
Disclaimer: This document was written in 2000 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

- * Transcript ID: EC-95-182PL003
- * Scan ID: EC-95-182PL003
- * CCINTB Document ID: 95-182-14a-b
- * Number of pages: 3
- * Date sent: 13 October 2000
- * Transcribed by: Annette Kuhn/Standardised by Jamie Terrill
- * Format: Letter
- * Details: from Ellen Casey to Annette Kuhn
- * Notes: This transcription has rendered the original text as written, including some spelling and grammatical errors. Part of Ellen Casey's continued contributions, which includes other letters and an interview, the latter of which this letter provides further contexts for.

(Past and Present Group)
 (Local History Group)
 [redacted]
 [redacted]
 [redacted]
 Manchester M9 [redacted]
 13-10-2000

Dear Annette

Maybe I can explain why that interview is confusing and doesn't seem to make sense. At the time I had taken along a print which helped to point out where our local cinema was located and how close it was to my home. I have a spare print which I have enclosed and I hope I can explain again and make it easier to understand. It isn't shown on the print as it was laid back between the buildings. Behind the high boardings on the left ran the Lancashire Yorkshire Railway and from here it went underground and made its way under our little 'Cinny' towards its destination. The district was Collyhurst known as a slum part of Manchester. Sorry, I forgot to mention our little street was just situated around the corner of the block on the bottom right.

I would like to describe our wonderful little place of entertainment: it was a long narrow type of building with corrugated iron sides and roof, inside bare floors. The seating was mostly long wooden forms. The best seats were at the back, these were covered with material a little worse for wear, admission old currency 2d and 3d.

Not knowing any other than silent films in the 1920s we were still absolutely fascinated by the stars and what was shown. The only annoyance came if someone couldn't read—a friend or relative would read the captions out loud.

Late 1931 the cinema closed to be modernised and install sound equipment. This seemed to take ages. The other alternative was the next nearest cinema still showing silent films. Those days television or radio wasn't part of our

2

lives so desperation had set in, we depended so much on our local cinemas.

The cinema opened eventually with a new name: 'The Rex Cinema', to us still the 'Cinny'. I still remember the night of the grand opening. The length of the queue waiting to go inside must have been a mile long. As I was still at school I was accompanied by my gran. We were so excited to hear the 'Talkies' she made sure we were at the front.

We were sorry to lose the lady pianist who had been around quite a number of years providing the music, whatever suited the silent films. But the changes suited us fine. The Cinny had become more attractive now it had been modernised, also better films were being shown. At first we thought it was wonderful to hear and see the actors actually speaking until it started to break down, losing sound, picture or both. For a time I suppose it was only to be expected, it was still new. Another annoyance, the dense thick fog we had in the 1920s-30s would leak into the cinemas and along with the cigarette smoke the small screen would be difficult to see. I remember the very first musical to be shown that became a big hit, it starred Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell in 'Sunny Side Up'. The songs from the film became popular: one was the title song with 'I'm a dreamer, aren't we all' and 'If I had a talking picture of you'. The three songs were available on records from Woolworths and cost sixpence each (2½p). As my Gran had an old windup gramophone we were soon playing them over and over again. From then on I must have seen every musical shown up to 1939.

The start of the war brought along so many changes. Collyhurst has now been transformed—the seven cinemas that were around, all within walking distance, don't exist.

P.T.O

Sadly our little Cinny has now been taken over by a block of high-rise flats, but they have not blocked out my memories.

I have tried to explain how the 1930s became a time to remember. The all talking and dancing movies had become alive.

I hope other information can be obtained from the taped interview. Maybe I have written more than is needed, but I have enjoyed doing it.

Regards Ellen Casey