

**MILL ROAD HISTORY PROJECT
BUILDING REPORT**

85–89 Mill Road, Cambridge

Sturton Town Hall (1882–1910)

The Empire (1910–16)

The Kinema (1916–85; unused 1985–97)

Scholars House (1997–present)



Simon Middleton and Allan Brigham

The Mill Road History Project was officially launched in 2013 under the umbrella of Mill Road Bridges¹ to study the heritage of Mill Road, Cambridge, its buildings (residential, commercial and industrial), institutions and community. It was supported by a two-year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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Cover picture: The Kinema on Mill Road, sometime during the 1960s, with the film 'Seven Seas to Calais' on the weekly programme.

¹ 'Mill Road Bridges seeks to grow and maintain the community spirit, heritage and rich cultural diversity of the Mill Road area by improving the flow of information between and about individuals, businesses, voluntary organisations and local stakeholders.'

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Abbreviations

CA:	Cambridgeshire County Archives (Shire Hall)	CIP	<i>Cambridge Independent Press</i>
CC:	Cambridgeshire Collection (Central Library)	CN	<i>Cambridge News</i>
CDN	<i>Cambridge Daily News</i>	CTA:	Cinema Theatre Association
CEN	<i>Cambridge Evening News</i>	CWN	<i>Cambridge Weekly News</i>
		EGM	Extraordinary General Meeting
		STLHC	Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company

NOTE

Simon Middleton produced this report in 2014 and 2015. Allan Brigham conducted initial research by gathering material from the readers of the *Cambridge Evening News* (CEN) in 1996. Joe McIntyre edited several drafts of the document. No site visit has been made since there is no trace of the original hall.

Location of site

85–89 Mill Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 2UB. — The site is located on the north side of Mill Road opposite St Barnabas Church and close to Ditchburn Place. There have been two significant buildings on the site: the first, best known as 'The Kinema' cinema and later a bingo club, was built behind an existing terrace of houses in 1882; the second, a student housing facility known as 'Scholars House' (Figure 1), was constructed in 1997, following a significant period of dereliction.

National Grid reference

TL 46205 57893 Latitude: 52° 11' 59.5500" N, Longitude 0° 8' 16.4256" E



Figure 1 – Scholars House, August 2015
(photograph by Simon Middleton)

INTRODUCTION

The cover picture (CC: I.L. K57 10647) shows the entrance to the Kinema. The door to the Gladstone Liberal Club is on the right; City Bargains occupies Nos 87 to 89. To the left is the open door of No. 85, which was a draper's shop at the time.

Seven Seas to Calais,² the film that was playing at the time that the photograph was taken, was released in the United Kingdom by Metro Goldwyn Mayer in 1963, although the photograph may postdate its initial release by several years. The *café* sign in the window of 87 to 89 is a remnant of its use prior to the opening of City Bargains and can still be seen in pictures taken twenty years later.



Figure 2 – An 1888 Ordnance Survey map of Cambridge (CA)

The map in Figure 2 shows the entrance to Sturton Town Hall, which extends onto the pavement on the north side of Mill Road. No. 48 and the Durham Ox public house are to the left; Nos 46 and 45 are to the right. No. 47 was converted into the entranceway to the hall downstairs, with the Liberal Reading Rooms upstairs.

² Internet Movie Database, *Il Dominatore dei Sette Mari (Seven Seas to Calais, 1962)*
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056396>

OUTLINE HISTORY OF SITE AND OCCUPATION

1881–82: the Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company

The area bounded by East Road, Mill Road, Newmarket Road and the railway line developed in a piecemeal fashion throughout the second half of the 19th century and became commonly known as Sturton Town. Its rapid growth was, for the most part, unplanned and led some to consider it a degenerate area. St. Matthew's Church (1866) and St. Barnabas' Church (1880) were built in order to support the spiritual needs of residents while various co-operatives and temperance societies were established to address their physical wants.

On 4 February 1881, local journalist James Drake Digby (1837–99)³ called a meeting in The Prince of Wales public house on Gwydir Street, at the request of 'all those having strong Liberal feelings'. The *Cambridge Independent Press (CIP)* reported that 'it was unanimously resolved ... that it is eminently desirable that a branch of the Reform Club and Junior Liberal Club should be established in Sturton Town'; a subcommittee was formed to consider the details, with Digby acting as secretary.⁴

At a meeting a week later it was resolved that a 'joint stock company be formed for the purpose of erecting a hall with reading-rooms, committee-rooms, and other conveniences for a club. It was further agreed that it should be called the Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company (Limited)'. An initial capital cost of £5,000 was agreed with the sum to be raised through the sale of £1.00 shares, a considerable number of which were taken up at the meeting.⁵

A company prospectus was printed and released on 18 February. After acquiring the freehold on a property, an initial public meeting was held in St. Matthew's Schoolroom on Norfolk Street on 25 March. Cambridge M.P.s, William Fowler (Cambridge) and Hugh Shield (University) attended, to lend their support to the initiative; the meeting itself was well attended, with standing room only for many. The *CIP* gave a detailed report of proceedings, noting that

[it] was deemed by the working men of the district themselves as most desirable, inasmuch as they find it impossible after their day's work is ended to travel down to the Reform Club-rooms for the sake of reading the newspapers and discussing political and local questions.⁶

A 99-year lease on a plot opposite the Mill Road Workhouse was offered by Mr Bays but it was decided that it would be of greater financial advantage to acquire a freehold property. A site opposite St. Barnabas' Church, owned by a Mr R. Bird of London and containing three cottages, then numbered 46, 47 and 48 Mill Road, was subsequently secured by Robert Sayle on 4 April.

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of shareholders was held in the Workman's Hall, Fitzroy Street on 25 April and again reported in detail by the *CIP*. About forty shareholders attended to approve the new articles of the company, although some

³ See 'Key People', p. 29 below.

⁴ *CIP*, 12 February 1881.

⁵ *CIP*, 19 February 1881.

⁶ *CIP*, 2 April 1881.

were surprised to hear that they were being asked to take shares in a commercial company, which was expected to pay dividends and be a sound investment, as it was common for subscriptions in such ventures to be taken with no expectation of a return.⁷ A second EGM was held on 10 May 1881, to confirm the resolutions of the previous meeting.⁸

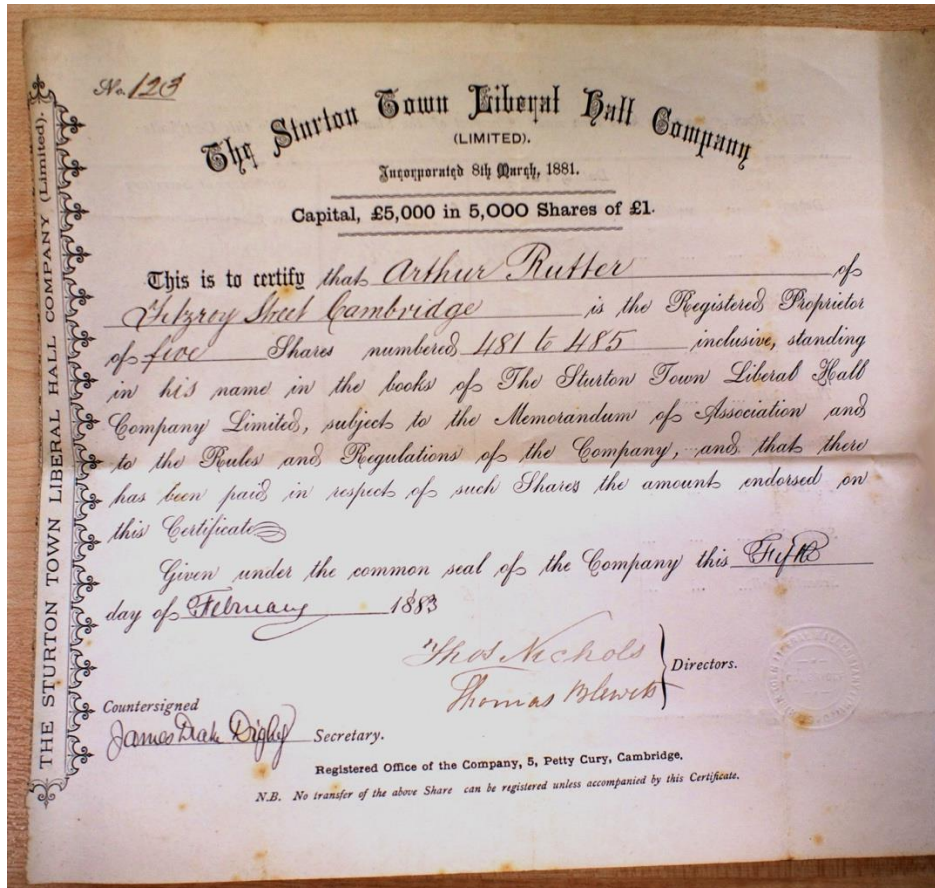


Figure 3 – A share certificate from 1883
(CA: R89/41)

The first ordinary meeting of shareholders was held at the Sturton Street Schoolroom on 8 June, which included a report of a provisional directors' meeting, held two days earlier, and a clarification of the decision to take a freehold rather than a leasehold site. It was noted that, with the rapid growth of Romsey Town and the fact that nearly 60% of all Cambridge residents were to be found in the parish of St. Andrew the Less, it was essential that the new facilities be built without delay. The first company directors were formally elected at the meeting.⁹

A third EGM was held at the Coffee Tavern, Mill Road, on 3 August 'for the purpose of passing a special resolution to enable the directors to proceed forthwith with the erection of the hall', which would seat up to 800 people and be accessible from both Gwydir Street and Mill Road. The motion was carried unanimously.¹⁰

⁷ CIP, 30 April 1881.

⁸ CIP, 14 May 1881.

⁹ CIP, 11 June 1881.

¹⁰ CIP, 6 August 1881.

The second annual fête of the Reform Club and Junior Liberal Club was held in the Corn Exchange on Thursday 25 August. A model of the Sturton Town Liberal Hall made by Mr Burwick of Clarendon Street, showing both the proposed exterior and interior of the building proved to be a popular 'source of attraction'.¹¹ A report of the event noted that building costs had been estimated at £900 and that the 80-foot by 40-foot hall would be built behind the existing cottages on Mill Road. The occupancy of the existing tenants would not be disturbed, but they would receive a month's notice of the building work and were expected to surrender part of their gardens.

A cornerstone ceremony was held on 10 October and, after Mr Hugh Shield M.P. laid the foundation stone, attendees who wished to lay a brick themselves were invited to do so. A viewing platform was erected on adjoining property and the model of the hall was again on display. Access to the site was via Gwydir Street and through one of the cottages that was unoccupied at the time. Around 1,400 Liberal electors attended a public meeting held in the Guildhall later the same evening.¹²

On the 18 October the Board of Improvement Commissioners met, finalised and approved the plans for the new hall.¹³

With building work under way, No. 47 Mill Road was purchased on 17 January 1882. The lower floor of the middle cottage was rebuilt as the main entrance to Sturton Town Liberal Hall, while the upper floor became the committee rooms for the Working Men's Liberal Club and, later, the Gladstone Liberal Club.

With preparations for the hall's opening well underway, an advert was placed in *The Era* theatrical newspaper on 13 May 1882, calling for companies to play in the new hall:

Cambridge – Sturton Town Hall – Can be LET to First-class Companies and Responsible Managers for Stage Plays. Terms and dates on application to Mr J. D. Digby, Mortimer-villas, Parker's-piece, Cambridge.

1882–85: the Theatre Royal, Sturton Town

William Fowler M.P. officiated at the opening of the Sturton Town Hall on Whit Bank Holiday Monday 29 May 1882. A celebratory dinner was held in the new building the following evening, tickets for which were available for two shillings each.

The opening was covered as part of a detailed article in the 3 June edition of *CIP*,¹⁴ which noted that the completion of the scheme, including the building of committee and reading rooms, was dependent on further share uptake and the successful, regular rental of the hall. The same edition of the *CIP* featured the first advertisement for performances at the hall, while the *Arrangements for June* section included the following items:

¹¹ *CIP*, 27 August 1881.

¹² *CIP*, 15 October 1881.

¹³ *CIP*, 22 October 1881.

¹⁴ *CIP*, 3 June 1882.

Saturday June 3rd – R.C.D.A Entertainment at Sturton Town Hall.

Sunday June 4th – Blue Ribbon Army Services, at Sturton Town Hall, at 3pm and 8.15 pm.

Saturday 10th – Popular Concert at Sturton Town Hall, at 8.

The Blue Ribbon Army were a group of evangelical Protestants who promoted temperance. The times of their services were also included in the regular *Town and County News* section:

New Hall, Sturton Town. – Evangelistic services are to be held at the new hall, Mill-road, every Sunday at 3 and 8.15 pm. until further notice. The services are in connection with the Blue Ribbon Army.

On 5 August the Mayor of Cambridge refused to grant a liquor licence for the hall.

Although the name Sturton Town Hall was written over the entrance of the building and used initially in notices and adverts during 1882, before long it was commonly known as the Theatre Royal, Sturton Town.

1885–1910: the Salvation Army

A major problem arose in April 1885 when local magistrates refused to renew the licence for theatrical productions. No formal reason was recorded, although there were many theories at the time concerning the underhand practices that had led to this turn of events.¹⁵ With the success of the hall dependent on regular, profitable use, it was essential to consider alternatives.

After several previous refusals, the Salvation Army were granted a short let in December 1884. On 6 June 1885, this was changed to a more long-term agreement. An initial 12-month arrangement was to continue for over two decades. The hall was still used in the evenings by the Liberal Club, and others, for public meetings, occasional concerts and tea dances, but the majority of time was given over to Salvation Army meetings and events.

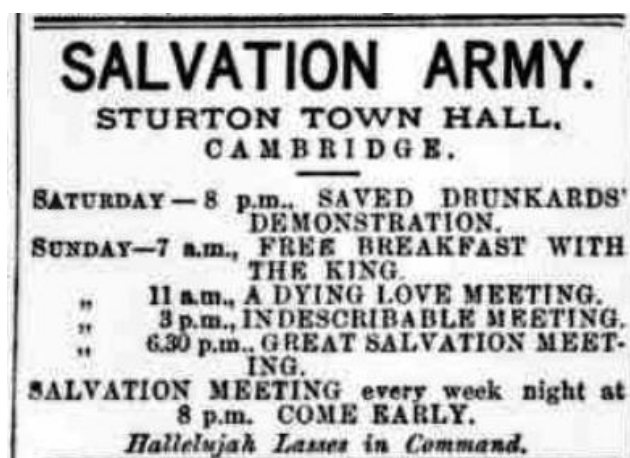


Figure 4 – Advert for the first Salvation Army meetings
(CIP 20 June 1885)

¹⁵ *The Era*, 25 April 1885.

As the Army grew in popularity they opened a Junior Hall in Gwydir Street. In 1907 Major Cheadle made enquiries about the purchase of Sturton Town Hall, with a view to making it their permanent base in Cambridge, but his proposal was rebuffed. As a result of the rejection, the Salvation Army sought alternative premises and began building a new citadel in Tenison Road, which was officially opened on 4 June 1914.¹⁶ They used the hall less frequently after 1907 and by 1910 they were only meeting there on Sundays. All services had ceased by the end of February 1913.

1910–16: the Empire, under Fredrick William Hawkins

The Working Men's Liberal Club changed its name to The Gladstone Liberal Club in 1910. James Drake Digby had originally proposed this name before the club was formed but, to his great regret, it had not been the preferred choice of the members.¹⁷

On 22 June 1910 Frederick William Hawkins¹⁸ enquired about the hire of the hall with a view to hosting film shows and theatrical performances. A licence for *Cinematograph and Music & Dancing* was granted on 19 August and the doors officially reopened on 17 October.

Hawkins advertised the venue under a number of different names. From 1910 and 1912 it was known as The Empire Picture Theatre but between 1912 and 1916 became The Empire Palace of Varieties.¹⁹ Throughout the period it was often also referred to simply as The Empire.

He also introduced a number of enhancements and innovations to the hall. An advert in the 9 March 1912 edition of the *Cambridge Daily News* reported the acquisition of a new Cinematograph machine, providing absolutely 'Flickerless, Rock-Steady Picture Plays', while a second article on 28 October noted the installation of a new Fuller Generator that provided a dedicated source of electricity in The Empire and greatly improved both the intensity and steadiness of the projected light.

Not everything went smoothly, however. On 12 April 1913, the *CIP* printed a lengthy open letter from Hawkins in response to a complaint received by the Cambridge Town Watch Committee 'with regard to the character of the entertainment' available at The Empire:

It appears that on that occasion a song was sung which had a refrain 'But I'm not satisfied, and you're not satisfied,' etc. This song was described as very suggestive, and it was alleged that on that night the entertainment generally was too much of that class.

A second open letter followed a week later that challenged the people of Cambridge to test the quality of his entertainment for themselves (see Figure 5).

A little over a year later, on 20 July 1914, the *CDN* reported that The Empire was under the personal management and supervision of Fredrick Hawkins himself, who continued to invest in developments and improvements. For two weeks from 4–20

¹⁶ *CIP*, 5 June 1914.

¹⁷ *CIP*, 16 December 1882.

¹⁸ See 'Key People', p. 29 below.

¹⁹ As seen in an advertising listing in the *CDN* on 12 February 1912.

September 1915, The Empire was closed while Messrs Negus and Sons conducted a variety of refurbishments. Seating was replaced throughout and tip-up velvet armchairs were added at the rear of the hall.²⁰ The building was redecorated and new heating and ventilation systems were installed.

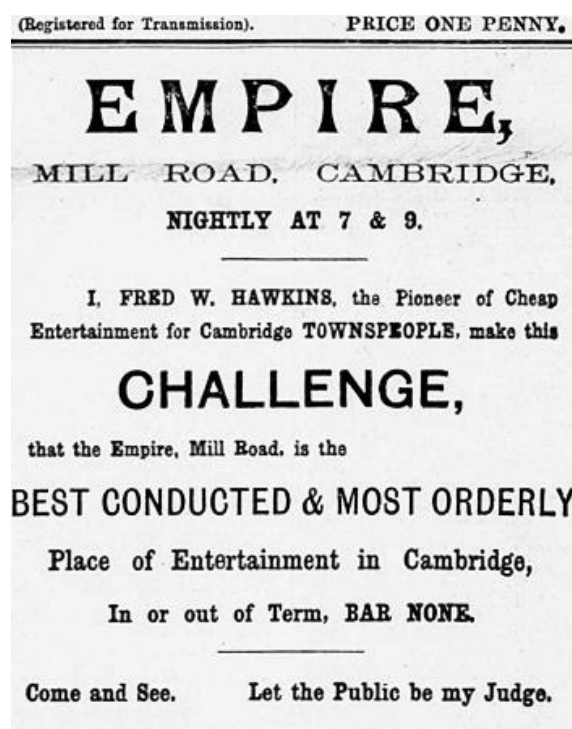


Figure 5 – Fredrick Hawkins' challenge to the people of Cambridge – 'Let the Public be my Judge' (CIP, 19 April 1913)

The Empire closed on 25 November 1916 and Mr Alfred James Pointer²¹ immediately took up the lease.

1916–50: The Kinema, under Alfred James Pointer

After a fortnight's closure for a general overhaul and cleaning, the hall reopened to a packed crowd on 11 December 1916 under the new name of The Kinema. It now operated exclusively as a cinema with some live entertainment booked to appear between film showings.

Mr Herbert C. Coulson acted as manager and was also listed as co-proprietor of the Kinema in *Spalding's Street and General Directory of Cambridge*. His Chief Operator and projectionist was Mr Sidney Stamp, who had previously worked at the Electric Theatre in the centre of the town, which was also owned and operated by Alfred Pointer.

In February 1918, Pointer expanded his holdings on Mill Road, taking the lease on the cottage at No. 85 (previously No. 48). *Spalding's Directory* lists it as the Kinema Stores.

²⁰ CDN, 18 September 1915.

²¹ See 'Key People', pp. 29–30 below.

In August 1920, the Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company (STLHC) purchased the freehold on No. 89 Mill Road for £825, the offer price being £1,200. In October 1922, Mr Frederick Dale, of Dale's Brewery on Gwydir Street, made an offer for the property, which was declined. The cottage remained as a residence until July 1926, when Pointer took up a lease and converted it into a café.



Figure 6 – The Kinema opening newspaper announcement
(CDN, 9 December 1916)

The Kinema remained 'silent' until August 1931, when it became the last cinema in Cambridge to install sound reproduction equipment and switch to the 'talkies'. The first film with a recorded soundtrack to be shown was *Song o' my Heart*²² (1930), starring John McCormack, which had been released in the UK the previous year. The Kinema moved to longer hours of operation at the same time, with a programme of films running continuously from 2:30pm until 10:30pm each day, Monday to Saturday.²³

Alfred Pointer consolidated his holdings in July 1934 with the addition of the lease for No. 87 Mill Road, which he merged with No. 89 to create more space for the café business.

A dispute with Dales' Brewery, concerning a dividing wall and right of way in the lane at the rear of No. 89, arose in 1943, but was resolved amicably.

Clifford S. Manning, a local authority on cinema history, noted that the Kinema became renowned as the 'home of the serial and wild west films'²⁴ during the thirties and forties and acquired the colloquial nickname of The Kinny.²⁵

²² Internet Movie Database, *Song o' my Heart* (1930) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021401>

²³ CDN, July 1931, as reprinted in CEN, 28 July 2006.

²⁴ Extract from KINEMA085, Cinema Theatre Association archive.

Figure 7 shows an architect's sketch produced in 1935 for the Master's House proposed for the County Infirmary in Ditchburn Place (separated from the Kinema by the Durham Ox). The Kinema is clearly displayed in the background. Above the windows it's possible to make out the letters 'M' and 'A', suggesting that the name 'KINEMA' was picked out along the side of the building. Until the Master's House was completed this would have been clearly visible to visitors approaching along Mill Road.

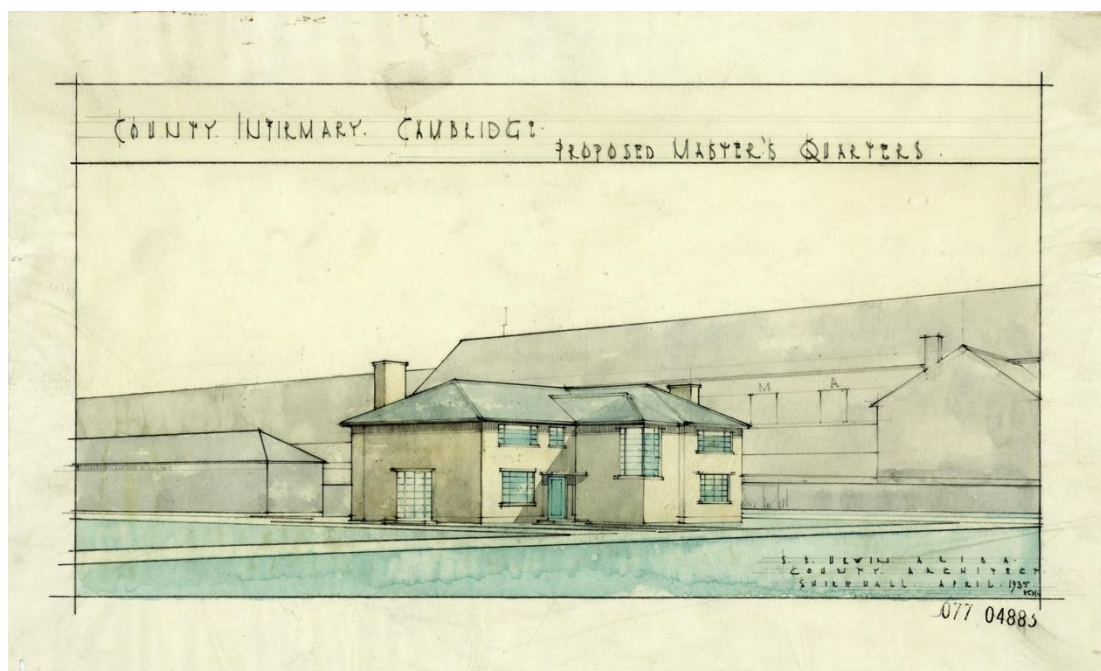


Figure 7 – Architect's sketch of the Master's House proposed for County Infirmary
(CA: ARCH SS2 7.07704885)

1950–66: The Kinema, under George Webb

The minutes of the Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company note that a new lease for the Kinema was issued to Mr George Webb²⁶ on 22 November 1950. Adverts promoting the venue 'under new management' had already appeared in the *CDN* earlier in the month,²⁷ although it was not until 28 February 1951 that 'Mr G Webb, Owner' appeared in print.

Although contrary to the terms of his lease, Webb sublet part of No. 85 for use as a draper's shop in July 1951. The STLHC took no formal action to address the issue however, and the property continued to operate as a draper's outlet until 1965 with the tenants changing several times over the period.

In 1951 a manager at the Kinema²⁸ was convicted for dealing in rationed food without the necessary permits or coupons and was sent to prison for six months.

²⁵ *Picture House* No. 16, winter 1990–1991.

²⁶ See 'Key People', p. 31 below.

²⁷ Advert, *CDN*, 1 November 1950.

²⁸ It seems likely that the article was actually referring to the manager of the Kinema Café given that the offence involved foodstuffs.

Over 1.5 tons of margarine, 1.5 tons of butter and 6 tons of sugar were involved, with a total value of £850.²⁹

In 1961 the manager of the Kinema, Mr Alfred Pink, sought to capitalise on the increasing popularity of bingo. He proposed that regular games meetings be held in the hall. The directors of the STLHC raised no objections but noted that both the terms of the operating license and Cambridge city regulations would need to be checked. They also encouraged Webb to explore any issues that the film distributors might have concerning the proposed change of use. As a result, bingo was not introduced to the Kinema until the lease changed hands five years hence.

The STLHC began a series of protracted contract negotiations with George Webb in 1961. The previous lease, which included all aspects of the property with the exception of the rooms used by The Gladstone Liberal Club, had been fixed at £445 with Agnes Jane Pointer, widow of A J Pointer, twenty years earlier.

The situation escalated when the company solicitors were instructed to terminate Webb's lease. He refused to relinquish it and a new rental was finally agreed in 1962.

Developments in the film industry, pressure from distributors and the increasing popularity of anamorphic film with UK audiences led many smaller cinemas to install widescreen facilities during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Kinema was the last in Cambridge to do so, when a Cinemascope projector and screen were installed in 1963.

Audiences continued to decline and the Kinema closed at very short notice on Saturday 12 March 1966. A fortnight earlier, the *CEN* had quoted Alfred Pink, who believed that the cinema would close two days hence, but George Webb had been quick to scotch the rumour at the time.³⁰

The last films on the playbill were the US civil war drama *Shenandoah* (1965),³¹ starring James Stewart, and a rerelease of the Arabian fantasy *The Golden Blade* (1953),³² starring Rock Hudson.

²⁹ *CEN*, 9 October 1951.

³⁰ *CEN*, 24 February and 12 March 1966.

³¹ Internet Movie Database, *Shenandoah* (1965) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059711>

³² Internet Movie Database, *The Golden Blade* (1953) <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045828>



Figure 8 – The Kinema in May 1956, with the hall visible behind the Durham Ox to the left
(CC: the Whitbread album)

After its initial conversion in 1926, Nos 87–89 continued to operate as a tearoom until the late 1950s. An advert for the Kinema Café appeared in the *CDN* on 5 February 1951.

A small fire in the basement of the property on 1 September 1957 and subsequent loss of business during a ten-day closure, followed by a rates demand, were blamed by Mr Fred Coulson, the proprietor of the Kinema Café and Caterers, for his being declared bankrupt on 3 December 1957.³³

The café was subsequently let to Vincent Freeman and continued to operate until 1960, when it became City Bargains. Freeman told the *CEN* that he had tried to make the venue as attractive as possible and spend a great deal of money on putting it in order. He hoped to deter local youths and attract a more lucrative student clientele by removing the automatic phonograph jukebox, dressing the tables with white cloths and adding menu cards. His efforts failed; his regular customers remained the teenagers from the surrounding area, with 85 per cent of the sales consisting of cigarettes and other tobacco products while the rest was cups of tea.³⁴

In 1961 Mr Capon, the proprietor of City Bargains, sought permission to divide No. 89 with the intention of subletting one half as a betting shop. This request was turned down.

³³ *CEN*, 9 January 1958

³⁴ *CEN*, 12 April 1960.

1966–86: The Kinema Bingo Club

Alfred Pink and a group of like-minded local businessmen formed Prize Entertainments Ltd on 2 March 1966, with a view to running the Kinema as a part-time cinema and bingo club. They reopened the venue on 31 March 1966 after the 'installation of new cinema and bingo equipment, and extensive decoration'.

The group hoped to operate the Kinema as a public cinema for two nights, a members-only cinema for one night and as a bingo hall from Thursday to Sunday each week³⁵ with film screenings starting 'soon after Easter' and 'certainly within two or three weeks'.³⁶

It may be that the plan proved to be too ambitious. It was not until September 1970 that a short item in the *CEN* reported 'The Kinema Cinema in Mill Road, Cambridge, is to hold late night film shows from Monday to Friday until the end of the year',³⁷ suggesting that perhaps Prize Entertainments had not been able to restart regular cinema shows for more than four years.



Figure 9 – The Kinema Bingo Club, date unknown
(CTA archive: KINEMA083)

³⁵ *CEN*, 29 March 1966.

³⁶ *CEN*, 5 April 1966.

³⁷ *CEN*, 30 September 1970.

Bingo was almost certainly at the height of its popularity in 1966. Dereck Harvey, a reporter from the *CEN*, visited the Kinema in July 1966 where Mr. Pink told him: 'I've never seen anything like it. We had 9,000 members in the first nine weeks'.

The caller sat at a large transparent container in which numbered ping-pong balls jostled with each other before being pushed up a tube into his hand. He called out the numbers and illuminated counter-markings on a big display board at the back. Three hundred people were concentrating hard, hoping for the big break – like the one enjoyed by Mr E. Brauerski, head porter at the Blue Boar Hotel, who had just the week before hit the jackpot with a massive £1,000 in a national competition.³⁸

The Gladstone Liberal Club closed in 1968 and the rooms that had originally formed the upper storey of the cottage at No. 47 Mill Road were taken over by Prize Entertainments. They were subsequently listed in Kelly's Directory as the P. K. Club until 1971.

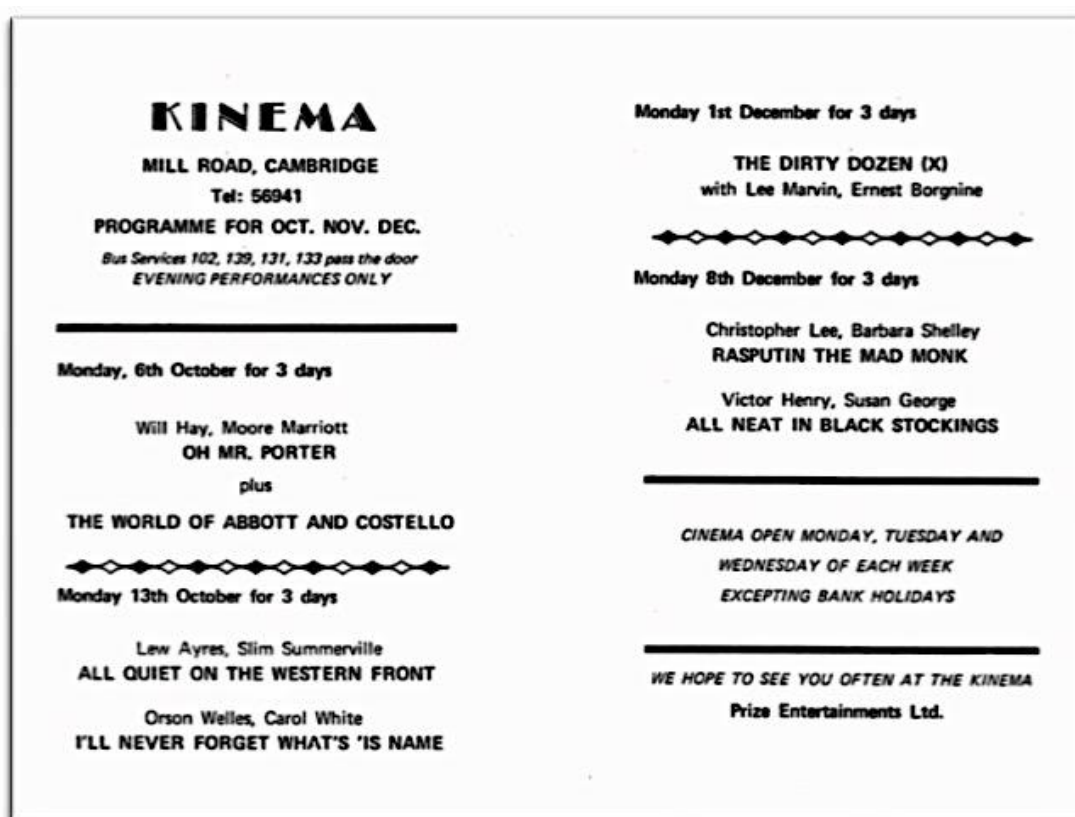


Figure 10 – A *Kinema* programme leaflet, probably dating from 1975
(CC: C C.76 VF)

Another *CEN* item in 1979, entitled 'Kinema re-opens as a Cinema', reported that the venue

is to get a new lease of life as a cinema. Three Wednesday late-night shows are booked, and children's films will be shown on Saturday mornings. [...] Kinema manager Alf Pink, had kept his projection equipment in good condition over the years – always in the hope of showing films again.³⁹

³⁸ 'Memories with Mike Petty', *CEN*, 1 June 2009.

³⁹ *CEN*, 23 November 1979.

Again, this would suggest that films had not been shown at the Kinema for some considerable time.

Anecdotal reports suggest that 1979 was the last time that films were shown with any regularity at the Kinema. The last known screening was part of the *Cambridge Animation Festival* held during the summer of 1985.

The Kinema closed its doors for good before the end of the year.

1986–present: Dereliction and Scholars House

31 January 1986	Prize Entertainments Ltd surrender the lease to the Kinema
10 February 1986	An EGM of Prize Entertainments Ltd resolves that the company be wound up
Mid-1986	A 'For Sale' sign appears on the Kinema
10 September 1986	The final meeting of Prize Entertainments Ltd
31 December 1987	City Bargains closes
Early 1988	The premises are sold to William Sindall for redevelopment
27 April 1988	Application for 80-room student hostel submitted by William Sindall Ltd
26 August 1988	Application for 80-room student hostel refused
14 December 1988	An EGM of the STLHC resolves that the company be wound up
23 October 1989	Appeal against application refusal dismissed
21 September 1990	Application for 70-room student hostel refused
29 July 1991	Application for 52-room student hostel submitted
25 December 1991	A final meeting of the STLHC committee is held
10 December 1993	Application for 52-room student hostel granted
11 August 1995	Premises sold to Dencora Homes Ltd.
26 September 1995	Application for 63-room student hostel submitted by Dencora Homes Ltd. and subsequently withdrawn
9 November 1995	Application for 60-room student hostel submitted
1 April 1996	Application for 60-room student hostel granted
20 September 1996	Building of Scholars House started
15 October 1997	Building of Scholars House completed
4 November 1997	Premises sold to Ian James Stennet

Figure 11 – A timeline of events for 1986–97

By late 1985, the Kinema was for sale, with a market value of £170,000. On 12 December, an article in the *CEN* described a proposal from Tony Jones, the then manager of the city centre Arts Cinema, to convert the Kinema and the former Dale's Brewery site into an arts complex. The news item also noted significant council support and enthusiasm for the scheme. A second article, on 27 December, reported that Prize Entertainments still held the lease for the property, with five years yet to run on the current contract.

The City Council requested a survey of the building but, on 10 April 1986, the *CEN* reported that the work was cancelled because the owners had taken the property

off the market. At much the same time Charisma Films of London investigated the purchase the building, with a plan to reopen it as a specialist cinema.

On 26 January 1987 the *CEN* noted that the council had abandoned plans for the Kinema. A £5,000 survey, commissioned by councillor Frank Gawthrop, had found forty major structural faults. Estimates for repairs to the building were in the range of £320,000, with costs increasing to as much as £600,000 when restoration and refurbishment were included. The council subsequently considered an alternative plan to buy land, demolish the existing buildings and extend the Dale's Brewery site.

William Sindall plc, a building company formed in the 1860s and based in Sawston, Cambridgeshire, which had been responsible for much maintenance and repair work over the years, purchased the Kinema site in early 1988. On 14 July 1988 the *CEN* reported that a plan for an 80-bedroom student hostel with basement parking had been turned down for two reasons, an overall lack of parking space and proximity of the building frontage to Mill Road.

On 24 April 1993 a retrospective feature about the Kinema published in the *CEN* mentioned that a new plan for student accommodation, which had been submitted nearly two years previously, might be approved later that month. This third plan was finally approved on 10 December, but building work never commenced. This is likely because William Sindall had been losing money since the start of the decade. In 1995 the company became Morgan Sindall after a reverse takeover purchase of Morgan Lovell and Overbury.⁴⁰

In August 1995 William Sindall sold the premises to Dencora Homes Ltd., who submitted a new building application on 9 November 1995 that was approved on 1 April 1996. Construction of Scholars House began on 20 September 1996 and was completed on 15 October 1997. Dencora also submitted an application to convert No. 83 Mill Road into a 26-room student hostel but that was refused on 5 February 1997.

Ian James Stennet, who owned a number of properties around Cambridge, purchased the Kinema site on 4 November 1997. In 2000 Mr. Stennet bought 83 Mill Road, the Durham Ox, and reopened it as the Chariots of Fire. In June 2002 the interior of the new public house was gutted by fire and its license was revoked the next month.⁴¹ Fast food restaurants and an eight-bedroom shared house now occupy the site.

⁴⁰ *The Independent*, 20 August 1995, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sindall-marries-into-success-1597045.html>.

⁴¹ Cambridge & District CAMRA Branch Newsletter No. 307, Summer 2002.

The following photographs were taken during the demolition of the Kinema and show the remains of the interior of the main hall. The projection booth and holes through which the projectors would throw their light are clearly visible in the first picture.



Figure 12 – During the demolition of the Kinema, taken from a position looking towards Mill Road
(photograph by Robert Halliday)



Figure 13 – During the demolition of the Kinema, looking away from Mill
(photograph by Robert Halliday)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

1850–99

The 1861 census contains the earliest recorded addresses for the cottages at 45–48 Mill Road, with county and England cricketer Robert Carpenter⁴² listed as the occupant of No. 45. The 1851 census does not list the house numbers along the road but, from the names of the inhabitants, it would appear that the tenant of No. 45 a decade earlier was Carpenter's father, George, and that there were no other houses between the cottages and East Road.

The Ordnance Survey map for 1887 shows that the frontage for both storeys of Nos 45, 46 and 48, both ground and first floor, are flush with the surrounding buildings and set back from the road. It is likely that No. 47 was constructed in a similar manner and that the entrance to the Sturton Town Liberal Hall was extended out onto the pavement when the cottage was adapted in 1882.

Building of the hall commenced in September 1881 and the conversion of No. 47 into an entrance started in January 1882. The hall opened to the public at the end of May 1882.

The plans for the modifications made to No. 87 in 1897 show that the entrance to the Liberal Club reading rooms was originally on the south-east side of the hall entranceway, before being moved to the front.

On 24 March 1895 gales destroyed nearly the whole of the lower rear part of the hall, just before an afternoon service was to start. Some people had already gathered inside but no one was hurt.⁴³

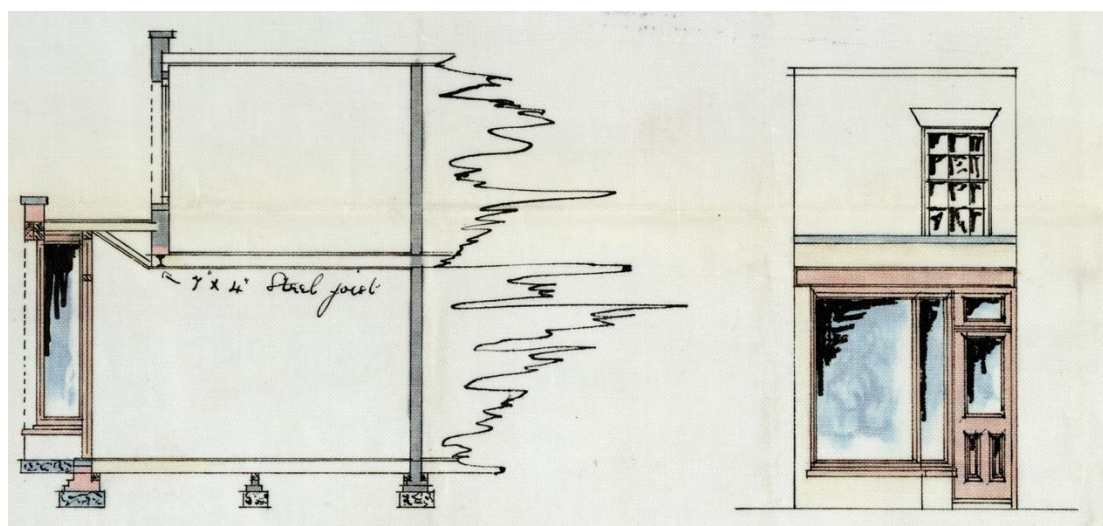


Figure 14 – The new front view of No. 85, from the building plans
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/1127)

⁴² See 'Key People', pp. 33–34 below.

⁴³ CWN, 29 March 1895.

In 1896 the front of No. 85 was rebuilt to bring the ground floor forward flush with the hall entrance and adding a glass front suitable for a shop. The building was let to Frederick Woolfenden, who ran a Hairdresser and Tobacconist business on the premises.

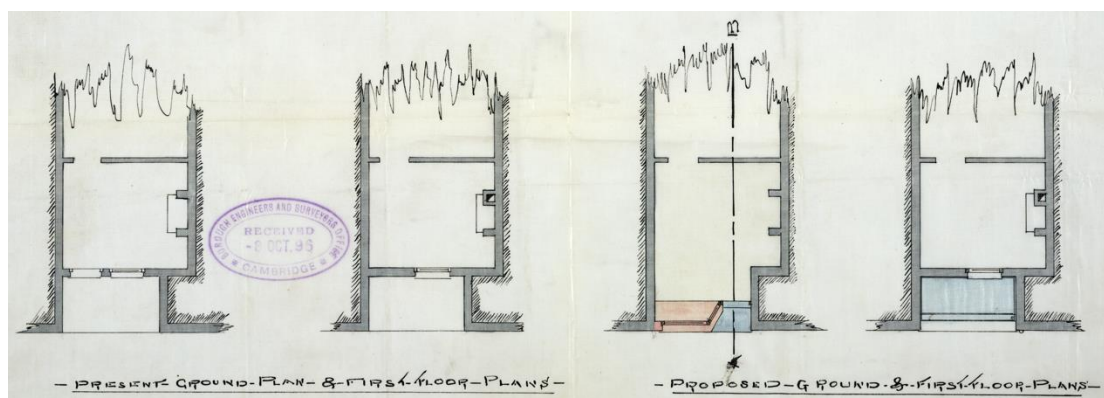


Figure 15 – Before (left) and after (right) the rebuilding of the front of No. 85
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/1127)

Similar adjustments were made to No. 87 during 1897, the front of the cottage was moved to be flush with the entrance to the hall and glass display windows suitable for use by a shop were added. The door to the Liberal Club was relocated to facilitate the changes to No. 87, moving from the side of the hall entranceway to the front wall and right of the entrance.

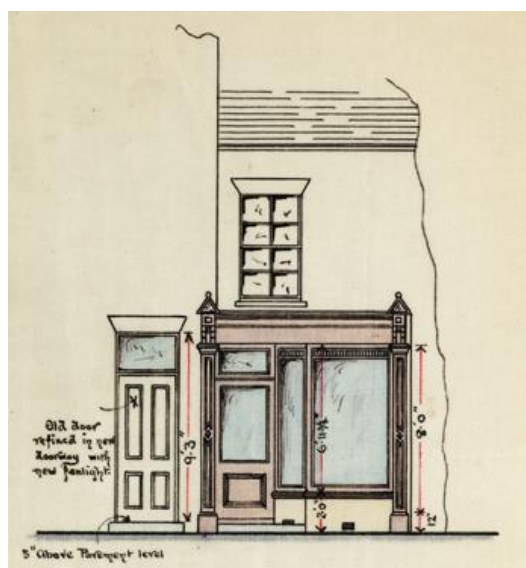


Figure 16 – The front view of No. 87 following reworking to add a shop front
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/1127)

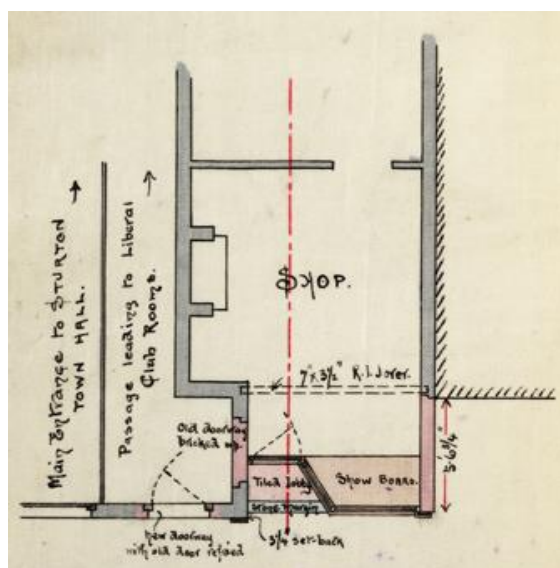


Figure 17 – The plan for changes to No. 87, carried out in 1897
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/1127)



Figure 18 – W. White and staff outside No. 87 in 1910
(CC: B.MILL.K1 44836)

1900–49

As a prerequisite to the award of a cinematographic license in 1910, Fredrick Hawkins had to ensure the provision of proper egress and exit routes from the building. This included the removal of an existing vestibule at the Mill Road end of the hall.

There was also considerable debate with regard to the most appropriate position for the projection equipment. An initial plan to create a platform for the equipment from the vestibule was abandoned, as was a subsequent proposal to place the projector outside the hall because of the location of a billiard room.

When asked for his opinion by local magistrates, Deputy Chief Constable Superintendent Hargreaves strongly supported the removal of the vestibule for reasons of safety. A dedicated platform and gallery, accessible by a ladder on the

east side of the hall, was installed. With modifications, it continued to serve as the projection box for the life of the cinema.⁴⁴

The *CDN* review of the first night of *The Empire* in October 1910 reported that 'a handsome and commodious stage and proscenium have been erected; body of hall fitted with comfortable seats; all excepting the back ones being the tip-up variety'.⁴⁵ Further improvements were made to the furnishings in mid-1911 when Hawkins arranged for 'All seats to be tip-ups, floor to be recovered, entrance hall to be improved'.⁴⁶

Clifford S Manning noted in a letter to *Picture House* (16, winter 1990-91) that 'the hall was typical of its time: a substantial brick building about 80 feet long by 36 feet wide. Side lights were obtained by means of a tile-hung clerestory supported on pillars; the pitched roof was of slates over felt secured to diagonal boarding'.⁴⁷

A number of structural changes were made to various aspects of the property throughout the 1920s. In 1926 No. 89 was converted into a café. Many of the interior walls were removed, to maximize the space available, and a separate door leading to the upstairs accommodation was added on the right. Unlike the other houses the front of No. 89 was not extended onto the pavement.



Figure 19 – The front view of No. 89
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/5707)

⁴⁴ *CDN*, 13th August 1910.

⁴⁵ *CDN*, 18th October 1910.

⁴⁶ *CDN*, 11th July 1911.

⁴⁷ Letter from C. S. Manning in *Picture House* magazine. B11. 2618a.

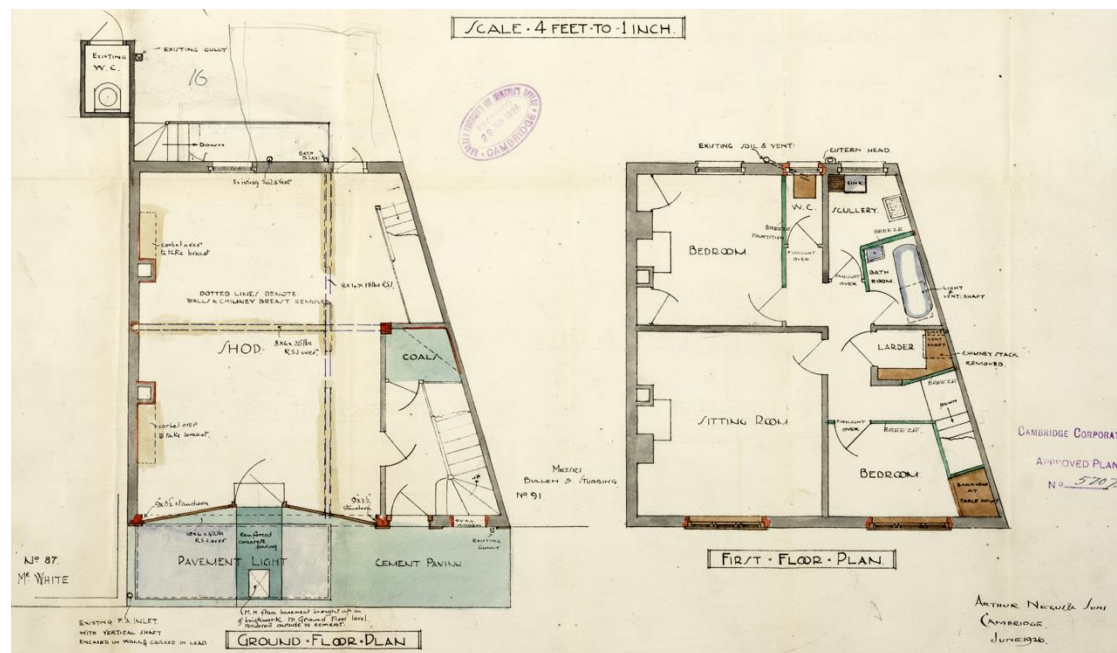


Figure 20 – Plans for conversion of No. 89 into a shop
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/5707)

An additional bedroom was added to the rear of No. 89 later in 1926.

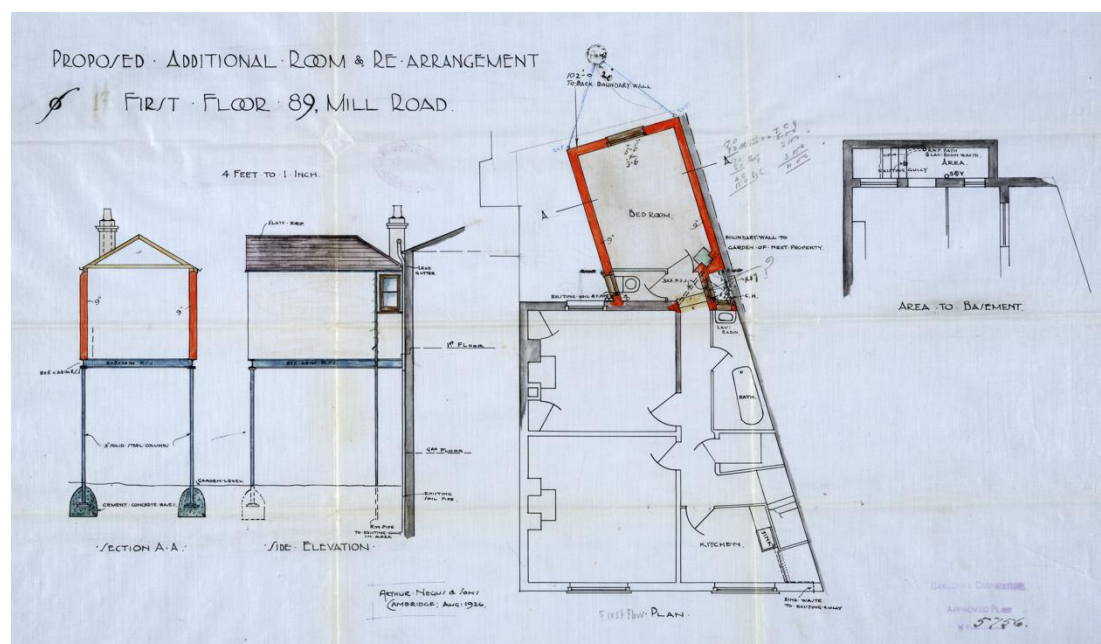


Figure 21 – Plans submitted for the additional room added to No. 89
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/5756)

Improvements in technology and decreased cost led to the widespread installation of electric lighting in many public buildings during the early years of the 20th century and Arthur Negus & Company was engaged in June 1926 to install electric lighting in the Kinema.

Throughout the early years of the Kinema, a number of small rooms behind the cinema screen were used as dressing rooms by the live acts that appeared between films at the time. Separate ladies and gentlemen's toilets were situated to the right of the main entranceway, beside the generator room that provided a mains supply

for the projectors. The walls of the hall were decorated, recalled projectionist's daughter Peggy Mansfield, with giant oil paintings depicting Cambridge scenes such as Garrett Hostel Lane.

Further alterations were made in April 1930, following recommendations by the Justices Clerk Mr Jasper Lyon. An external iron stairway leading to the projection booth was installed in the alleyway behind No. 89, replacing the internal ladder access that had been in use since 1910. Unfortunately, the stairway also obscured the foundation stone laid by Mr Hugh Shield M.P. in 1881.

At some date between 1934 and 1948 the dividing wall between Nos 87 and 89 was knocked through to create a single larger space for the Kinema café. There was also an entranceway into the café from the Kinema itself.

The office space in No. 85 was reorganised in 1945 and modifications were made to the entranceway to the hall, moving the double doors further towards the front in order to facilitate access to the offices.

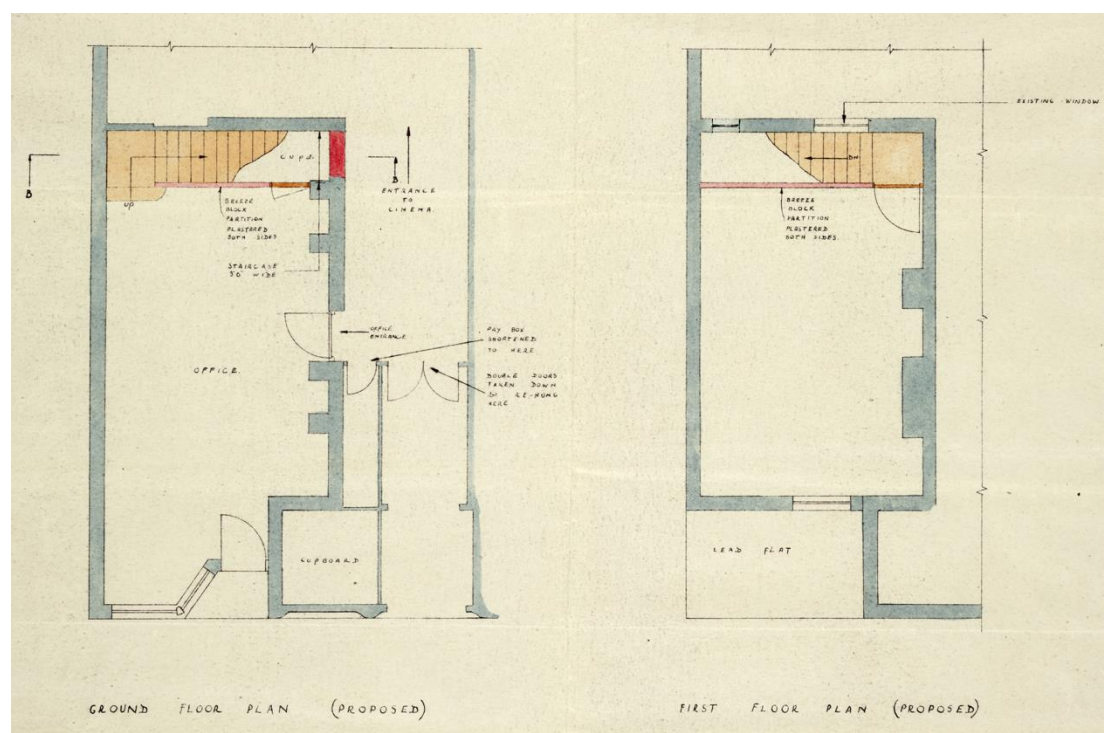


Figure 22 – Office space changes in No. 85, also showing Kinema entrance hall
(CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/16440)

1950–99

Film critic and one-time manager of the Kinema Leslie Halliwell described the entrance to the hall in his memoirs, recalling that during the early 1950s it was 'pink stuccoed and known as the "Tunnel of Love"'.⁴⁸ The venue could seat a maximum of 422 throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

A building report from July 1962 noted that the ground floors of Nos 87 and 89 had been combined by the removal of interior walls, while the first floor consisted of five

⁴⁸ Leslie Halliwell (1985).

separate rooms. A small yard was located on the east side of the hall, which contained outhouses and workshops.

After the closure of the Liberal Club in 1968, Prize Entertainments converted the front rooms located upstairs above the entranceway into a bar.

The following plan of the Kinema, originally dated March 1969, was attached to a fire insurance policy quote from December 1971. The lettered areas are described on the policy as:

- A B and C** Cinema, Children's Wear, Fancy Goods and Toy Sale, shops.
D Staff Mess Room and Stores.

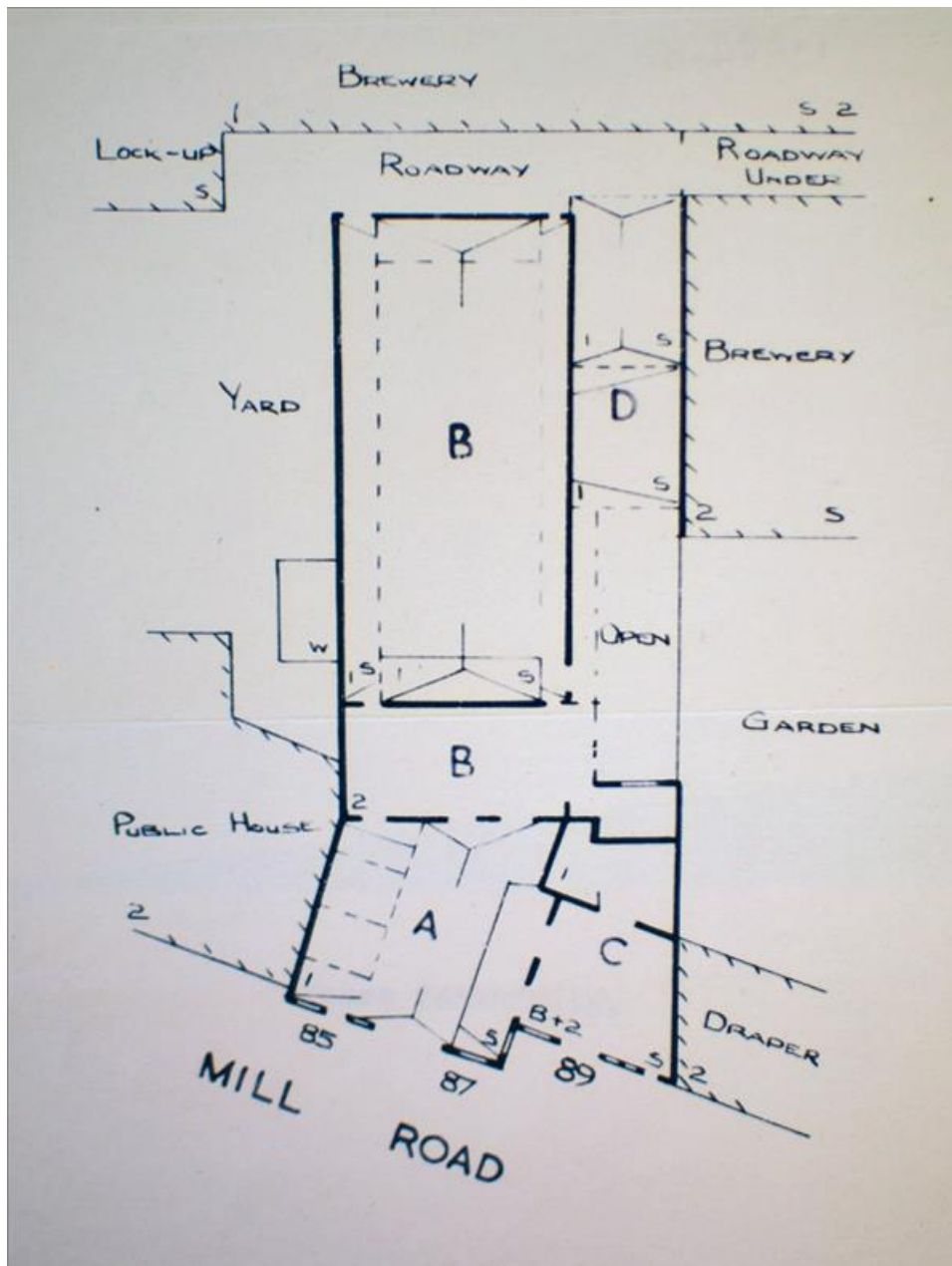


Figure 23 – Plan of the Kinema created for insurance purposes
 (CA: from R89/41)



Figure 24 – Rear view of the Kinema in 1984
(CC: I L K84 28371)

KEY PEOPLE

James Drake Digby



Figure 25 – James Drake Digby
(<http://www.iceskating.org.uk>)

James Drake Digby (born in Wisbech in 1837) worked as a staff journalist with the *CIP* for many years. He was elected secretary of what was to become the STLHC in 1881 and served in this capacity until 11 November 1885, when he resigned in order to spend more time pursuing journalistic and political work in London.

The *CIP* reported that Digby was injured on the 17 April 1882 while attending a meeting on the site of Sturton Town Hall. He slipped on the exposed floor joists and dislocated an ankle, but 'after restoratives had been applied to Mr Digby, who fainted, he was conveyed home, and, under the care of Mr Lucas, is progressing favourably'.⁴⁹

Digby was also secretary of the National Skating Association, an organisation he helped to found in 1879 to promote and regulate the sport of Fen skating, with a view to eliminating betting malpractice from the sport.⁵⁰ In 1893 he wrote *Skating and Curling. The Glaciarium: a Brief History of the Invention, and the proposed Glaciarium Club*.⁵¹

His son, James Newton Digby, was Secretary of the Working Men's Liberal Club from 1889 to 1892 and President in 1893 and 1907.

James Drake Digby died in February 1899.

Fredrick William Hawkins

Fredrick William Hawkins took the lease for Sturton Town Hall in 1910 and was the first person to license the venue as a cinema. He also leased and showed films at The Alexandra Hall and The Workmen's Hall on East Road Cambridge as well as The Hippodrome in Peterborough. Hawkins is considered to be one of the pioneers of commercial cinema in Cambridge.⁵²

The Pointer Family

Alfred James Pointer (July 1868 – 23 April 1941) took the lease for the Kinema in 1916. He also ran the original Victoria cinema, previously known as The Electric Theatre, on Market Hill from July 1915, the Cambridge Ice Cream Company in Hertford Street and a milk and billiards bar called The Dugout in Guildhall Street.

⁴⁹ *CIP*, 22 April 1882.

⁵⁰ <http://www.iceskating.org.uk/>

⁵¹ <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Skating-Curling-The-Glaciarium-invention/dp/B000WVPWNW>

⁵² *Cambridge Town and County Standard*, 5 May 1935.

After two planning applications for a cinema in Petty Cury were rejected,⁵³ Pointer was granted permission to build a new 1,500-seat cinema in Guildhall Street in 1919. The *CIP* reported in January 1920 that building was to start imminently and that an entertainment licence was to be granted, but construction never began. This appeared to be due, at least partially, to a Ministry of Health edict prohibiting the construction of new cinemas to ensure no interference with local housing schemes.⁵⁴

Pointer had five sons, several of whom were involved in the cinema business. The most notable was Eric Claude Pointer (born 1899) who made local newsreels in and around Cambridge, many of which were shown in the Victoria cinema and the Kinema. In 1925 the Kinema screened a short film by Pointer about the Boxing Day meeting of the Cambridgeshire Hunt at Market Hill.⁵⁵ In 1929 he formed the company Pointer & Co. Ltd to build and run the new Victoria cinema at 9–11 Market Hill. He was named Managing Director for life. Cambridge Holdings Ltd, a subsidiary of the rapidly growing Union Cinemas chain, acquired a majority shareholding of the business in 1935.⁵⁶ He and his wife Constance emigrated to Canada in 1956. He died in Vancouver in 1980.

Hedley Pointer (1902–82) was a violinist who played at the Victoria cinema and the Kinema in their silent days.



Figure 26 – Letter heading for Kinema (Cambridge) Ltd in 1948
(CA: from R89/41)

After Pointer's death his widow, Agnes Jane (1872–1950), and family established the company Kinema (Cambridge) Ltd to continue running the cinema until they sold the lease to George Webb in 1950. Frank Pointer (1903–91) was responsible for the day-to-day management.

⁵³ *CIP*, 16 January 1920.

⁵⁴ *CIP*, 18 June 1920

⁵⁵ *East Anglia on Film* – David Cleveland, p.26.

⁵⁶ Letter from C. S. Manning in *Picture House* magazine. B11. 2618a

George Webb



Figure 27 – George Webb
(courtesy of G. Webb Haulage)

George William Dickerson Leslie Webb (10 July 1919 – 29 January 1983) was born in Newmarket. He operated a successful local haulage company for many years before selling the business in the 1950s. Part of the agreement of sale was a limitation on setting up in competition for five years.

Webb used some of his earnings to purchase the leases on two Cambridge cinemas, The Rex on Magrath Avenue and the Kinema on Mill Road. He employed the film critic Leslie Halliwell, then a recent graduate of Cambridge University, as a manager and programme organiser for the venues from 1952 to 1955. Halliwell included a number of colourful anecdotes about Webb in his autobiography.⁵⁷

After the sudden closure of the Kinema in 1966, Webb returned to the haulage business. The company he founded, G. Webb Haulage Ltd, is located in Longstanton Cambridge and run by his surviving family.⁵⁸

Webb was a popular, larger-than-life figure throughout his life and the day he died the *CEN* ran a half page article entitled 'City Loses a Flamboyant Personality', a front-page teaser and an anecdote in the diary page it published the following day.

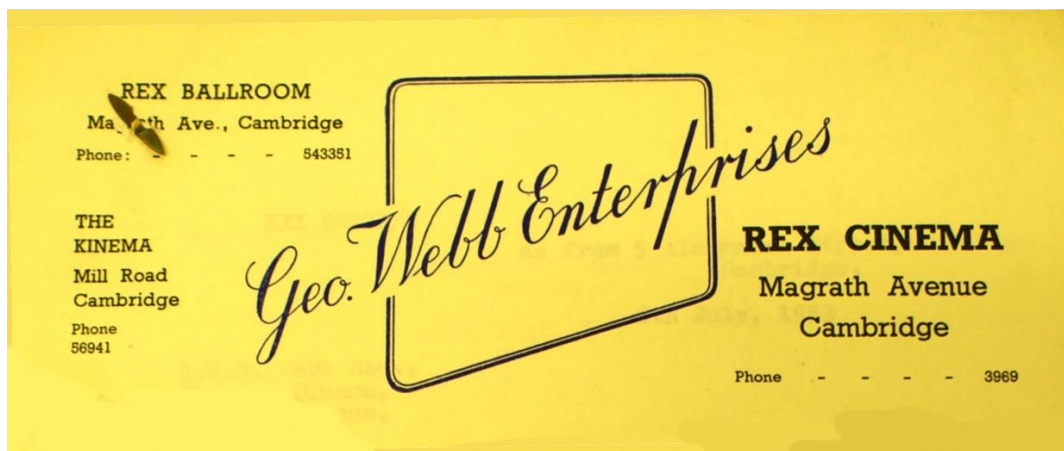


Figure 28 – A letterhead for *George Webb Enterprises* in 1955
(CA: from R89/41)

Jimmy Pink

Jimmy Pink was the long-time projectionist at the Kinema from the 1920s and most likely remained in post until the closure of the cinema in 1966. In a letter dated 1996, his daughter Peggy Mansfield recalled her mother and aunt working as cleaners at the Kinema while her uncle was the custodian of the cycle shed located

⁵⁷ Leslie Halliwell, *Seats in all Parts: Half a Lifetime at the Movies*.

⁵⁸ G. Webb Haulage Ltd, <http://www.gwebb.uk.com/>.

at the rear of the cinema where patrons could leave their bicycles for a few pennies.⁵⁹

Despite his uncommon surname, Jimmy Pink was not related to Alfred Pink the cinema manager at the time.

Figure 29 is a photograph from Peggy Mansfield's wedding album. Jimmy Pink is standing at the rear on the left of the photograph with Fred Mansfield (Robert's brother) next to him. Seated, from left to right, are Gladys Missen (Robert's sister), Robert Mansfield, Peggy Mansfield and Eva Pink (Peggy's elder sister).



Figure 29 – Peggy Mansfield's Wedding
(Courtesy of Robin Mansfield)

⁵⁹ Letter from Peggy Mansfield to Allan Brigham, 1996.

Alfred Wilkinson

Alfred Wilkinson was manager of the Meadowsweet Dairy on the corner of Mawson Road and Mill Road from 1919 to 1972. He was elected secretary of the Gladstone Liberal Club in 1923 and served in this capacity for sixteen years.

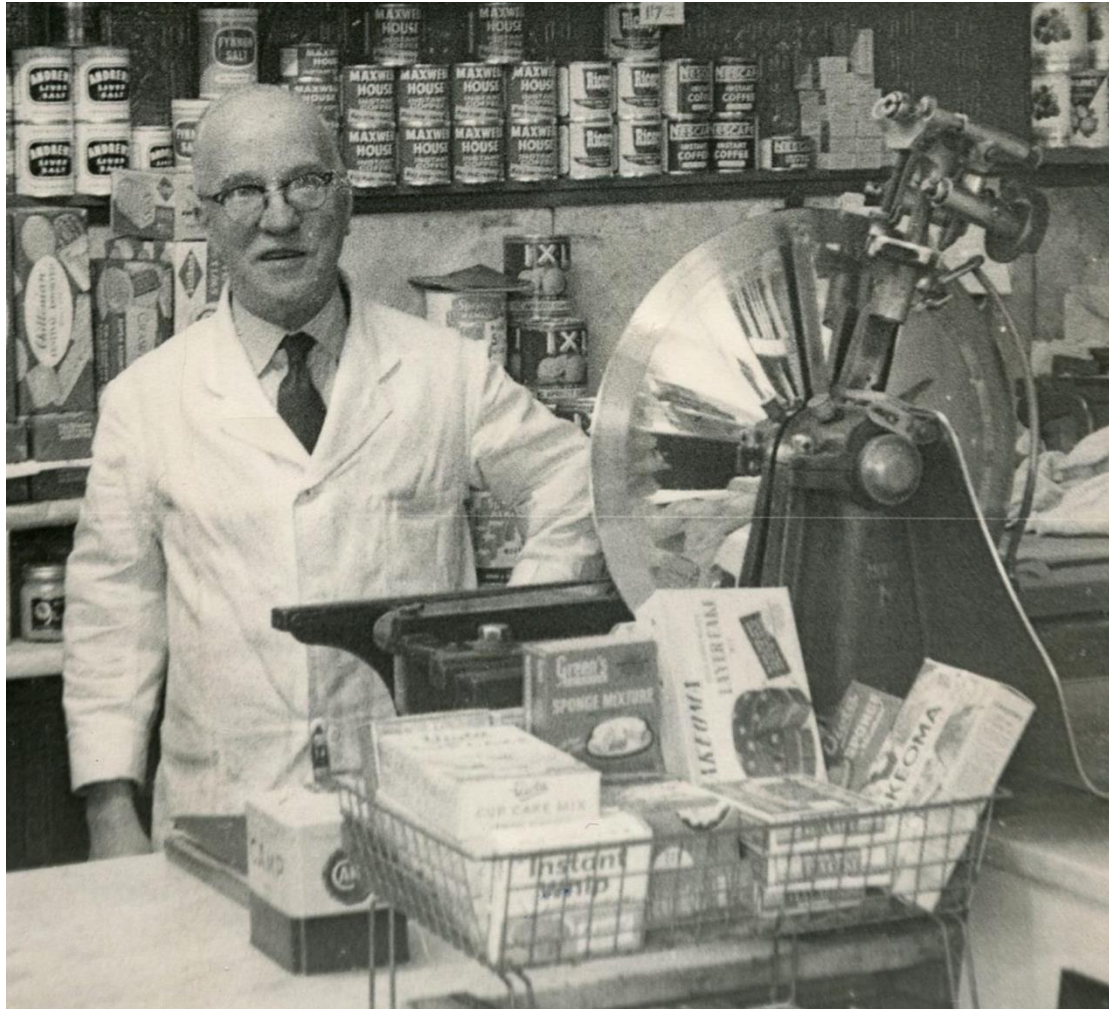


Figure 30 – Alfred Wilkinson in the Meadowsweet Dairy
(Courtesy of the Wilkinson family)

Robert Carpenter

Robert Carpenter was born in St. Andrews Street Cambridge on 18 November 1830 and married in 1850. He was listed as a boot maker by trade and resided on Mill Road with his wife and child in the 1851 census. A decade later, his occupation was recorded as a 'Professional Cricketer' on the 1861 census and remained so until his death in 1901. He lived in the same cottage until he died – initially it was No. 45 Mill Road, however it was later renumbered to No. 47, and finally to No. 89.

Announcements of his death appeared in newspapers around the country; the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* called him 'the most noted exponent of purely back play of all times' and notes that he had been umpiring in Liverpool less than a week earlier. *The Western Daily Press* said the cricketing world had lost 'one of the very greatest batsmen of the last generation'.

In 1859 he took part in the very first overseas cricket tour, as a member of a team visiting North America.

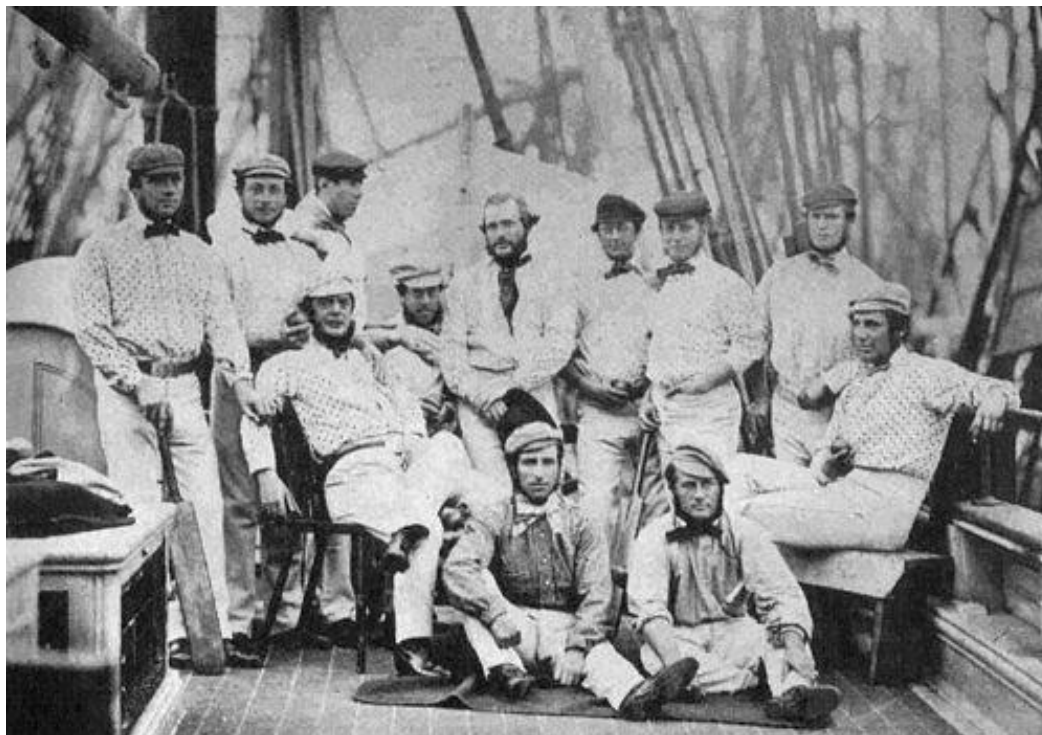


Figure 31 – The first English touring team pictured on board ship at Liverpool.

Standing at left Robert Carpenter

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Carpenter_\(cricketer\)\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Carpenter_(cricketer)))

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein was a regular visitor to the Kinema in the 1930s, while a fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. Theodore Redpath, a student of Wittgenstein's, wrote of his visits:

Wittgenstein was a fervent film addict. He used to go a great deal to see American wild-west and gangster films at the Kinema in Mill Road. At some stage of our acquaintance he told me that he didn't know how he could have done without them. He also used to read tough stories in such periodicals as *The Red Magazine*. This sort of fare clearly corresponded to some deep need in Wittgenstein's character; but I never came to understand quite how it worked. On the other hand he recognised the strength of 'needs' in other people to see films, or read books or magazines, and a 'need' was evidently an important criterion of genuineness in his way of looking at things. I can remember his delight on one occasion when I was walking along Trinity Street with him, and a stranger, who evidently didn't know Cambridge, asked us if there was 'a cinema near 'andy'. When the man had been told by us that there was one in Market Hill, just around the corner, and gone off in great glee, Wittgenstein repeated the phrase 'near 'andy' with relish.

Wittgenstein had apparently no similar need for music of a kind which could reasonably be considered analogous to what he consumed in the form of films and tough stories. On the other hand he did approve of light popular music as a background to shopping in such emporia as Woolworth's. But he never gave it the

concentrated attention that he apparently gave the rough films and magazine stories.⁶⁰

John King, another former student, noted Wittgenstein's preference for American films and distaste for their British counterparts, on the grounds of the theatricality of their players.

The Mill Road cinema ... was the one he most favoured and here he sat as far to the front as he could get, leant forward in his seat and was utterly absorbed by the film. He never would go to any British film; and if we passed a cinema advertising one he pointed out how the actors looked dressed-up, unnatural, unconvincing, obviously play-acting, while, in comparison, in the American films the actors were the part, with no pretence.⁶¹

Maurice O'Connor Drury added that Wittgenstein disliked all English and Continental films: 'in these, the cameraman was always intruding himself as if to say, "Look how clever I am." I remember him expressing a special delight on the dancing of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire'.⁶²

Norman Malcolm, a friend and fellow philosopher, also wrote of evenings spent with Wittgenstein at the movies in Cambridge in 1939.

Wittgenstein was always exhausted by his lectures. He was also revolted by them. He felt disgusted with what he had said and with himself. Often he would rush off to a cinema immediately after the class ended. As the members of the class began to move their chairs out of the room he might look imploringly at a friend and say in a low tone, 'Could you go to a flick?' On the way to the cinema Wittgenstein would buy a bun or cold pork pie and munch it while he watched the film. He insisted on sitting in the very first row of seats, so that the screen would occupy his entire field of vision, and his mind would be turned away from the thoughts of the lecture and his feelings of revulsion. Once he whispered to me 'This is like a shower bath!' His observation of the film was not relaxed or detached. He leaned tensely forward in his seat and rarely took his eyes off the screen. He hardly ever uttered comments on the episodes of the film and did not like his companion to do so. He wished to become totally absorbed in the film no matter how trivial or artificial it was, in order to free his mind temporarily from the philosophical thoughts that tortured and exhausted him.⁶³

Wittgenstein died in 1951 and was buried in the Ascension Parish Burial Ground in Cambridge, a common resting place for Cambridge University academics.

The Duke of Devonshire

Spencer Compton, Duke of Devonshire, took thirty £1 shares⁶⁴ in the Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company (Limited), which were transferred on his death in 1916 to his son 'the Most Noble Victor Christian William, Duke of Devonshire K.G.'.

Reregistration of the share certificate cost two shillings and sixpence and was paid by Postal Order.

The shares were later passed to Deborah Mitford, her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire, the younger sister of the more famous Nancy, Diana and Unity.

⁶⁰ Redpath (1990), chapter 11.

⁶¹ King (1984), p. 71.

⁶² King (1984), p. 120.

⁶³ Malcolm (1958), pp. 27–28. I am grateful to Martin Jones for drawing my attention to this item.

⁶⁴ From correspondence in CA: R89/41.

Cinema in Cambridge

Cinema grew from simple beginnings in the 1890s to a large-scale entertainment industry in just twenty years. By 1910, a number of existing venues were holding regular film performances in Cambridge, including the Hippodrome on Auckland Road, The Electric Theatre at the Victoria Assembly Rooms on Market Hill, the County Rink Cinema on Magrath Avenue and Alexandra Hall, the former Young Man's Christian Association (YMCA) on Alexandra Street, now part of Lion's Yard.

Fredrick Hawkins was showing films at the Picture Palace, located upstairs at the Working Men's Club on East Road, in 1909. He built upon his success and licensed Sturton Town Hall as The Empire with regular screenings on Mill Road from 17 October 1910.

The first purpose-built cinema in the city was The Playhouse, which opened on Mill Road in 1913, a few minutes walk from, and in direct competition to, The Empire. More venues followed and by 1937 there were nine full-time cinemas operating in Cambridge, the Central, Cosmopolitan, Kinema, Playhouse, Regal, Rendezvous, Tivoli, Theatre and Victoria. Many were purpose-built.

The Theatre was requisitioned in the Second World War and did not operate as a dedicated cinema again. The remaining eight cinemas were active until 1956 when the Playhouse and Tivoli closed following the imposition of the Entertainment Tax. The rise of television led to a slow decline in the industry and, with the closure of the Victoria in 1989, the city was left with only two cinemas, a situation that would remain unchanged for some years to come.

There are three cinemas in Cambridge in 2015:

- Having operated as part of the ABC, Cannon and MGM entertainment chains, the Regal was purchased by Wetherspoons and redeveloped into a large, themed public house which retains the cinema's name. The Arts Picturehouse, a three-screen cinema with a varied programme of big studio and independent films is located on the upper floors. It is very much the successor of the popular Arts Cinema that previously operated in the Market Passage;
- The Vue opened as a Warner Brothers cinema in the Grafton Centre shopping arcade in 1995. It is located close to the old Picture Palace site on East Road;
- The Light Cinema opened in early 2015, replacing the Cineworld multiplex built on the Cambridge Leisure Park in 2004.

After acquiring the Picturehouse cinema chain, Cineworld were obliged to sell their Cambridge multiplex following concerns about a potential monopoly in the city's cinema market being raised by the Competition and Markets Authority, formerly the Competition Commission – a world away from the situation in 1951, when the ABC chain owned five major cinemas in Cambridge, with only the local Arts Cinema and George Webb's Kinema and Rex as competition.

The Kinema always operated in conjunction with other venues in Cambridge. Fredrick Hawkins ran the Empire and the Picture Palace on East Road. The Pointer family operated the Victoria in two separate locations on the Market Square as well

as the Kinema, while George Webb owned the Rex on Magrath Avenue at the same time. It may be that the Kinema only endured because it was always part of a larger operation.

MEMORIES OF THE KINEMA

The Kinema was often referred to as a 'flea pit', but opinion differs as to whether it was due to actual infestations or the general run-down nature of the venue. The term is used both with affection and with distaste, depending on who is asked.

On 13 June 1996 the *CEN* published a selection of memories that their readers had sent in response to a letter from Allan Brigham.

Peggy Mansfield

My father was well known to the children in this area. Before the days of Sunday cinema we used to go out as a family. Many children would see my father and say 'Hello Mr Kinema'. When he used to climb the 'iron ladder' (to the projection box) on the Saturday Matinees they would cheer, and when the film broke down they would boo.

Every time I go past the Kinema I can still see my father in my mind, as he used to stand on the front door step in his break time.

It most certainly was not a flea pit, not in the 1920s and '30s anyway. My mother and her sister were cleaners there. Between the seating was lino, and after the pews had been swept my mother and her sister scrubbed 6 rows each day.

Reg Wood, Saffron Walden

The first time I went inside the Kinema in 1926 I was rather frightened – it was all dark with a piano playing with the film in progress. They were silent films in those days but when a Tom Mix or a Hoot Gibson cowboy film was being shown you couldn't hear the pianist playing because of the kids making such a noise.

Walter Miller, Chesterton

About 1927 my father, Harry Miller, was a member of the orchestra which was the accompaniment to the films. My father played the cello. His employment carried with it a complimentary ticket for admission to the cinema. This ticket, at 16, I found most useful.

On Mondays I would go from 6.00-7.30, then on to Scouts!

On Tuesdays I would return and see the programme right through.

Then on Thursdays I went for the change of programme.

I even got in on a Saturday or two, although this was not really allowed!

Entrance to the projection room was by a secure ladder at the back of the auditorium and the sight of Mr Pink's legs disappearing at the top of the ladder brought cries of 'Legs Up, Legs Up!'

Fred Unwin, Cockcroft Place (author of the *Pimbo* books)

Above the Kinema, on top of Dales Brewery, was a large cup. When the sun shone it splayed out rays, and as a small boy I wasn't going to an old, rough building, it was like our beacon to the Kinema, it was like a Mecca that all the poor kids were going to. I knew when I got inside there I was going to see something I'd never see again.

A window on the world, an oasis in a world of poverty and unemployment. No rotten old building.

Graham Richardson, Walpole Road

In about 1925 Graham Richardson went to a Saturday afternoon children's programme at the Kinema to see his favourite cowboy, Tom Mix. He was ushered down the front to the first row seat, nicknamed the 'neckbreakers'.

In front of him was a long brass pole from which hung a red velvet curtain to hide the musicians, who were also watching the films so they could play the appropriate music.

After five minutes an usher came down, shone a torch, grabbed Mr Richardson by the scruff of the neck, marched him outside and dared him not to go in again. Nonplussed the lad asked why. He was told that a boy had been taken short and relieved himself over the curtain onto the man playing the drums. It was no good protesting that it was the boy in the next seat. The usher was convinced it was him.

The boy concerned went on to make a name for himself in Cambridge.

Peter Raymond, Milton Road

In 1935 a Saturday morning matinee was held there every week. The films would be a Marx Brothers or Laurel and Hardy plus a Cowboy – Buck Jones – plus a serial feature like the Perils of Pauline that cut off where the hero was in dire trouble to encourage you to turn up the following Saturday.

The price was 6d – 4d for the film and 2d for a large ice-cream. It was the venue for the deprived kids of Cambridge.

Graham Swan, Chesterton Road (undergraduate 1948–51)

I have happy memories of the Kinema. It was small, stuffy, smoky and cheap. It was also entertaining. The films varied from hilarious 'H' films to art house films that hadn't been taken up by the main distributors. It was always worth checking the programme if one wanted to waste an evening in congenial company.

John Holliday, Cherry Hinton

I remember going to this picture house back in 1948/49. We used to go to the Saturday afternoon matinee – known as the '3d Rush' because it used to cost three old pennies to get in. The doorman used to have one arm. He used to put the ticket in the hook of his artificial arm, tear them in half, and give you the other half. This fellow was a right character. He kicked many a backside.

I attended this picture house well into my teens. Of course with a young lady present it was the back row. The cost was about a month's pocket money.

Derek Comber, Luton (bingo caller 1970s)

I don't think the prize money was the prime reason for attending. It was the company and the friendships that were formed. I remember a lady, around 50, who had a crush on a gentleman, and at least half a dozen times during the course of the evening you could see her mouth the words 'I love you' to him.

I never had any problems getting a laugh, and thoroughly enjoyed myself. For me all the fun has gone out of the game now, along with the characters. I think it's a great loss that these bastions of innocence have closed, to be replaced by impersonal gambling houses. Just another commercial nail in the coffin of old fashioned pleasure.

The last word belongs to Alan Kersey of the *Cambridge News* who neatly summed up the experience of watching a film at the little cinema on Mill Road 'It had a hole in the roof and stunk of stale urine, but when Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin were on it had a magical atmosphere'.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ CN, 21 January 2004.

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Mike Petty, Cambridgeshire Historian,
<http://www.cambridgeshirehistory.com/MikePetty>

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Afterword

The Kinema – Mill Road by Fred Unwin

What pleasures as kiddies you gave us;
As our young minds hankered for change.
Cowboys, to grip and enthrall us,
With Tom Mix riding the range.
Charlie Chaplin's bowler and cane;
A hotch-potch of laughter and tears.
Ben Turpin, and dear Larry Semon,
And Lon Chaney, to heighten our fears.

And we, who have enjoyed all these pleasures,
And once hungered for adventures unknown,
Have gorged our life of such treasures,
Till ancient and decrepit have grown.
And then with the pang that comes after,
The delights and happiness given
We'll cherish the memory of laughter
And the Kinema's sample of Heaven!

APPENDIX I: Companies and Personnel

The Empire

These following details are taken from contemporary newspaper reports.

Date	Name	Role
1913–16	Mr Davis	Conductor
1915–16	Harry Chester	Manager
1916	Mr Franks	Manager

The Kinema

The following details have been compiled from public contributions, following an article published in the *Cambridge Evening News* in 1996.

Date	Name	Role
1916	H. C. Coulson	Manager
1916	Sidney Stamp	Chief Machine Operator
1916	A. C. Gilchrist	Proprietor
1920s–1960s	Jimmy Pink	Projectionist
1920s	Mr William Barker	Commissionaire
1920s	Doris Barker	Box office
1927	Harry Miller	Cellist in orchestra
1927	Miss Humberstone	Pianist
Early 1930s	Elsie Gillingham	Pianist
1930s	Walter 'Ginger' Winters	Doorman
1930s	'Jummy' or 'Gammy' Smith	Kicker-out
1930s	Mr Naylor	unknown
1940s	Malcolm George Clarke	Projectionist assistant
1940s	Bat Willis	Under manager
1940s	Pauline Harrison	Ushette
1940s	Doug Ayres	Projectionist assistant
1940s	Len Amos	Projectionist assistant
1948	Tony Ventress	Violin
1940s	Wally Cockleton	Doorman
1940s	Mr Gray	Night watchman
1940s	Mrs Hurry	Café
1951 – ?	Fred Wilkinson	Manager/Asst. Manager
1952– 53	Mr R.H. Gable	Manager

Date	Name	Role
1953– ?	Mrs Webb	Manageress
? – 1966	Alfred Pink	Manager
1970s	Derek P. Comber	Bingo caller and cashier
Unknown	Stewart Wilkinson	Projectionist
Unknown	Basil Wilkinson	Projectionist

Sturton Town Liberal Hall Company Ltd

The known chairmen and secretaries of the company are as follows. This information is drawn from the minutes and documents of the company and from newspaper reports.

Date	Chairman	Secretary
1881	Thomas Nichols	James Drake Digby
1885	T. Nichols	Sub committee
1888, 1889, 1890	T. Nichols	James Rae
1891	T. Nichols	J. D. Digby
1893	T. Nichols	E. J. Wallis
1894	<i>T. Nichols resigns, unknown who takes over</i>	E. J. Wallis
1900		George or Percy William Throssel
1904		Ernest T. Rider
1905	John Burford (<i>not known when he became chairman</i>)	E. T. Rider
1909	A. Negus (<i>period of chairmanship not known</i>)	E. T. Rider
	W. F. Thompson (<i>not known when W. F. Thompson becomes Chairman</i>)	E. T. Rider
1930	S. F. Thompson (<i>not known when S. F. Thompson resigns</i>)	E. T. Rider
1942		Bernard Chater
1964		George E. Williamson
1976		A. G. Kinnear
1979	Mrs E. G. Piggot	A. G. Kinnear
1985	Mrs E. G. Piggot	H. G. Parish

Directors of the company include:

Date of change	Directors added or removed
1881	Thomas Blewitt, Philip Banyard, E. C. Bramley, William Briggs, George Bullock, J. Burford, Joseph Francis, Charles Moody, Thomas Nichols, J. Pierson, J. Rae, Seth C. Reeve, Joseph Twinn, Mark Winzar, Frank Ward, Henry Yockney, Edward Young.
1882	Seth Reeve, Philip Banyard resign on becoming contractors
1884	Bowers, E. Young resigned; Page, A. Negus elected
1889	Yockney resigned, Burwick elected
1905	Frank Ward resigned
1930	William White elected
1932	Sydney H. Watson elected
1934	William White resigned, Arthur T. Marshall elected
1945	P. F. Thompson elected
1957	Directors in 1957 were P. F. Thompson, A. E. Mason, A. T. Marshall, S. H. Watson
1961	S. H. Watson resigned, Bertram Chater elected
1962	A. E. Mason died, George Williamson elected
1964	B. Chater resigned
1966	T. H. Marshall elected
1968	A. T. Marshall resigned, Maurice Rushton Marshall elected
1974	A. G. Kinnear elected
1977	G. E. Williamson resigned, H. G. Parish elected

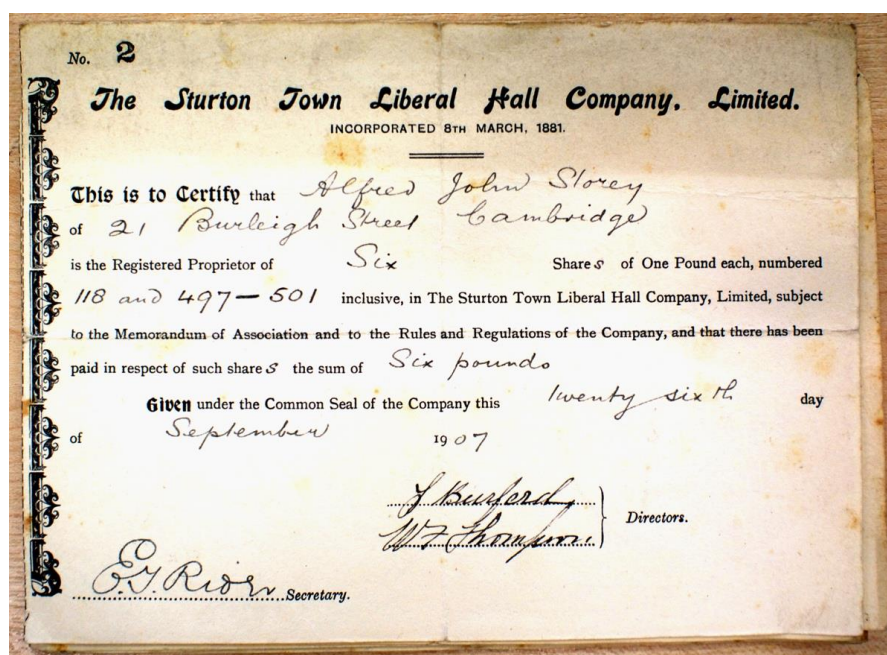


Figure 32 – A share certificate from 1907
(CA: from R89/41)

By 1971 the company had lost of track of most of the smaller shareholders. The largest holdings known are P.F. Thompson (a director since 1945) and the Cambridge Ice Cream Co. Ltd. (one of the Pointer businesses).

<u>THE STURTON TOWN LIBERAL HALL COMPANY LIMITED.</u>		
<u>List of shareholders on 14th. December, 1971.</u>		
Apthorpe Miss D.D.	Flat 16, Oban Court, Union Lane, Cambridge.	5
Bullock. Miss R.M.	8, Holly Road, Uttroter	5
Cambridge Ice Cream Co. Ltd.	Hertford St. Cambridge	125
Canham. Miss M.O.	School House, Bentworth. Nr. Alton. Hants	5
Chater. P.B.	1, Stratfield Close, Cambridge.	92
Cork. C.E.P.	100, Hartington Grove, Cambridge.	25
Devonshire. Her Grace the Duchess of,	c/o Westminster Bank, S.W.1.	30
Englemen. Miss M.	8, Glenville Caravan Park, Tewersham, Cambs.	1
Jackson. F.C.	33, Luard Road, Cambridge.	5
Knight. J.C.C.	10, Bushmead Gardens, Eaton Socon. Hunts.	30
Lean. Mrs. I.F.	72, Gilbert Road, Cambridge.	82
Marshall. T.H.	106, Ross Street, Cambridge.	78
Marshall M.R.	46, High Street, Longstanton. Cambs.	50
Negus. E.L.	109, Glebe Road, Cambridge.	17
Pigott. Mrs. E.J.	16, Gilbert Road, Cambridge.	82
Norris. Mrs. E.	4, Gladstone Rd. Folkestone. Kent.	7
Pointer. J. (Exor. A.J. Pointer deceased)	12, Humberstone Road, Cambridge.	16
Pointer. F.A.	Hertford Street, Cambridge.	1
Putley. Mrs. K.C.	7, Western Grove, Fulbourn. Cambs.	55
Read. W.A.	76, Mill Road, Cambridge.	55
Smith. Miss J.M.	39, Perowne Street, Cambridge.	5
Steggles. J.W.	2, Chedgrave Road, Lowestoft. Sfk.	62
Thompson. P.F.	38, Fitzroy Street, Cambridge.	298
Watson. A.H.V.	Waverley Hotel, Cullen, Banffshire.	82
Webb. W.F.	188, Mill Road, Cambridge.	80
Whitbread & Co. Ltd.	Chiswell Street, London. E.C.1.	60
Wilkinson. A.	68, Mill Road, Cambridge.	80
Williamson. Mrs. B.A.	21, Wort's Causeway, Cambridge.	1
Williamson. G.E.	21, Wort's Causeway, Cambridge.	52
Dixon & Watts. Misses	c/o Barclays Bank Ltd. Benet Street, Cambridge.	1
Shareholders whose present whereabouts are unknown		396
		<hr/> 1883 <hr/>

Figure 33 – List of shareholders in 1971
(CA: from R89/41)

The Gladstone Liberal Club

The following details for the Working Men's Liberal Club and Gladstone Liberal Club (from 1910) are taken from the *Spalding's Directory* and newspaper reports. The election of officers took place at the annual meeting that was generally in October, on the anniversary of the club's founding, but sometimes delayed until the new year.

Date	President	Honourable Secretary
1883	Bullock	H . Yockney
1884	Blewitt	H. Yockney & Thurlow Corke
1885	James Drake Digby	<i>unknown</i>
1886	J. Rae	<i>unknown</i>
1888	J. Burford	J. Twinn
1889	J. Burford	James Newton Digby
1890, 1891, 1892	Frank Ward	J. Newton Digby
1893	J. Newton Digby	E. Briggs & J. Canham
1894	Philip Banyard	J. Canham & Adams
1895	P. Banyard	R. Cleaver
1897	<i>unknown</i>	R. Cleaver
1898	Alfred Wisbey	S. Watson
1899	J. Burford	J. Newton Digby
1890, 1891	F. Ward	J. Newton Digby
1901	H. G. Gray	Horace Summers
1902	F. Ward	A. W. Wisbey
1903	F. Ward	R. Cleaver
1904	F. Ward	S. Watson
1905	R. Cleaver	W. F. Taylor
1906	W. Charter	Howell
1907	J. Newton Digby	F. Brigham
1908	Councillor H. J. Gray	F. Brigham
1909	R. Cleaver	F. Brigham
1910	Councillor H. J. Gray	Horace Summers
1911	Councillor H. J. Gray	F. W. Drake
1912, 1913	R. Cleaver	A. R. Almond
1914	T. A. Mathers	A. N. Ward
1915, 1916	A. J. Wyatt	A. N. Ward
1916/1917	R. Cleaver	C. Brignell
1919/1920, 1921/1922	A. R. Almond	C. Brignell
1922/1923	E. J. Rider	R. Williams

Date	President	Honourable Secretary
1923/1924, 1924/1925	W. Wills	A. Wilkinson
1925/1926	C. J. Paul	A. Wilkinson
1926/1927, 1927/1928	E. J. Rider	A. Willkinson
1929/1930, 1930/1931, 1931/1932, 1932/1933	Coun. Justin G. Kenney	A. Willkinson
1933/1934, 1934/1935, 1935/1936	M. C. Green	A. Willkinson
1936/1937	J. S. Steggles	A. Wilkinson
1937/1938, 1938/1939	A. E. White	A. Willkinson
1939/1940	A. E. White	C. H. Patrick

After 1940, *Spalding's Directory* and the later *Kelly's Directory* did not list names for the club.

Salvation Army

The following are the *Spalding's Directory* entries for the period in which the Salvation Army were based at the hall.

Date	Directory Entry
1887, 1891, 1895, 1898	Salvation Army (Eastern Division)
1901	Salvation Army (No.1 Corps)
1904	Major William H. Lord (26 Guest Road, Officer in Command of the Division), Adjutant Fairloof (16 Perowne Street, Officer in charge)
1907	Headquarters 97 Mill Road, G. Bramhall (Major), Cheadle (Major - Hastings Villa, St Barnabas Road)
1910	Salvation Army (No.1 Corps)
1911	Salvation Army (No.1 Corps), Adjutant H.J and Mrs French - Commanding Officers
1912	Salvation Army Sundays only, Adjutant and Mrs Hitchcock, 201 Mill Road - Commanding Officers

Prize Entertainments

Prize Entertainments was apparently created for the sole purpose of running the Kinema as a bingo club, so ensuring its survival at a time when business had become increasingly difficult for small cinemas.



Figure 34 – Prize Entertainments letterhead
(CA: from R89/41)

The directors of the company were Alec G. Kinnear, Alfred Pink and Ken Sylvester.

City Bargains

The proprietors of City Bargains in 1987 were Denis Capon and B. Alderton. Capon also rented the flat about No. 89.

APPENDIX II: the Cottages and Directory Entries

The cottages on the land purchased by the Sturton Town Liberal Company, Nos 46, 47 and 48 and No. 45, next door, were converted over a number of years into parts of the Kinema site holding offices, stores and a café. The following is a summary of information about the previous tenants, from census records and the *Spalding's* and *Kelly's* directories.

	No. 48	No. 47	No. 46	No. 45
1861 Census	John Legge, Foundry Labourer	Richard Southell, <i>Engine Smith</i>	Robert Roe, <i>Engine Driver</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1871 Census	William Harper, <i>Engine Fitter</i>	George Brooks, <i>Railway Engine Driver</i>	Robert Hellaby, <i>Railway Inspector</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1874 Spalding's	Mrs Naomi Slater, <i>Tobacconist</i>	George Brooks, <i>Engine Driver</i>	Charles Arthur Millington	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1878 Spalding's	Mrs Naomi Slater, <i>Tobacconist</i>	George Brooks, <i>Engine Driver</i>	Humphrey Thomas, <i>Railway Servant</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1881 Spalding's	Mrs Naomi Slater, <i>Tobacconist</i>	George Brooks, <i>Engine Driver</i>	George Ranner, <i>Railway Signaller</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1884 Spalding's	Mrs Naomi Slater, <i>Tobacconist</i>	<i>Sturton Town Hall</i>	Robert Sandfield Watts, <i>Hall-keeper</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1887 Spalding's	<i>(empty)</i>	<i>Sturton Town Hall</i>	Oswald G. Smith, <i>Resident custodian, Sturton Town Hall</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>

Mill Road was renumbered between 1887 and 1891. The original No. 47, now the entrance to Sturton Town Hall, was not assigned a revised number and just appears between Nos 43 and 45 in *Spalding's Directory*. Note the direction of count was reversed and the now common pattern of only odd or even numbers on each side of the street was adopted.

	No. 43 (was 48)	No. 45 (was 46)	No. 47 (was 45)
1891	Mrs Mary Griffin	Oswald G. Smith, <i>Resident custodian, Sturton Town Hall</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>

Mill Road was renumbered again between 1891 and 1895, adopting the pattern used now. The following entries are all taken from *Spalding's Directories*.

	No. 85 (was 43)	No. 87 (was 45)	No. 89 (was 47)
1895	Mrs Mary Griffin	Oswald G. Smith, <i>Resident custodian, Sturton Town Hall</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1898, 1901	Frederick Woolfenden, <i>Hairdresser and Tobacconist</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	Robert Carpenter, <i>Cricketer</i>
1904, 1907, 1910, 1911, 1912	Thomas & Co, <i>Printsellers</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	R. Pyle, <i>Chimney Sweep</i>
1913, 1914, 1915	H. Cullum, <i>Picture frame maker and mount cutter</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	R. Pyle, <i>Chimney Sweep</i>
1916/1917	<i>(empty)</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	R Pyle, <i>Chimney Sweep</i>
1919/1920, 1921/1922	Kinema Stores	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	J. B. Bullen
1922/1923	Kinema Stores	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	Henry J. Wilderspin
1923/1924, 1924/1925	Kinema Stores	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	Ernest Free
1925/1926	Kinema Confectionary Stores	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	Ernest Free
1926/1927	<i>(empty)</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	<i>(empty)</i>

	No. 85 (was 43)	No. 87 (was 45)	No. 89 (was 47)
1927/1928, 1929/1930, 1930/1931, 1931/1932, 1932/1933, 1933/1934, 1934/1935	<i>Part of Kinema from hereon</i>	W. White, <i>Bootmaker</i>	The Kinema Café
1935/1936		<i>Part of Kinema from hereon</i>	The Kinema Café
1936/1937, 1937/1938, 1938/1939, 1939/1940			The Kinema Lounge

Entries for the hall are, once again, unnumbered in the directory between Nos 85 and 87 until the 1927/1928 edition, after which No. 85 is listed as **Sturton Town Hall – Kinema (Pointer & Coulson, Proprietors)**. From the 1935/1936 editions onwards, there is only one entry for No. 85 and No. 87, which reads **85–87 Kinema, AJ Pointer, Proprietor**.

The following listings are taken from *Kelly's Directories*. The cottage to the left of the Kinema is known as No. 85a Mill Road from 1953 to 1969, the Kinema is No. 85. At some point Nos 87 and 89 were knocked through and so appear as one entry, 87–89 Mill Road.

	No. 85a	Nos 87–89
1948	<i>(not listed)</i>	The Kinema Lounge, <i>Café</i>
1951	<i>(not listed)</i>	The Kinema Lounge, <i>Café</i>
1953	Dorothy Rowling, <i>Draper</i>	The Kinema Lounge, <i>Café</i>
1957	Fabric Shop, <i>Drapers</i>	Kinema Café & Caterers (<i>F. Coulson</i>)
1960	Fashion Box, <i>Drapers</i>	V Freeman, <i>Café</i>
1962, 1964	S & B Butler, <i>Drapers</i>	City Bargains, <i>Shopkeepers</i>
1965/1966, 1967, 1968, 1969	S & B Butler, <i>Baby Linen Dlrs</i>	City Bargains, <i>Shopkeepers</i>
1970	<i>(not listed)</i>	City Bargains, <i>Shopkeepers</i>

Subsequent listings are just for the Kinema and City Bargains.