
Disclaimer: This document was written in 1992 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.

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[redacted]

Paisley [redacted]

Renfrewshire

Dear Miss Kuhn,

First of all apologies for a ribbon which is acting up! You will have to put up with a red black blend, I'm afraid!

I was most interested in your appeal re. old movies and movie going generally in the Neville Garden programme this lunch-time I don't know if I can contribute really very much for you are likely to have many helpers, I should imagine. Anyway, [personal information redacted] (giving away my age more or less!) [personal information redacted] (where it then had 3 cinemas - none now) but also spent many holidays in Glasgow with my grandparents and there-fore frequented many of the Glasgow cinemas. They lived in Partick which pre-war had five cinemas: The Tivoli (Crow Rd) The Rosevale (now bingo) The New Partick (Vine St.) and now gone. The Western (it remained derelict as you probably know for many years across from Dowanhill St. and the Standard which many don't remember but was situated in Dumbarton Road (typewriter finally jammed. Sorry!) further east in Dumbarton Rd., near Church Street.

It is quite vivid to me the queues that were part of cinema-going even in the suburbs of Partick and Hillhead. "Double-bills" were the order of the day, plus travel, cartoon (always) and newsreel. And it was possible, I can recall, to be admitted to the "fleapits" of the Western and Standard with jam jars in lieu of pennies! This for a programme which could last more than 3 hours! -

I queued for probably two hours at least for "Gone with the Wind" when it appeared in the Regal. But the Paramount was "the cinema" (Odeon Renfield St.) for it had an undoubted

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atmosphere - but the Regal had the moveable organ for interval entertainment "The Picture House" (later Gaumont) had a marvellous foyer. I recall - as did the La Scala, with its restaurant.

I recall my [personal information redacted] and I queuing at the Paramount for "Victoria The Great" (1937?) - seeing it three times in the day - for a shilling! The queues would be along West Regent St. and down West Nile St. The same ritual we went through when "Sixty Glorious Years" brought Anna Neagle to reinforce the earlier box-office success!!

At Partick - the "New Partick" had for children the best Saturday morning programme imaginable - A western usually + Laurel & Hardy or George Formby + a serial with Larry Buster Crabbe, a cartoon, a travelogue & the newsreel, of course. But at any time the Vine St. cinema the best value anywhere - usually 4 hours in the evening! (Even in later years) What predominates in my recollection is the "[infinite variety]" of films. There was none of this irritating duplication of the same film being

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shown in different suburbs. You could be sure that the Grosvenor or Salon at Hillhead or the Commodore at Scotstoun would never be showing the same films Partick were showing.

In the war years, I still visited Glasgow a lot, meeting up now with friends - and we could virtually look the papers AND FIND your favourite actors. During a phase of following Marx Bros films, I recall making our way to the Prince's at Springburn (only a few pence in the tram!) to see a double-bill of two Marx Bros films. You could finish two westerns, or a combination of [illegible] + comedy or western, only musicals and the big epics tended to be 'single features'. Cinema-going was a compulsive habit then - now I never go. I have no idea what they are like as cinemas, but the range of horror upon horror is a complete fall-off. In all our years in Paisley (almost 20) we have been to the local Kelburne but once - and one other cinema but once. There is just no comparison

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with the old days.

I went less after the war, not that there was any marked deterioration - far from it! - but increasingly I went to the theatre more and more.

On my visits to Alloa (now working in [personal information redacted]), the three cinemas there did great business for many years. During the way, in two or three cinema it was absolutely necessary to book for a Saturday night no matter what was showing - still good films then, of course! Pre-war the [accent?] was on American films - post-war British came more and more to the fore - and rightly so! But I remember as a boy pre-war an uncle or aunt raging "we won't go to that one - it's British!"

Neville Garden was right about the "1/9ds" seats but not about the "popcorn" incidentally. That is an anachronism! All I can recall was usherettes serving ice-cream tubs and pokes of sweets. No counters, no fancy chocs and no popcorn... too noisy!!

How were put with "the smoke"

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in those days, I will never know! No one obviously complained, so we suffered with smarting eyes. Terrible at times, but still the cinema was the place to go!

If I can help you in other way please let me know. I think I must have been in 90% of the city's cinemas from Riddrie in the east to Dalmuir in the West.

Without doubt to go to the Paramount, La Scala, Regal or Ascot (Anniesland - later the Odeon, I think) were major events - and later the intimacy of the Cosmo (GFT) where "Hamlet" (Olivier) "Third Man" "Fallen Idol" first appeared to packed houses!

Yours Sincerely,

L. J. Stirling