

Valentina Bold
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Not on 'phone
3rd April 95

Dear Ms. Bold.

I thank you for your letter of 22nd March. Before answering your questions I should like to describe, briefly, Levenshulme as it is relevant to cinemas in 1930s.

Levenshulme, 3 1/2 miles south from the city centre, is the last suburb and borders on Stockport.

Longsight, 2 1/2 miles from the city centre was our next friendly neighbour.

The A6, London to Scotland cuts through Levenshulme and Longsight and comprises our shopping and former cinema area.

Levenshulme had 4 cinemas in 250 yds of the A6.

- NOW:-**
- IRISH CLUB/BAR PALACE - fleapit, but with a balcony
 - ANTIQUES WISE GRAND - long-but. single storey, raked floor.
 - LEISURE CENTRE ARCADIA - formerly a roller-skating rectangular
 - MECCA BINGO REGAL - mink. - single storey.
- REGAL - posh ABC balcony cinema built about 1936

DEMOLISHED the KINGSWAY built late 30's - very posh, - stage, organ, and music - hall acts between films. I saw Tommy Fields there, - Gracie Fields brother.

Longsight had 3 cinemas in 100 yds on A6.

- ALL DEMOLISHED FOR HEALTH CENTRE, LIBRARY SHOPS.**
- QUEENS - fleapit with balcony
 - SHAFTESBURY - long-but and balcony
 - KINGS THEATRE - literally a theatre with balcony
- I saw my first pantomime here.

DATE OF BIRTH 20 FEB. 1917. 13 years old in 1930
22 years old conscripted in 1939

FIRST VISIT. ... approx 6 years old - silent films.

REGULAR VISITS. 1927-1939. 9 years to 22 years old

CINEMAS VISITED All those on page but mainly
in Levenshulme.

I didn't visit city centre cinemas
until post-war as they were too expensive and
involved tram-rides and, later, bus-rides.

LEFT SCHOOL 1934 - aged 17 years.

FIRST JOB. THAT new ~~exciting~~ breed, office boy
One of five dominated by a one-armed
commissionaire. Weekly wage at 17
was $\frac{3}{6}^d = 3\frac{1}{2}$ pence.

MAIN OCCUPATIONS. - cost clerk, tax clerk and company
cashier.

I would welcome your questionnaire
to rationalise a sprawling subject.

Could I finish in recording the
cataclysm that turned me from an average cinema-
goer to an avid aficionado? I think when I was
9 or 10 and visited ill a family friend
unwittingly gave my mother a huge pile of
"PICTUREGOER"s to interest me. I was hooked and, on
return to fanatically-football health, bought
it every week. I joined the 'Picturegoer' Picture
club and amassed a collection of glossy sepia
postcards 6" x 4" of my idols. In later years
colorfully-colored cards became available but
were smaller, about 3" x 2", because of
the expense

The memories I recall of those
early years were that children's matinees
were Saturday afternoons, not mornings.
Performances were twice nightly

but my parents only allowed me to go to first house. When continuous performances came along it was a startling 'revolution'.

The early years saw programmes of many 'shorts' as opposed to the later "grand double bill". Shorts would consist of several animated cartoons (Felix the cat) a short of some (unknown to us) big American band, Pathé or British Movietone News, and a James Fitzpatrick's Itavlogue, later satirised by Peter Sellers in "Romantic Balham". Inevitably there were Pearl and Dean publicity shorts listing local traders. The advantage of a collection of shorts was that, by the law of averages you liked ~~some~~ - you didn't suffer too long. With 'grand double bills' if one film was a stinker you really suffered.

Programmes were changed mid-week and the choice of films, 4 cinema times 2 films = 8, meant many visits per week to see our favourites. If through shortage of cash we had to miss any, we crossed our fingers and saved up our pennies in the hope that we could see it at a future date in Longsight.

You can see why I need your questionnaire to crystallise my remembrings!

Yours sincerely

AD Houlston