two minutes, and as a Malton magistrate described it, 'The hall is the safest in Yorkshire.' The premises are practically fireproof, and the inhabitants of the district need have no fear in attending. One of the comforts essential to every place of entertainment is the heating, and in this the management have been successful in installing gas radiators, which will keep the building perfectly warmed. The lighting arrangements also leave nothing to be desired. A powerful Westinghouse electric generator has been installed, and the electric lights have been tastefully arranged. One of the latest and best projectors has been secured, and with up-to-date pictures, which the management intend to provide, there is no doubt that the Exchange Picture Hall will prove a tremendous 'draw.' The services of Mrs. Saville have been secured as accompanist. It might be added that the building has been equipped with up-to-date sanitary arrangements. The work has been successfully carried out by the following:- Excavating and masonry, Mr. Anthony Lyons, Norton; Engine and electrical appliances, The Westinghouse Co.; Lighting, Mr. A. English, Leeds; and painting and decorating, Messrs. Allen Bros., Malton. In conclusion, a word or two about the 'bill of fare' may not be inopportune. The management intend to secure the most up-to-date pictures, and the opening of the hall is to be marked by the showing of two exclusives viz.,

'Brewsters Millions,' and the 'Lure of London.' A continuous programme is to be provided, which will be changed twice weekly, while a matinee will be given every Saturday afternoon. From the above it will be realised that the Exchange Picture Hall is well equipped in every way, and a successful future may be safely predicted for it.

References

The Stage Newspaper, 19 Nov 1891

A Cinema Miscellany Part 2, No 1 covering Malton,
Brian Hornsey

World's Fair, 1 Oct 1910

[1] The Yorkshire Evening Post, 21 March 1904

[2] The Yorkshire evening Post, 5 February 1909

[3] The Yorkshire Evening Post, 15 Nov 1912,

[4] The Stage, 7 December 1922

[5] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 2
August 1923

[6] The Hull Daily Mail, 1 April 1927

[7] The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 20
November 1923

[8] London Gazette 17 April 1928 issue 33376

[9] Malton Messenger, 19 September 1914

[10] Malton Messenger, 6 February 1915

[11] Leeds Mercury 26 September 1932

[12] Yorkshire Evening Post, 5 February 1949

[13] Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 25
March 1949