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- * Notes: This transcription has rendered the original text as written, including all spelling and grammatical errors. This essay was attached to an email and was sent in response to a request by Annette Kuhn for brief background details of her mother.

Joan Billinge nee Shedden

My mum was born in Florence Street in Birkenhead in 1924, the middle of three sisters. Her full name was Bertha Joan Daphne Shedden. She left school at 18 and became an office worker. She started her family in 1948. I'm sorry but neither myself or my siblings have any memories of mum's cinema going history but I found a list from 1947 which I've attached that shows the cinema was a huge interest, my calculation is 75 films seen across the year. She went with friends, her mum and boyfriends.

The main cinemas she went to were close to home but she also went to the Futurist and the Palais de Luxe in Liverpool. She mentions going to the Ritz in Birkenhead the day after it had reopened in January 1947 - it had been closed after bombs had hit it in 1940 killing 10 people. She wrote "looks nice, all flowers and mirrors and the attendants all very nice and polite, but, for how long, I wonder?" If the cinemas were full she would go to another so I don't think she was bothered about any particular genre.

I haven't any information on when she started going to the cinema but I do remember her telling me she was in the cinema when the end of the war was announced - the film was stopped to make the announcement and everybody stood to sing the national anthem before leaving- the same thing happened to announce the invasion of Europe on D Day in 1944. I can only presume that she was going regularly throughout the war.

CINEMAS ATTENDED

BIRKENHEAD

- Gaumont
- Ritz
- Empire
- Savoy
- Plaza
- Rio
- Piccadilly
- Super
- Royal
- Romilly
- Regent

LIVERPOOL

- Futurist
- Palais de Luxe

NEW BRIGHTON

- Trocadero

FILMS SEEN 1947

January

6th, Canyon Passage 14th, Monsieur Beaucaire 23rd, Smoky 28th, Without Reservation 29th, The Bride wore Boots and the Overlanders

February

5th, The Big Sleep and North West Trail 12th, No Leave No Love 15th, Great Expectations 18th, This Man is Mine 26th, Blue Skies and In Fast Company

March 1st, Dangerous Moonlight and Wanderers of the Wasteland 2nd, Three Little Girls in Blue 5th, The Dark Mirror 6th A Matter of Life and Death 10th, School for Secrets and Look up and Laugh 18th, Mrs Loring's Secret and Caravan Trails 25th, Mr Griggs Returns and The Wife of Monte Cristo 31st, Love Laughs at Andy Hardy and My Pal Trigger

April 10th, Monsieur Beaucaire 11th, A Kid from Brooklyn 15th, Calcutta 16th, Nocturne and Lady Luck 21st, Cross my Heart and Women aren't Angels 25th, My Favourite Brunette 29th, Piccadilly Incident

May 9th, Hungry Hill 14th, White Tie and Tails and Mr Big 30th, Under Nevada Skies and Green for Danger

June 11th California 19th Angel on my Shoulder 23rd, Song of the South and Little Mr Jim 25th, Dead Reckoning

July 8th, Hue and Cry and Home in Oklahoma 15th, While the sun Shines and Apology for a Murder 19th, Texas and Bring on the Girls 22nd, A Woman Destroyed and Riff Raff 28th, The Mysterious Mr Nicholson and The Secret Heart 30th, Moon over Burma and Easy Come Easy Go

August 2nd, Dear Murderer and The Ghost goes Wild 4th, Sea of Grass 9th, It Happened in Brooklyn 11th, 20th and 29th (unnamed)

September 3rd, The Ghost and Mrs Muir 8th, The Brothers 12th, The Other Love 16th, Wild Harvest 20th, Time, Place, Girl 23rd, Jassy 30th (unnamed)

October 1st, Angel and the Badman 14th (unnamed) November 21st, Where There's Life December 12th, Copacabana and Secret Mission 18th, Woman in the Hall and Romance of the West 27th, The Big Heart

Mum made a few notes about the films she saw. Mostly they were "quite good show," "decent," or "very good. Other comments were "lousy, Van Johnson terrible" (no leave no love) and "mouldy" (while the sun shines). She thought A Woman Destroyed was very good but it left her dying for a drink - it's about a woman falling into alcoholism!

I hope some of this information is helpful to you. I was amazed at the number of cinemas operating in such a small area. I also found a small book about the making of Gone with the Wind; it's missing its cover but I'd be happy to forward it if you send me the address.

Lindsey Billinge