

Dr. David Wilmore BSc.

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY COMMENCING ON 1st DECEMBER 2020

APPEAL SITE

135-149 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H 8AH

APPELLANT

Capitalstart Limited

APPEAL

Appeal against London Borough of Camden's refusal of Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for:

'The comprehensive refurbishment of the existing Grade II listed building and the provision of a new two storey roof extension and new basement level, providing a new four-screen cinema (Class D2) and spa (sui generis) at basement levels, a restaurant/bar (Class A3/A4) at ground floor level, a 94 bed hotel (Class C1) at part ground and first to sixth floors and associated terrace and bar (Class A4) at roof level, together with associated public realm and highways improvements'.

Planning Inspectorate Reference Nos.

APP/X5210/W/19/3243781 & APP/X5210/Y/19/3243782

London Borough of Camden Application Reference Nos.

2017/7051/P & 2018/0037/L

Summary

- i. The investigations and research which we have been commissioned to undertake by Camden Council has revealed a lot of hitherto new information about the building. This has helped to place the building in context and to identify a number of key issues that have not been fully explored by the appellant, namely:
 - The importance and lack of research and understanding relating to Alfred. Reginald Thomson's decorative murals
 - The lack of real investigation into any remaining original physical evidence within the main foyer ceiling
 - The lack of understanding and importance associated with the stage house and the surviving rigging grid
- ii. The true architectural and artistic significance of Walter Bayes frieze
- iii. We further examine how the appellant has failed to understand the true nature of how theatre is created, the processes, the options and variants, but most of all the commercial opportunities that are available. The lack of an independent commercial marketing exercise to investigate the potential value of the site as a theatre demonstrates that this option has been simply been dismissed without due diligence or arts-based financial analysis.
- iv. The role of the Saville Theatre within London's West-End is also examined to demonstrate that the sum of the parts are greater than the individual pieces. In other words this site is invaluable to the whole of "theatreland". It is the missing theatrical dentition on Shaftesbury Avenue. A theatre brings many additional benefits to a community, specifically the cascading commercial, social and architectural gains that are so important in helping to articulate and support the High Street at a time when it is in desperate need of regeneration.
- v. Our conclusion is that the Saville Theatre could unquestionably be operated once again as a commercial theatre, that there is undoubtedly a market for an additional theatre in the West-End, and that given the opportunity the appellant would be faced with significant commercial competition to acquire the site for this singular purpose.

1. Introduction

1.1 I am Dr. David Wilmore BSc. of Theatresearch Ltd., Historic Theatre Consultants. I am a Director of Theatresearch a company that was established almost 40 years ago. I have worked in the theatre industry for the whole of my professional career. I started work at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House in 1979 to research and oversee the restoration of its unique nineteenth century stage equipment and other historic elements of the building. On completion of the work I undertook a PhD at the University of Hull based upon the concept of researching the development of nineteenth century stage technology and its direct relationship with the physical construction of theatres. Just prior to completion of my PhD the Tyne Theatre & Opera House suffered a disastrous fire on Christmas Day 1985 and I was engaged once more to undertake another more ambitious restoration.

1.2 At the same time as working upon this restoration project I was engaged to work on development of the stage machinery for Andrew Lloyd Webber's new musical "Phantom of the Opera" at Her Majesty's Theatre, London. This involved researching the original construction of the theatre, identifying the key possibilities for re-using the original stage equipment and then working with the designers to create a production concept which would respect the historic fabric whilst delivering a visually stunning production.

1.3 I then went to work on the restoration of the Playhouse Theatre, Northumberland Avenue, London. On my return to Newcastle I was engaged as Stage Director for the newly formed professional repertory company at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House. This was followed by two years as the Technical Director at the National Garden Festival in Gateshead where I was engaged to develop technical concepts for the performance venues, and to oversee the operational technical management of the whole site.

1.4 In 1990 I was appointed Technical Director of the Harrogate International Conference Centre and was responsible for all venues including the modern 2,000 seat auditorium and the 1903 Royal Hall designed by world famous theatre architect, Frank Matcham. During my time there I developed restoration proposals for the building which were completed in 2007.

1.5 Throughout my time in Harrogate I was also working on a portfolio of other projects around the country which included:

- Theatre Consultant: Gaiety Theatre & Opera House, Douglas, Isle of Man
- Conservation Consultant: Georgian Theatre Royal, Richmond [Grade I Listed]
- Conservation Consultant: Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds [Grade I Listed]

1.6 In 1996 I was elected Chairman of the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) and served a six-year term of office developing and nurturing important elements of the technical theatre profession which included:

- Publications of guidance and best practice in the technical theatre industry
- Development of publications for the circulation of technical theatre knowledge
- Development of technical theatre training strategies within the industry
- Serving on the ABTT Theatre Planning Committee (advising theatre owners on proposals for alterations and theatre related design and construction).

1.7 The ABTT is recognised as an authoritative body in the theatre industry and continues to publish and update the standard industry guidance *Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment* in partnership with The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, The District Surveyors Association and The Institute of Licensing.

1.8 In 1998 I was admitted as a full member to the Institute of Theatre Consultants

1.9 In 2017 I was elected a Fellow of the Association of British Theatre Technicians.

1.10 I am a Life Member of both the Cinema Theatre Association and The Theatres Trust

1.10 In 2005 I began to focus the practice wholly on theatre construction and conservation. Since that time I have been involved in many historic theatre projects which *include*:

- Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne, [Grade I Listed, Frank Matcham, 1900]
- Palace Theatre, Redditch, [Grade II, Bertie Crewe, 1913]
- Plaza Cinema Theatre, Stockport, [Grade II, William Thornley, 1932]
- Globe Theatre, Stockton, [Grade II, Percy L. Browne, 1935]
- Shaftesbury Theatre, London, [Grade II*, Bertie Crewe, 1911]
- King's Theatre, Edinburgh, [Grade A, Swanston & Davidson, 1905]
- Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, [Grade I, Emblin Walker, Jones & Cromie 1922]
- Normansfield Entertainment Hall, [Grade II*, Rowland Plumbe, 1879]
- Theatre Royal, Portsmouth, [Grade II*, Frank Matcham, 1900]
- Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen, [Grade A, Frank Matcham, 1897/1909]
- City Varieties Music Hall, Leeds, [Grade II*, G. Smith, 1865]
- Globe Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees, [Grade II, Percy L. Browne, 1935]

1.11 My professional theatre expertise provides advice in a number of key areas including:

- Project Development & Lead Project Consultants
- Restoration & Conservation
- Technical Equipment Specification
- Viability Studies
- Technical Management

1.12 I recently acted as Conservation Consultant for Really Useful Theatre Group [now Lloyd Webber Theatres] developing Conservation Plans for several areas within the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane whilst also overseeing the dismantling of the historic stage equipment for storage and future reconstruction. I also provided expert advice on The Theatres Trust's advisory panel which was hand-picked to comment and advise on the design proposals.

1.13 During the course of my career I have written, edited and contributed to a number of theatre publications which *include*:

- *Curtains!!! or A New Life For Old Theatres*, John Offord Publication, 1982
- *The Theatres Trust Guide to British Theatres*, A&C Black, 2000
- *British Theatrical Patents 1801-1900*, Society for Theatre Research, 1996
- *British Theatrical Patents 1901-1950*, Society for Theatre Research, 2010
- *Frank Matcham & Co.*, Theatreshire Books Ltd., 2008
- *Edwin O. Sachs – Architect, Stagehand, Engineer & Fireman*, Theatreshire Books, 1998
- *Backstage in the Theatre – Scenes and Machines*, Theatreshire Books Ltd., 2015

1.14 I am currently acting for Stockton Borough Council as the appointed Lead Consultant on the project to restore and return the Globe Theatre, a 1935 Grade II listed building back to theatre use. The building has been a cinema, theatre and a bingo hall and is now the subject of a restoration project to return the building back to a very carefully defined end-user theatre

specification. Stockton Borough Council has contracted with commercial theatre operator ATG, who will be responsible for the day to day management and operation of the building.

1.15 I am also a visiting scholar at the University of Hull, Drama Department and have also been awarded a Leverhulme Post-Doctoral Fellowship to the University of Manchester Drama Department.

1.16 I have recently been commissioned by Historic England to carry out research for their forthcoming publication relating to fibrous plasterwork, with specific reference to historic theatre ceilings. This work was instigated after the Apollo Theatre ceiling collapse in Shaftesbury Avenue in 2016.

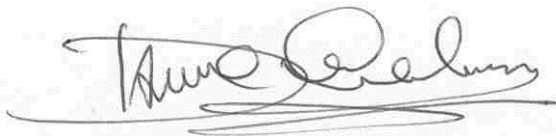
1.17 In preparing my evidence I confirm that I have acted with

- objectivity
- impartially
- without interference and
- with reference to all appropriate available sources of information.

1.18 I consider that I have no conflicts of interest in acting for the Council in this appeal.

1.19 My advice is not subject to a performance or success related fee basis.

1.20 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Wilmore', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Signed: Dr. David Wilmore BSc., PhD

Director: Theatresearch Ltd.

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Appendix 1: The 1931 Architectural Drawings of the Saville Theatre

Appendix 2: Bertie Crewe – Theatre Biography

Appendix 3: Historic England Listing Description

2. Scope and Summary of Evidence

2.1 The Council determined the planning and listed building consent applications under delegated powers, and on 5 July 2019 refused planning permission and listed building consent for 14 reasons. The Council considers that it would be possible to overcome reasons for refusal 4-14 by entering into a suitably worded section 106 legal agreement and that Reason 3 could possibly be overcome through provision of additional information. The key reasons for refusal are therefore 1 and 2 set out below:

Reason 1

The proposed rooftop extension, by reason of the proposed height, mass, detailed design and materials would compromise the form, architectural character and historic interest of the host listed building, and in combination with the change of its main use to a hotel, would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the host listed building and nearby surrounding Seven Dials and Denmark Street Conservation Areas, contrary to policy D1 (Design) and D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

Reason 2

The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the proposed development would ensure the provision of the maximum reasonable amount of replacement cultural or leisure facilities within the scheme contrary to Policy C3 (Cultural and leisure facilities) and Policy D2 (Heritage) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

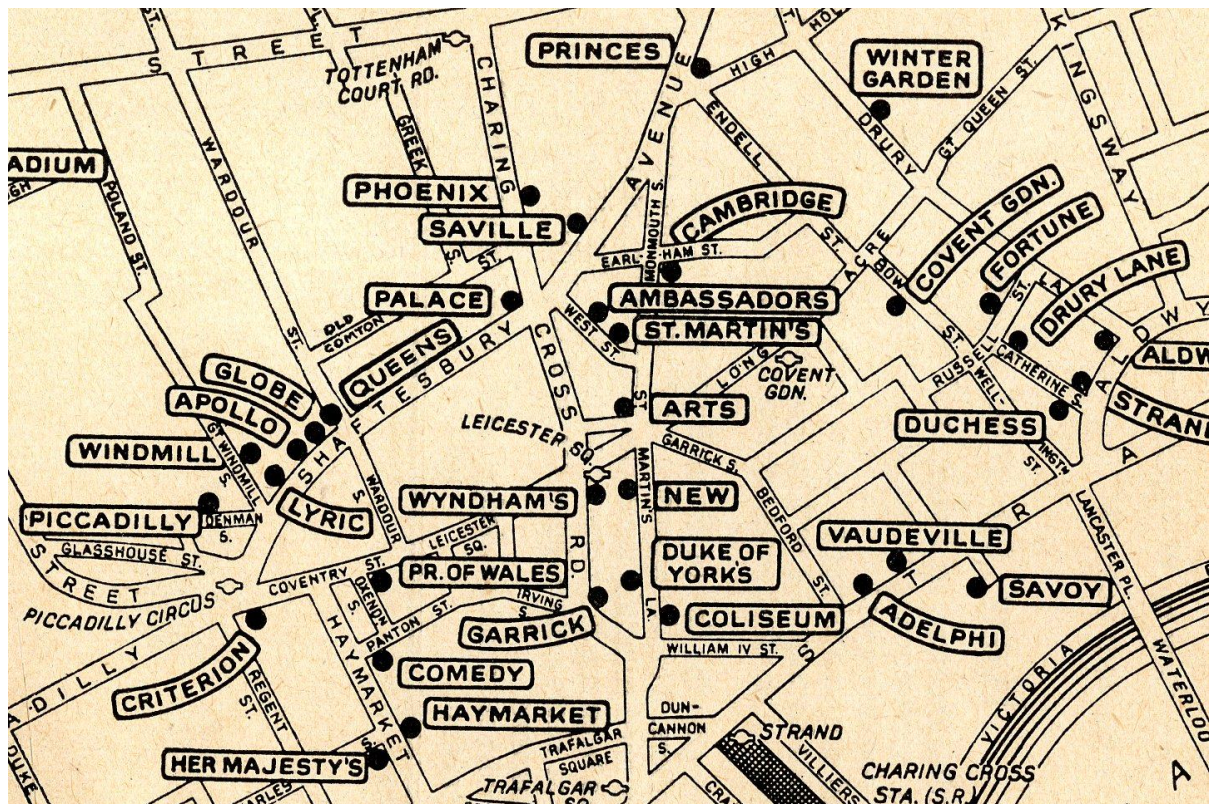
2.2 My company was approached by Camden Council in March 2020 to examine the documentation relating to this matter in order to provide an independent assessment within the areas of our expertise.

3. Assessment of the Site

3.1 The Saville Theatre opened in 1931 and was designed by the architects T.P. Bennett & Son of London. They were assisted in their design by the internationally famous theatre architect Bertie Crewe, also of London.

3.2 The location of the building in Shaftesbury Avenue is significant as it occupies in my independent opinion a desirable ‘theatreland’ site equi-distant between the Palace Theatre (formerly the Royal English Opera House) in Cambridge Circus and the Shaftesbury Theatre (formerly the Princes Theatre) further along the Avenue which was also designed by Bertie Crewe in 1911.

3.3 The “theatreland” map shown below clearly places the location of the Saville Theatre in context.



“Theatreland” map from Lytton’s Theatre Seating Plans 1960-61
[Note the “Princes Theatre” is now called the “Shaftesbury Theatre”]

3.4 This clearly demonstrates the contextual location of the Saville Theatre, sitting comfortably within the area referred to as “theatreland”. Standing outside the Saville Theatre

it is possible to look one way and see the Shaftesbury Theatre, look the other way and see the Palace Theatre, and looking forward observe the Cambridge Theatre at Seven Dials.

3.5 Geographically the Saville Theatre provides a physical and psychological linkage for the theatres along the eastern end of Shaftesbury Avenue. Without the presence of the Saville Theatre the Shaftesbury becomes slightly isolated. The creation of “theatreland” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a conscious decision on the part of theatre owners and actor-managers. The concentration of theatre buildings was recognised as being of collective benefit to everyone working within the theatre industry and associated businesses. The same is true today and the loss of a theatre site within the West End is now an extremely rare occurrence.

3.6 Any doubt as to the modern-day commercial suitability of the site could be clearly ascertained by a competitive commercial marketing exercise managed by an independent company experienced in such matters. There has not been such an exercise, as I discuss below.

3.7 The appellant’s ICO Consultancy report states that;

“The stretch of Shaftesbury Avenue on which it is located [The Saville Theatre] has a disparate range of shops and restaurants and is presently used more as a thoroughfare than a destination high street. This dislocation from other venues means that the cinema – unlike these nearest competitors – does not presently gain any commercial benefit from being part of a cluster of similar entertainment facilities.”¹

3.8 We would partially concur with this assessment and therein lies the difference between understanding the current and proposed cinema use and theatre use. Small basement cinemas, almost by definition, do not provide the unique cultural experience that a large theatre does, and in consequence it does not have the same strength of ability to attract an international audience and the associated footfall for every night of a run. This in turn means that a theatre has a greater propensity to encourage and sustain urban regeneration and redevelopment around it. With the current decline of the national High Street, Local Authorities are now using theatres as a significant catalyst for urban regeneration. This is clearly demonstrated by the current restorations of both the 1935 Globe Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees and the 1930 Granada Walthamstow as live venues.

3.9 That is not to say that cinemas cannot have such impacts, but their scale of impact is lower, exceptional groupings like the Leicester Square cinemas aside. A cinema’s ability to deliver significant footfall depends evidently on screen-size, capacity, show-times, the

¹ ICO Consultancy Report, *Shaftesbury Avenue Cinema*, p.10, col.1.

“destination” element of the cinema, and the movie on release and that movie’s ability to “draw a crowd”. Small basement cinemas will not achieve these levels of footfall.

3.10 It is clear that the portion of Shaftesbury Avenue which forms the site of the Saville Theatre is currently “down at heel”. Its current usage does not attract significant audiences in the way that a 1,200 seat theatre could, and in consequence the recognised commercial “ripple effect”, which is generated around a theatre e.g. cafes, bars and restaurants has simply not prospered in recent years. Furthermore, with the Saville Theatre “dark” the theatrical dentition of Shaftesbury Avenue as a whole is materially affected. The concept of “theatreland” relies as the name implies on close proximity, and the distance between the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus, The Shaftesbury in High Holborn and the Cambridge Theatre in Seven Dials is presently far too great. By replacing the “missing tooth” in the dentition of the streetscape with a working theatre, rather than a small screen basement cinema(s), this connectivity will be restored – and the sum of the parts will unquestionably be greater than individual elements.

3.11 The Camden Local Plan clearly states that;

“Cultural and leisure facilities support consumer expenditure, tourism and business investment in the Borough contribute to the vibrancy and success of town centres and the night-time economy.”²

3.12 It furthermore goes on to state that, theatres of national, metropolitan and local/community significance, including part of London’s ‘theatreland’ are considered to be important in helping to define Camden’s cultural and leisure offer.

² See *Camden Local Plan* p.148, 4.57.

4. Architectural Context in 1931

4.1 The architectural press reported the 1931 opening of the Saville Theatre in some detail (see bibliography), acting effectively as a public peer review. It is interesting to note that Frank Matcham's theatres³ (he was involved in over 160 theatre projects), though recognised today as wonderful theatrical spaces, did not gain this kind of architectural recognition when they were originally built. The Saville Theatre on the other hand was clearly a building which resonated with the architectural community and in consequence received extensive coverage because of its exceptional architectural merit, and specifically the successful architectural integration of architectural design, cultural sculpture and art which was embedded within the building on its exterior and interior, rather than hung upon the wall.

4.2 The 1931 published written accounts, plans and sections of the building have been used as base reference documents in my evidence and these are reproduced in the accompanying appendices and cited in the bibliography.

4.3 The island site that was purchased for the construction of the theatre provided an excellent opportunity for the architects to execute both a safe and contemporary design which took into consideration many of the ideas and principles that had been developed by Bertie Crewe over a professional career spanning more than 45 years. For example, the island site afforded exceptionally safe means of escape on all sides of the building, something which many West End theatres were not and are still not able to provide. Examples of island site theatre construction, without party walls, are relatively scarce and considered to be highly desirable providing additional public safety through reduced distances of travel for escape, ease of access and egress for both public and stage equipment etc. Added benefits are also provided by sinking the building into the ground. These include the increased acoustic isolation of the auditorium due to the semi-subterranean nature of the building, which was designed by Hope Bagenal⁴, who was one of the first professional theatre acousticians.

4.4 London's theatreland underwent a major theatre building-boom during the inter-war period. Significant new theatres included: The Cambridge Theatre (1930), The Carlton Theatre (1927), The Duchess Theatre (1929), The Fortune (1924) The Phoenix (1930), The Piccadilly (1930) The Prince of Wales (1937) The Savoy (1929) The Westminster Theatre (1923) and The Whitehall Theatre (1930). Two of these theatres, The Piccadilly and The Phoenix (the latter located just round the corner from the Saville Theatre on Charing Cross Road) were designed in collaboration with T.P. Bennett's consulting architect Bertie Crewe – who is a significant figure in our national history of theatre construction (see Appendix 2 for further biographical details)

³ Matcham's London theatres include: The London Palladium and the London Coliseum

⁴ Bagenal, Hope, *Planning For Good Acoustics*, pub: Methuen, London, 1931.

4.5 By 1982 the context of theatre buildings in the British Isles had changed dramatically. *Curtains!!! of A New Life For Old Theatres* was a book published in that year which took stock of the remaining theatre buildings. It reported that eighty-five per cent of the 1,000 Theatre Royals, Grands, Alhambras and Empires, which flourished between 1900 and 1914 had been destroyed or irretrievably altered. Despite the mini theatre-building boom experienced in London during the inter-war years “theatreland” has since 1931 lost numerous historic theatres to development including;

- The Holborn Empire demolished for office accommodation
- The Carlton Theatre, Haymarket – the stage house sold for development
- The Plaza, Haymarket – gutted and now a supermarket
- The London Pavilion, Piccadilly Circus – gutted and redeveloped
- Daly’s Theatre, Leicester Square - demolished
- The Alhambra, Leicester Square – demolished for office accommodation

5. The Gilbert Bayes Frieze & Exterior

5.1 The audience experience has always been a major consideration in the architectural statement of nineteenth and early twentieth century theatres. The sense of theatricality and anticipation was intended to commence when the building came into sight. It is particularly interesting to note the 1930s external architectural relationship statement which is focused upon the first storey and surmounted with Gilbert Bayes⁵ sensational decorative frieze. Telling the history of theatre through the ages it announces to the Avenue a contextual timeline, proclaiming and announcing to the streetscape the link between the decorative arts, architecture and performance. It is fascinating to note that as early as early as 1916 T.P. Bennett wrote a monograph entitled *The Relation of Sculpture to Architecture*⁶. Though Bennett and Bayes were both engaged professionally during the Edwardian period their mutual interest in the relationship between sculpture and architecture transcended the traditional stiffness and formality of the pre-war period.

5.2 Writing as early as 1908 Rudolf Dircks was clear to point out that,

“Mr. Bayes has done many panels in relief.....Working in this method, his feeling for movement, his lightness of touch and fancy, are expressed pretty much in the same decorative manner as in his work in the round.”⁷

5.3 In receiving the commission for the frieze Bayes must have been conscious of the existing frieze on the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. This originally sat on the main elevation of Sir Robert Smirke’s Theatre of 1809, which burnt to the ground in March 1856. However the original panels, designed by John Flaxman⁸ and entitled “The Ancient and Modern Drama” were salvaged from the ruins and reinstated in E.M. Barry’s reconstruction of 1857-8, and remain in situ contained within the main Bow Street elevation.



The Ancient Drama Frieze – Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

[From: [theatresearch](#) archive]

⁵ Bayes, Gilbert William, b.4th April 1872, d.10th July 1953.

⁶ Bennett, T.P., *The Relation of Sculpture to Architecture*, pub: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1916.

⁷ Dircks, Rudolf, “Mr. Gilbert Bayes,” *The Art Journal*, July 1908, pp.193-199.

⁸ Flaxman, John, b.6th July 1755, d. 7th December 1826.

5.4 It is fascinating to note that Gilbert Bayes' older brother Walter⁹, had in 1921 produced an internal decorative frieze for Robert Atkinson's superb Regent Kinema in Brighton. The subject matter was "Carnival" and it employed the use of some of the Commedia Dell'Arte characters which Walter would also quote from some ten years later. A comparison between the Clown of Walter (left) and that of Gilbert (right) is irresistible!



⁹ Bayes, Walter John, b.31st May 1869 d.21st January 1956.

THE "REGENT" KINEMA THEATRE, BRIGHTON.

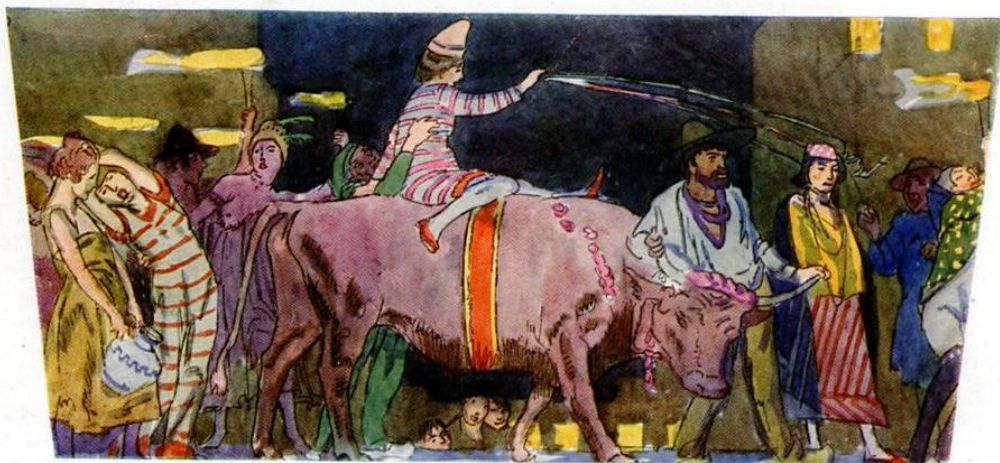
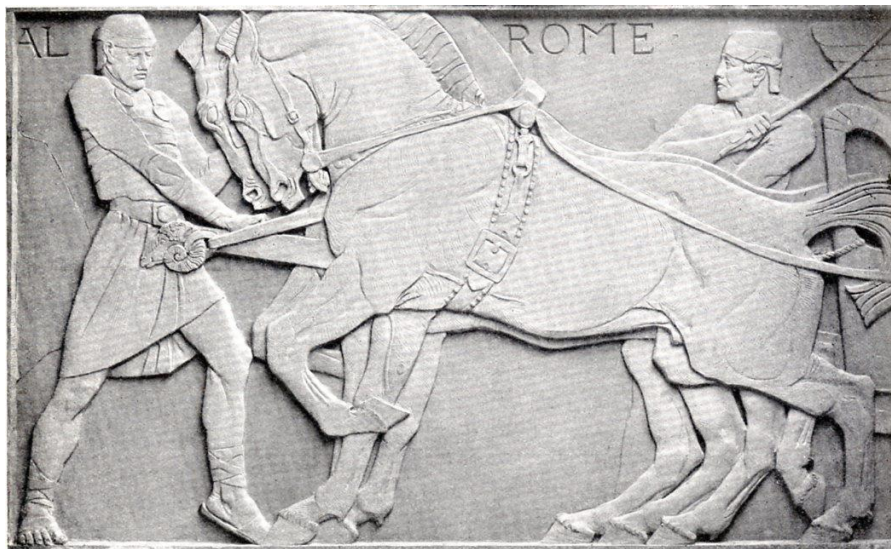


Plate I.

"CARNIVAL," BY WALTER BAYES.

[From: The Architectural Review, Vol.I No.2, 1921]

5.5 Gilbert Bayes' bold and extensive frieze surmounts the streetscape and draws the eye towards the intended original focus, namely the decorative fenestration of the main entrance, originally flanked by the decorative green bronze marquise and inventive lighting scheme. Bayes' frieze, model of which were exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibitions of 1930¹⁰ and 1931¹¹ and also awarded the silver medal by the Institute of Sculptors for the best applied sculpture of 1931 was visionary for the time discarding the stiffness of tradition by inserting humouresques into the interpretation. For instance, in the section devoted to the Harlequinade it is remarkable to see that he introduces a traditional pantomime Clown, rather than the traditional lozenged, visored, tighted lover of the ballet-skirted Columbine.

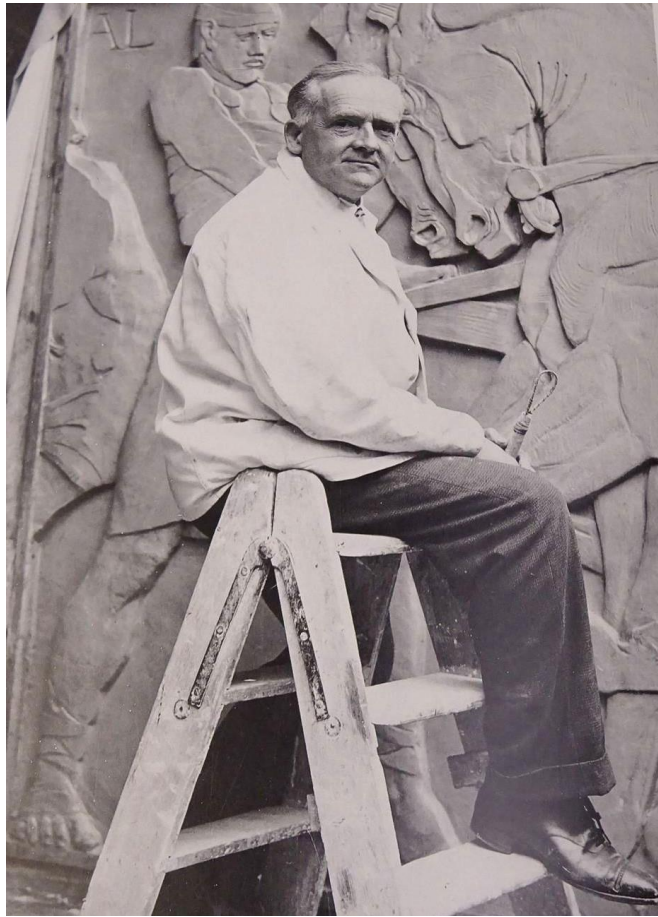


The Models of Bayes' Frieze which Were Exhibited at the Royal Academy
 [From: *The Builder*, May 9th 1930, p.888.]



¹⁰ See: Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1930, The 162nd, p.88, Item Nos. 1522 and 1528 "Model of Portion of a Frieze for the Saville Theatre, London: The Drama Through The Ages, by Gilbert Bayes.

¹¹ See: Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1931, The 163rd, p.88, Item No.1512 "Model of Portion of a Frieze for the Saville Theatre, London: North Side".



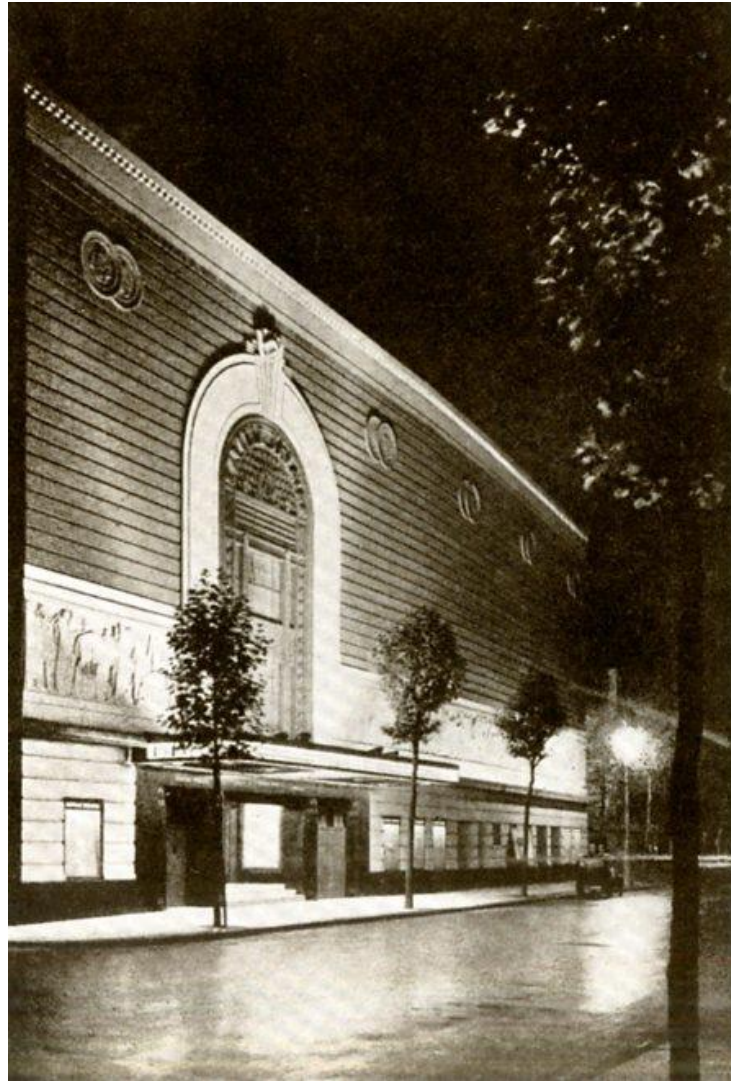
Gilbert Bayes in his Workshop with the Saville Theatre Frieze
[photo: Courtesy Gilbert Bayes Trust]

5.6 *The Architect & Building News* was particularly erudite and complimentary of Bayes' work;

"It is true that not many theatre sites in London give opportunities for interesting elevations; but it is also true that few architects have taken the opportunities that have been presented. The theatre is a show, and the outside of the building should reflect that fact.

Mr. Gilbert Bayes' great modelled relief is a superb piece of showmanship, which is also good sculpture properly applied to a building. Its placing recognises the view-point of the man in the street. It serves as a strong architectural relief to tie the curved facades together. Lit from below by a continuous lighting trough which carries on the line of the marquise, it looks its best at night when the dramatic quality of the figures seems to gain by a 'footlight' effect." ¹²

¹² *The Architect & Building News*, August 28th 1931, p.244.



The Saville Theatre – Illuminated By Night in 1931
[From: **theatresearch** archive]

5.7 Seen in this context with footlight “uplighters” the dramatic streetscape effect must have been stunning as it illuminated Shaftesbury Avenue, and being at first floor level it must have acted as a beacon drawing eager patrons from afar in Cambridge Circus, Seven Dials and High Holborn. The external lighting was carefully designed to enhance and highlight the theatricality of the main elevation. Today the building is lit in a rather random way which belies the design intentions of the architects. The scheme was further enhanced with a dramatic scheme of illumination for the great semi-circular arched entrance which was manufactured along with the external marquee in green-bronze. The whole composition was also illuminated around the margin of the canopy and display cases in order to advertise the performance as well as provide a cascade of attractive warmth and light down onto the surrounding streetscape pavements.

5.8 The architectural focus of this main elevation was considered in 1931 to be a refined visual focus within the formal avenue of an adventurous tree-lined streetscape. The architects, T.P. Bennett & Son were also invited to exhibit their architectural drawing of the Shaftesbury Avenue main entrance at the 1930 Royal Academy Exhibition.¹³ This was yet another contemporary recognition that the building was significant, of quality and worthy of note.

5.9 The main elevation is grounded on a black marble plinth under a heavily rusticated Portland stone basement storey, which is surmounted by Bayes' artificial stone frieze which was manufactured by The Empire Stone Company.¹⁴ Above the frieze the rusticated unpierced brick wall rises to be capped with an artificial stone cornice. The double-medallions (also by Bayes) are in neutral coloured terra-cotta and serve to carry the colour of the great semi-circular arch along the entire frontage.

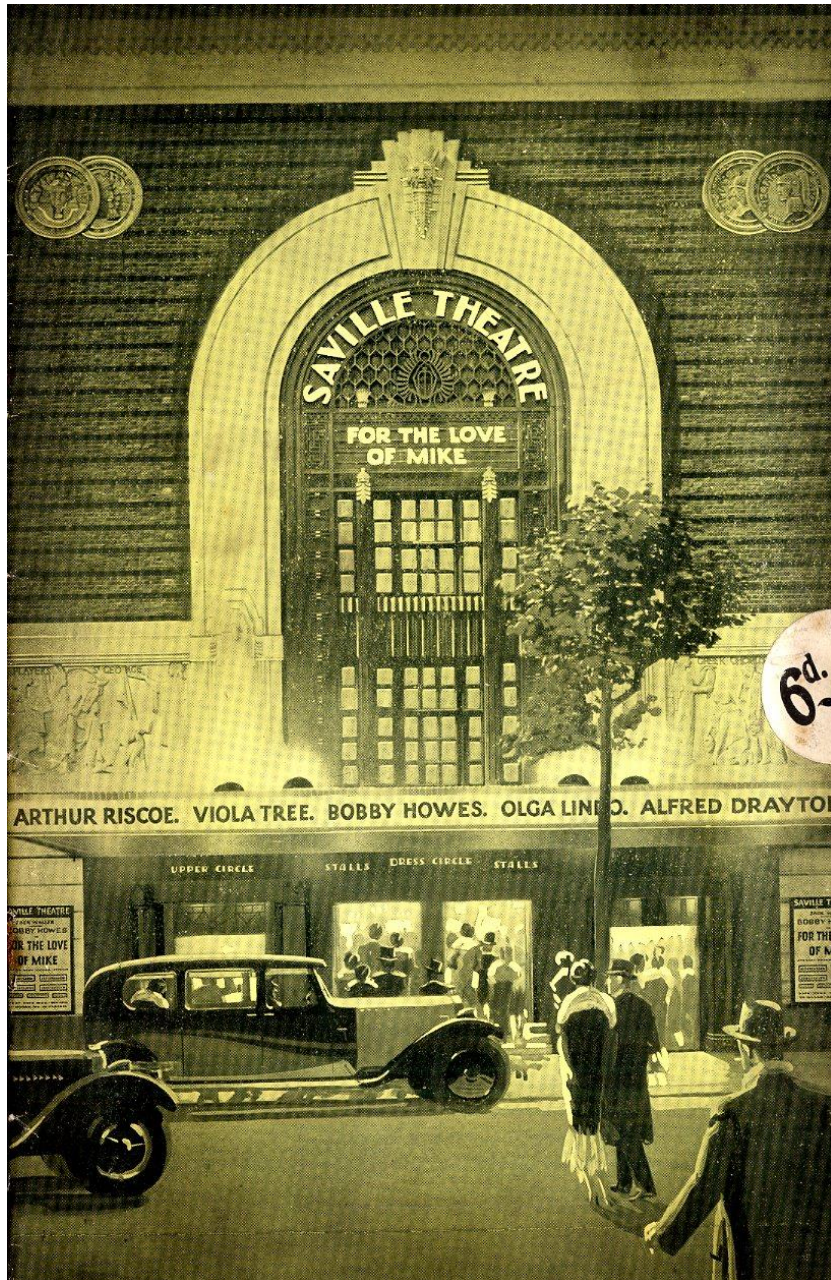


T.P. Bennett's Royal Academy Exhibition Drawing of 1930
[From: *The Builder*, May 9th 1930. p.914.]

¹³ See: See: Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1930, The 162nd, p.80, Item No.1415, "Saville Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C. Detail of Entrance."

¹⁴ The Empire Stone Company was a major supplier to key architectural projects including Alfred B. Yeates' extra-ordinary Golders Green Crematorium.

5.10 It is perhaps important to remember that theatre-going is primarily an evening activity and in consequence theatre architects endeavour to develop an external persona that is both welcoming and attractive. The Saville Theatre embraces this technique to great advantage, the opening programme cover for 1931 introduced an artist's impression of the exterior illuminated at night, an image which was to be used as the theatre's visual identity for the next ten years.



Opening Programme Cover for 1931 – this art-work remained in use as the programme cover for all productions presented for almost ten years.

[From: **theatresearch** archives]

6. The Front of House Entrance

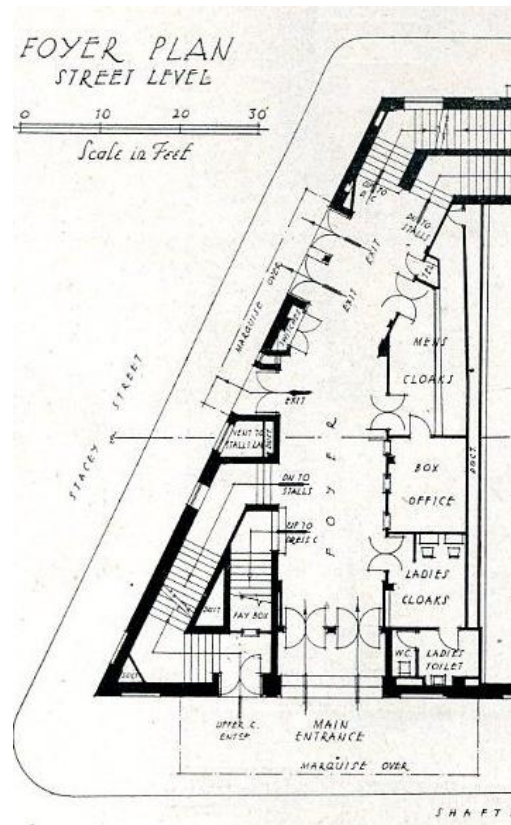
6.1 The front of house areas as designed in 1931 retained the nineteenth-century concept of social class separation, although the patrons of the upper circle were at least allowed to enter from Shaftesbury Avenue albeit using a separate entrance and box office immediately adjacent to the main foyer entrance – both of which were protected externally by a continuous ‘marquise’. This type of canopy was a standard device which served several functions; it created a visual focus to the main architectural elevation, it encouraged audiences to spill out onto the tree-lined Parisian-style boulevard of Shaftesbury Avenue both prior to the performance and during the interval. It would be fair to say that it also telegraphed to the casual passer-by the enhanced theatricality of the architecture, the sense of occasion leaving little doubt that this is an elegant and important theatre - especially during an age when people dressed formally to go to the theatre.



6.2 This illustration ably demonstrates the theatricality of the streetscape as the audience disperses at the fall of the curtain. As a performance at the Saville Theatre concluded an audience of around 1,230 cascaded out onto Shaftesbury Avenue – articulating the streetscape in a way that audiences of small screen cinemas simply cannot begin to compete with.

7. The Main Foyer

7.1 The Main Foyer has been altered since its construction in 1931 by removing partition walls that originally defined ancillary accommodation such as the main box office, and toilet facilities.



Bennett's Original 1931 Foyer Plan

[From: *The Architect & Building News*, August 28th 1931, p.242.]

7.2 However, the main public circulation space still retains the architectural connection between the external character and the physical channelling as originally conceived by Bennett. The present ceiling is formed from a suspended tile grid system. Above this there appears to be an earlier but certainly not original ceiling surface. At the time of writing it is understood that no attempt has been made to examine what is above this ceiling. In my experience features that are no longer required, but which do not interfere with change are often retained in situ. Without proper invasive investigation it is impossible to say what might still be there.

7.3 On entering the main foyer the patrons were welcomed to a visual feast of decorative finishes. Traditionally the dress circle was always the most expensive seating area within a theatre, and by sinking the auditorium below ground level it meant that the habitués of this tier were not required to scale any major staircases in order to get to their seats.

7.4 The theatre also had the added benefit of being designed upon the “iceberg” principle whereby a proportion of the building mass was sunk into the ground. This provided a number of key benefits:

- A reduced distance of travel for patrons in the upper circle tier – in other words the average distance of travel between seat and street was reduced – because the stalls was below street datum. In earlier three tier theatres, where the stalls was at street level, the distance of travel to the street for patrons of the top tier could be excessive and in the eyes of the licensing authority, dangerous.
- A net reduction in the building’s visible massing above ground level. By sinking the building into the ground the height of the building was visually less intrusive.
- The foundations were firmly seated below street level on solid footings.

7.5 Although the original stalls was below street level it still possessed the sense of shared space and community between patrons on all three levels. Theatre is a three-dimensional emotional experience which allows the audience to cross-reference across an auditorium – sharing their experience and feeding consciously or sub-consciously from each others responses. Bennett and almost certainly Crewe carefully wrapped the two tiers around the auditorium, introducing a subtle but very definite curvature to the seating rows. The introduction of the two boxes on the side walls is an architectural device which allows the emotional connectivity to complete the actor audience connection. Conversely the cinematic experience is largely two-dimensional, the rows of seats in the sub-divided auditorium lack connectivity which the boxes provide – the emotional response is far more solitary, the existing cinemas spaces are much smaller that the original spatial volume and in consequence the power and sense of occasion is substantially reduced. The current proposal to provide small scale cinema in a solitary basement, which shares nothing with upper tiers and boxes, and creates little if any sense of shared emotional experience will lose the cultural connectivity and experience with what has gone before something which has been increasingly lost in the conversions of this space, but which still remains in part.

8. The Stalls Basement Bar & Salon

8.1 The Stalls Basement Bar appears to have closed down after the 1970s cinema conversion. It has the ambience of a 1960s space commensurate with the period when Brian Epstein owned the theatre. The volume however reflects the earlier 1931 layout as shown on the original plans. Whilst the décor and bar fittings appear to date from this later 1960s period, the access staircase and handrails certainly date from the original construction.

8.2 In 1931 Bennett was keen to embrace his philosophy of “architecture embracing the arts” internally as well as externally. In consequence, and according to the architectural press of the day “A.R. Thompson” was engaged to produce three murals for the stalls bar and an additional mural for the semi-circular panorama wall of the adjoining “Salon”.

8.3 Throughout the Saville Theatre architectural reviews of 1931 the mural painter is referred to consistently as “A.R. Thompson”. It would seem that his name was spelt incorrectly in the opening architectural press release, and the mistake was perpetuated, and has not been corrected in the application. In reality his name was Alfred Reginald Thomson [1894-1979] an important artist of the twentieth century.¹⁵

8.4 The significance of these original murals has not been properly explored. We understand that the appellant has not investigated whether or not any remnants of these murals still survive within the stalls bar. However, research has revealed that one of them, “The Cocktail Bar” was sold at Christie’s London on January 16th 2014. The estimate was a substantial £20K-£40K. At the time of writing it has not been possible to trace precisely how it came to auction, and despite the fact that both Theatresearch and Camden Council have approached Christie’s separately to request further information, little has been forthcoming. Adequate investigation of this issue would assist in understanding what historic fabric remains or may be capable of reinstatement.



“The Cocktail Bar” by A.R. Thomson
[From: *The Sketch*, October 14th, 1931, p.51.]

¹⁵ See a short biographical sketch of his life in the Appendices to this report.

8.5 The other two murals as depicted below have not been located. They may still remain in situ or on the site, or they may well be in private ownership (or a connected ownership to the current or previous operator of the cinema/theatre). Clearly understanding the point at which one or more of them was removed from the building may assist in understanding what historic fabric remains and how it has been treated.

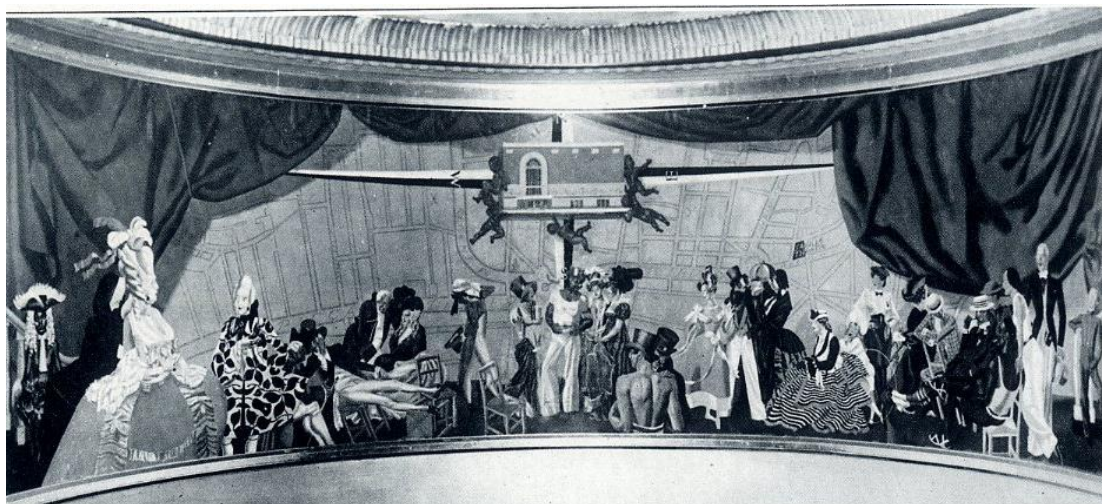


The Two Other Murals From Behind The Bar Counter

[From: *The Builder*, October 9th, 1931, p.586.]

8.6 The three wall paintings depicted fashions from Silenus's time, via a fantastic Venice, to a 1931 cocktail bar – grouped together as “Drinking Through The Ages”, a clear reference to the frontage works by Bayes.

8.7 The panorama painting in the Salon represented the history of fashion from “the powder-and-patches period down to the bare-back bathing-suits and espadrilles of the pages of to-day.”¹⁶



From Powder to Bare Back – “1730-1930”
[From: *The Sketch*, October 14th, 1931, p.51.]

8.8 The curved wall upon which this canvas was mounted was probably demolished during the alterations of 1970. The whereabouts of this canvas is also unknown, and there is no evidence this has been investigated by the Applicant.

8.9 In 1931 *The Architect & Building News*¹⁷ reported that;

“Equally pleasant is the decoration of the stalls salon and bar. These two large rooms are in simple tones of yellow, with plain carpets. Their principal decorations are the extremely good mural paintings of Mr.A.R. Thompson [sic.], illustrating theatrical subjects and people. These paintings are very fresh, both in subject treatment and colour.”

8.10 Whilst the Stalls Bar area has been subjected to significant interventions during the course of its lifetime, the spaces themselves remain, and are in principle capable of reinstatement and return to use.

¹⁶ See: “The Way Of A Man With A Bar”: Saville Theatre Décor, *The Sketch*, October 14th, 1931, p.51.

¹⁷ *The Architect & Building News*, August 28th 1931, p.245.

9. The Front of House Staircase Blocks

9.1 The 1931 architectural drawings show a number of access and egress staircases. It is clear that the 1970s alterations retained these original staircases and in consequence reused the various original landing datums to reconnect the new cinema auditoria. As would be expected in a theatre of 1931 the seating areas: stalls, dress circle, and upper circle were separated to reflect a degree of social class distinction imposed by the variation in ticket price. The staircases demonstrate varying commensurate degrees in quality of “finish” e.g. exposed painted brickwork is apparent in the upper circle staircases.

9.2 Bennett, and it should not be forgotten his specialist theatre adviser Crewe, understood that the audience needed to be moved through the foyer space quickly and efficiently, and in consequence they introduced access staircases to both the dress circle and stalls from this centralised assembly. Constructed in concrete (of which Bennett was a recognised authority and exponent¹⁸), they provided safe and fireproof means of escape and egress for the various levels of the theatre. Their complex and dense construction may well have been an influencing factor in their retention, largely throughout the building. Instead of completely gutting the interior of the building, subsequent owners have consistently elected to use the datum landings provided by the original staircases to access the new auditoria. A few new ones have been introduced as one might expect but the majority and especially the means of escape are largely original.

9.3 Given that the original staircases are still in situ it seems clear that these are important structural survivors from the original 1931 construction. Moreover, as they were originally designed to accommodate a theatre audience on three levels, and used for the purposes of access and egress it seems reasonable to suggest that they could be repurposed once more in any proposed scheme to convert the building back to theatre use. Such use would allow the retention of historic fabric and in doing so be likely to mitigate the cost of significant theatre related reconstruction costs.

¹⁸ See: Bennett, T.P., *Architectural Design in Concrete*, pub: Oxford University Press, 1927. It was also translated into German and published simultaneously in Berlin.

10. The Auditorium

10.1 Whilst it has not been possible in the limited time offered to undertake an invasive survey of the original auditorium envelope, it would appear that the original decorative fibrous plaster has been completely stripped out.

10.2 Evidence survives to indicate where the original dress circle boxes were positioned, and as with the stage house, much of the auditorium's perimeter side walls survive.

10.3 It is possible that some original fabric is still retained behind the various sub-divisions and partitions that have been inserted for cinema conversion purposes. In my experience this often occurs when theatres are converted to cinemas, and is largely defined by the principle that any structure which does not encumber the conversion is left in situ because there would be an additional cost to take it out. It is not possible to confirm whether or not this is the case without undertaking a comprehensive invasive survey.

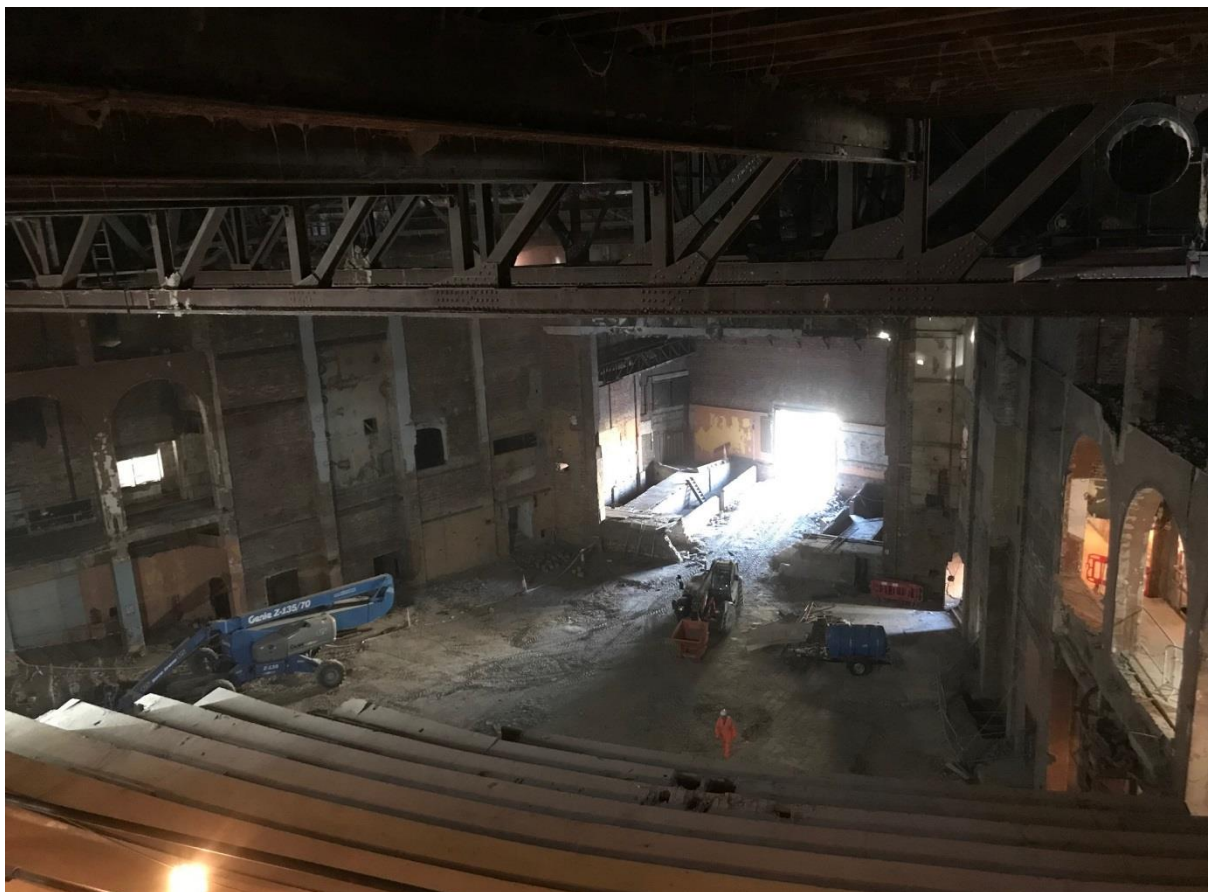
10.4 To the casual observer it is now difficult to read the original architectural relationships, and clearly identify the location of the original tiers, boxes, and proscenium arch. Nevertheless, the original volumetric relationship between the auditorium and the stage house is still extant and simply disguised by the later additions and interventions. This is not at all uncommon in the field of theatres converted to cinemas. Perhaps the best and most recent example of this is the Victoria Theatre in Bradford.

10.5 It would be fair to say that the two main screens within the present building still provide a certain sense of physical orientation and volume within their respective auditoria. They are of course in reality little more than sub-divided areas of the original theatrical volume. In order to provide an indication of this "volume awareness versus subdivision" issue it is interesting to examine another project which has recently been stripped back from cinematic sub-division. The New Victoria Theatre in Bradford was designed by the theatre and cinema architect William Illingworth and opened in 1930. It was subsequently converted into a cinema and latterly was operated by Odeon Cinemas, who undertook a programme of subdivision within the main auditorium, a space which had when it first opened the capability to seat 3,500. The auditorium was sub-divided into stalls, dress and upper circle. Several applications were made to English Heritage to have the building listed after it had been sub-divided but these were all rejected on the grounds that there was little of significant and historic interest remaining. However, after proposals to demolish the building were eventually overturned a public interest group obtained the freehold and the support of Bradford Council after which the sub-divisions were stripped out.



Above: Internal View of the Bradford Odeon When Sub-divided in 2018

Below: Internal View of the Bradford Odeon after Sub-division Removed in 2019





Above: View From the Stage of the Bradford Odeon after Sub-division Removed in 2019

Below: View from the Stage of the Bradford Odeon (New Victoria Theatre) in 1930



10.6 The Bradford Odeon project is currently being driven by a registered charity but will be operated by a commercial international arena company. Interestingly the restoration philosophy which has been adopted involves stabilising the remaining historic structure but not restoring it back to its original 1930 condition. This approach to theatre conservation and restoration has already been used to great effect at both Wilton's Music Hall and perhaps more comparably at the Alexandra Palace Theatre – which remained unused and derelict for almost 40 years prior to its conservation and stabilisation in 2018.

10.7 It is pivotal to understand that a theatre space can take many different forms which depend on the artistic and commercial aspirations and ambitions of the collaborators. The cost of returning the Saville Theatre back to a building which holds a public entertainment licence is the real issue associated with this case and not the cost of a full restoration which returns it back to its original 1931 condition. In consequence the report commissioned by the appellant to demonstrate the cost of return to theatre merely explores one of the numerous potential theatre design solutions. It therefore follows that as a single entity option, and without any other options provided it simply demonstrates a high end option developed purely to support their preferred argument and is not an adequate replacement for market testing. I discuss this further below in section 16.

11. Seating Capacity

11.1 An analysis of the Saville Theatre's seating accommodation over time demonstrates the following evolution:

Date	Stalls	Dress Circle	Upper Circle	Boxes	Total
1931 ¹⁹	646	261	319	8	1,234
1934 ²⁰	598	261	319	8	1,186
1946 ²¹	597	261	319	8	1,185
1952 ²²	597	261	319	8	1,185
1962 ²³	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	1,200
1968 ²⁴	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	1,206

11.2 After an initial reduction of 48 in the stalls c.1934 the seating capacity remained almost constant, and even increasing slightly in the 1960s. (Note these figures exclude any standing capacities which were allowed by the licensing authority.) In 1931 the theatre was licensed for 1,234 seats. In 1968 just prior to conversion into a cinema the total was 1,206.

11.3 As can be demonstrated the Saville Theatre is an excellent comparator in terms of both seating capacity (see section 13.13 &15) and stage dimensions, leading to my firm conclusion that the building could definitely be made commercially viable.

¹⁹ *The Builder*, September 4th, 1931, p.375, col.2.

²⁰ *Keith Prowse Plan Book of All London Theatres*, London, 1934., p.70.

²¹ *The Stage Guide*, London, 1946, p.54.

²² *The Stage Year Book*, London, 1952,

²³ *The Stage Year Book*, London 1962

²⁴ *The Stage Year Book*, London 1968

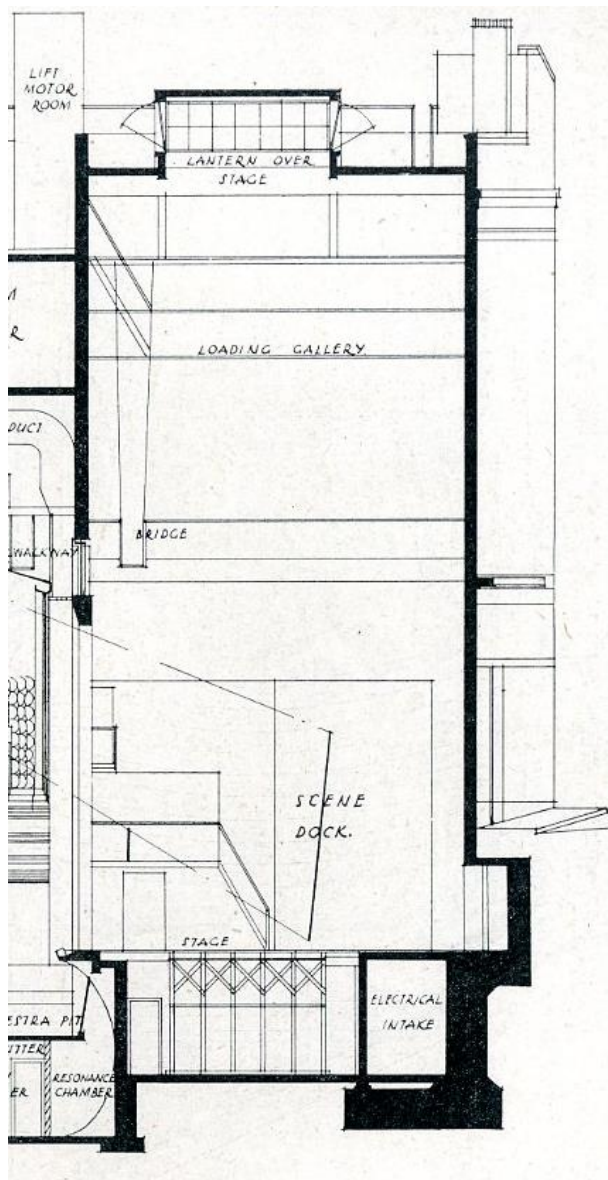
12. Dressing Rooms

12.1 Many of the original 22 dressing-rooms, an exceptionally well provided number are still extant within the backstage facility areas. The original design even incorporated a backstage lift for the performers, though this was decommissioned in 1970 and a new lift shaft inserted within the stage right wing space.

12.2 Whilst the dressing-rooms were fairly rudimentary in 1931, as with all theatres, they remain in many cases recognisable, intact and mostly disused.

13. The Stage House

13.1 It is clear from the internal inspection of the building that the original stage house envelope is completely intact. The appended 1931 longitudinal section provides an excellent indication of the original internal architectural relationships. The volume of the stage house has in certain areas been subdivided with lightweight partitions and ceilings but some elements of the original 1931 structural configuration remain undisturbed and wholly intact.



Lantern Level [roof present]

Gridiron Level [present]

Loading Gallery Level [present]

Fly Floor Level [floors removed]

Stage Level [floor removed]

Substage Floor [present]

13.2 This includes:

- The original “Lantern” on the roof of the stage house – used for ventilation purposes
- The original “Gridiron” – being the scenic suspension grid above the stage. (note that the appellant’s analysis that there are “two layers of the ‘Fly Grid’ within the fly tower” is a misinterpretation of the extant evidence)
- The original Loading Gallery on the stage right side of the fly tower, including the original walkway and connecting ladder to the gridiron

13.3 I consider that the 1931 stage house remains clearly recognisable and largely intact within the building. The *1952 Stage Guide* provides technical information relating to the original 1931 dimensions of the stage house:

- Proscenium Opening: 31ft 6ins [9.6m]
- Proscenium Height: 30ft [9.14m]
- Minimum Stage Depth: 30ft [9.14m] (from setting line)
- Height Under Fly Floors: 30ft [9.14m]
- Width Between Fly Galleries: 42ft [12.8m]
- Height of Grid From Stage: 61ft. [18.59m]

13.4 Using the above dimensions it is possible to confirm that the extant stage house still resembles the original 1931 volume, even though certain elements have been removed.

13.5 These dimensions clearly indicate a stage house which provides proportions which exceed several existing West End theatres owned and managed by large scale commercial theatre managements. Examples of this include the Ambassadors Theatre and the Harold Pinter Theatre (formerly the Comedy Theatre) which are both currently owned by the country’s largest commercial theatre operator Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG)

13.6 An examination of the whole portfolio of the 40 West End proscenium theatres open during the year 1960, provides the following contextual analysis of the Saville Theatre:

- 25 of the 40 theatres had a narrower proscenium opening

- 33 of the 40 theatres had a lower proscenium opening
- 17 of the 40 theatres had a shallower stage (using average depth where the rear wall was splayed)

13.7 Whilst a number of the theatres listed in 1960 have undergone some improvement at various times, many of them, indeed the majority of them still have the same size performance area as they did in 1960. An examination of the current product being presented on the stages of many of these theatres clearly demonstrates that they are capable of delivering commercially viable productions including musicals.

13.8 An examination of the list of past productions at the Saville Theatre reveals that the theatre was regularly used for the presentation of musicals and for a period between 1965-68 was also the London home of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, who presented full scale operas in repertoire for ten week annual seasons with productions which included; The Mikado, The Gondoliers, Iolanthe, Patience, Ruddigore, The Yeomen of the Guard, The Pirates of Penzance, H.M.S. Pinafore, Princess Ida, Trial by Jury, and Cox and Box.

13.9 Other notable performers, which establish the theatre's credentials as a site of significant cultural significance include:

- Sir Laurence Olivier in "Semi-Detached"
- Leonard Rossiter in Brecht's "Arturo Ui"
- Leslie Henson and Mantovani in "Bob's Your Uncle"
- Marcel Marceau in Revue
- Fred Emney and Richard Hearne in "Big Boy"
- Paul Schofield in "Expresso Bongo"
- Robin Bailey, Jim Dale and Cleo Laine in "Midsummers Night's Dream"
- Sir Peter Ustinov in "Photo Finish"
- Dorothy Tutin in Ibsen's "The Wild Duck"
- Diana Wynyard and Lyndon brook in Chekhov's "The Seagull"

- Peter Sallis and Laurence Harvey in Sheridan’s “The Rivals”
- Harry Secombe in the Musical “Pickwick”
- Martha Graham and Dance Company

13.10 This variable programme of classical drama, comedy, musicals, opera and dance clearly demonstrates the mixed, eclectic and varied commercial programming capability of the theatre. In addition to the varied programme of performances at the Saville Theatre it is fundamental to understand the role which the building played during the ownership of Brian Epstein and The Beatles. This is an element of the building’s history which has not as yet been absorbed into the cultural consciousness of Great Britain. The original “Cavern Club” where the Beatles once played in Liverpool was demolished many years ago, much to the regret of the local population. Today a copy of the original club, which is not even on precisely the same site as the original is a site of international pilgrimage for many visitors from around the world. There can be little doubt that Epstein’s connection to the Saville Theatre could be used as a major selling point to attract large audiences to a re-invigorated theatre.

13.11 In our introduction we noted the inter-war theatre building boom in London. The list of theatres includes:

- **The Cambridge Theatre (1930)**
- The Carlton Theatre (1927) [now a cinema]
- **The Duchess Theatre (1929)**
- **The Fortune (1924)**
- **The Phoenix (1930)**
- **The Piccadilly (1930)**
- **The Prince of Wales (1937)**
- **The Savoy (1929)**
- The Whitehall Theatre (1930) [now Trafalgar Studios]

[All the theatres in **bold** are currently operating under commercial management]

13.12 The survival and indeed commercial success of these inter-war theatres suggests that they were built in a manner which has enabled them to continue to operate as a viable commercial proposition for a period of around 90 years.

13.13 An analysis of comparative theatres which continue to operate commercially provides interesting comparative statistics:

Name of Theatre	Present Seating Capacity	Proscenium Opening	Average Stage Depth	Grid Height
Cambridge Theatre (1930)	1,231	8.99m	9.43m	15.24m
Phoenix Theatre (1930)	1,012	9.50m	9.14m	15.24m
Piccadilly Theatre (1930)	1,232	9.70m	11.50m	16.50m
Prince of Wales (1937)	1,160	14.00m	8.45m	14.78
Savoy Theatre (1929)	1,158	9.10m	9.15m	15.80m
Averages:	1,158	10.26m	9.53m	15.51m
Saville Theatre (1931)	1,206	9.6m	8.99m	18.59m

13.14 The theatres selected above were specifically chosen because they were originally constructed between 1924-1937 and operated commercially as theatres from the outset. All the above continue to be operated successfully (some with original grids) by commercial theatre operators (as opposed to local authorities, registered charities or national subsidised arts organisations – although that is not to discount the valuable role that such operators also play).

13.15 The quoted Saville Theatre seating capacity of 1,206 is based on 1968 statistics, however, there is no reason to suppose that this capacity could not be achieved or exceeded with the correct commercial brief in 2020.

14. The Gridiron

14.1 The key issue in relation to returning the Saville Theatre to operational use is that the volume and space for the fly tower remains with its original flying grid still in situ.

14.2 An effective gridiron is essential in a large theatre because it allows the scenery and the lighting equipment to be suspended, raised and lowered above the stage. This original flying grid appears to be in good condition and largely intact. The steel girders that support the grid appear to be in very good condition and even the loading gallery, which sits just below the grid against the stage right wall is still intact and complete with its original connecting access ladder. It is an evocative space which captures the sense and atmosphere of a 1930s theatre, utilising the materials, technology and constructional styles of the period.

14.3 I consider that the grid could be returned to operational use, (by which I mean use in the manner in which it was used in the 1930s – 1960s whilst it was a theatre), and that this would require a detailed structural analysis in order to allow a new counterweight system (the method of raising and lowering the scenery) to be installed commensurate with the structural lifting capabilities of the grid.

14.4 It is important to understand that when a new production is designed for the West End it is executed to work within the technical parameters of the chosen theatre. In consequence, any productions created for a restored Saville Theatre would take account of the theatre's structural loading capabilities and be designed accordingly. *The Stage Guide* for 1952²⁵, states that the Saville Theatre had 32 counterweight lines (the number of counterbalanced flying bars) as well as 6 additional "hemp sets" (manually hauled bars). In my considered opinion this kind of installation could easily be reinstated to provide a very practical proposition for the operation of a West End theatre. If a commercial operator had greater ambition it would of course be possible to increase this capability significantly, but this would largely depend upon the type of productions to be staged within the theatre.

14.5 I discuss below the nature of different theatre operators. I consider it is practicable that some theatre operators could choose to use the fly grid structure in, essentially, its current form. It is likely that some theatre operators would make minor alterations to the grid whilst installing a counterweight system or rigging equipment. Finally, there are also some theatre operators who would consider replacing the grid for an anticipated lengthy run whilst absorbing and sharing this capital outlay with the show's producers.

14.6 West End theatre grids have in many cases exceptional longevity. For instance, the grid at Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket, until recently the home of "Phantom of the Opera", still has its original timber grid as constructed in 1897. Similarly the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus still has its original grid dating from the construction of 1891.

²⁵ *The Stage Year Book Incorporating "The Stage Guide" 1952 (Festival Edition)*, pub: Carson & Comerford Ltd., London, 1952.

14.7 The creative element that is so central to the idea of “making theatre” often demands that theatres are modified or altered to meet the specific demands of a new production. This creative element is never more prevalent than in the technical side of the industry. In consequence rigging companies, specialist stage engineering firms and technical directors regularly rise to the challenges that are simply seen as “part and parcel” of running and operating a West-End theatre.

15. Historic England Listing Description

15.1 The building was not added to the National List of Historic Buildings until 1st July 1998, by which time the internal conversion works to a multi-screen cinema had been carried out. The current listing description provides no detailed description of the present internal arrangements. It is unclear whether the listing officer made an internal inspection when preparing the listing. It is however clear that the appellant has not commissioned a detailed analysis of the surviving internal heritage. It is further stated that internal listing descriptions of theatres throughout the British Isles often note the condition, age and points of historic significance within the stage house.

15.2 Historic fabric in theatres is not limited in listing terms to the auditorium and front of house areas. For instance, backstage elements are sometimes described in West-End theatre listings e.g. Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue²⁶; but the approach is often inconsistent and largely dependent on the knowledge of the person writing the listing and the access that they were given (if any) at the time. Given that the Saville Theatre was not listed until after a significant amount of intervention it is not surprising, especially given the limited access to the stage house, that its details were not included within the listing description. Had a comprehensive inspection been carried I would have expected to see a listing description which included the original fittings that remain within this area, and this would have included as significant remaining structure evident on even casual inspection:

- The original structural steel of the suspension grid
- The stage right loading gallery and connecting access
- Remaining pulley- wheels and suspension points on the grid
- The form of the haystack ventilation lantern

²⁶ Mention is given in the listing to a stand-by hydraulic hand pump in the stage basement manufactured by Clark and Bunnett (the listing misspells Bunnett as “Burnett”)

16. The Commercial Operator & The Theatre Brief

16.1 The appellant's document prepared by Charcoal Blue has been provided by one of the country's leading theatre consultancy practices. It seeks to offer a single option for the provision of a new traditional proscenium theatre space within the existing site.

16.2 The sketch proposal as laid out in their document is in my view only one design which looks could be technically feasible, and one which with a willing end user could prove to be both financially viable whilst delivering a sympathetic theatrical use for a grade II listed building. It is interesting to note that in 1931 the "Stalls Salon" was claimed to be "the largest [theatre] bar in London."²⁷

16.3 However, the reality of the commercial theatre industry means that different end users have significantly different design intents which usually require the identification of the end user before the design brief is developed. The definition of a theatre can mean many different things to many different people, as indeed the use of this theatre space over time also demonstrates, and this impacts the design brief. For instance, the existing volume, once occupied by Bennett & Crewe's auditorium could be converted into a number of different theatrical spaces, for example as a cabaret restaurant theatre or a thrust stage auditorium. At one end of the budget this could involve a "found space" whereby the Odeon insertions were removed to reveal the exposed internal shell of the original building in a similar manner to the previously cited Bradford Odeon. Conversely an end-user who considers cost to be of secondary importance (such theatre owners do exist) might aspire to (for example) to completely restore the original interior back to its original 1931 state. Other end users might go for a "rock" experience, introducing an option for an increased standing capacity within the stalls.

16.4 The cost variance between alternative architectural approaches would be significant, but both could unquestionably deliver commercial albeit very different theatre spaces. For example, the existence of the range is indicated by the evidence which Mr. Jones produces, which indicates different seat values of between £2,792 per seat to £131,290 per seat. This can also be seen qualitatively for example by comparing the cost of the experience at the Royal Opera House, with the cost of experience at the Arts Theatre in Great Newport Street (which was founded in 1927 and has a capacity of 350.) Both theatres deliver high quality artistic products at very different ticket prices – the cost of the experience is inevitably subjective – some audiences will want to see something "edgy" whereas as others will prefer to see high end opera.

16.5 However valuing a theatre on a simple "per seat" example does not necessarily reflect patron behaviour or understand the nature of location, demography and product within the theatre experience. For example, The Theatres Trust has recently released commercial

²⁷ Page, Philip, The Play's The Thing, *The Sphere*, May 9th 1931.

information which relates to secondary spend within a typical 1,200 seat West-End theatre. In other words an excellent comparator to the potential of the Saville Theatre. Income is generally split into three distinct elements:

1. The Show – the associated rental fee for the building, and any negotiated share of the box office takings and associated ticketing fees.
2. Food and Beverage – the sales from bars, kiosks, ice cream, show merchandise, and hospitality spaces.
3. Ancillary income – the hire of meeting rooms, rehearsal spaces, location filming, and local partnerships.

16.6 In a 1,200 seat theatre with a mixed programme of musicals and high profile drama spend per head has increased year on year with targeted marketing and careful operational management to ensure access to bars before, during and after performances.²⁸

Full Year Results	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Spend per Head	£4.43	£4.07	£6.00
Net Retail	£1.47m	£1.37m	£1.96m
Ancillary Income			
Number of Hires	14	13	11
Net Fees	18.5K	£20.2K	£23K

16.7 There is a clear relationship between type of product and spend per head. For instance certain audiences will major on spirits and wine, whereas others will be tend to focus on beer and lager. Irrespective of the audience profile and their drinks preference the key for an operator is based upon understanding what the demand will be for a particular show, and more importantly be capable of delivering it. Theatre design focuses not only on seating, technical equipment and acoustics, it also focuses on operational efficiency. In a short interval of no more than twenty minutes it is essential that people are able to get a drink without extended waiting and queues. Today commercial theatre operators have developed in-house models which quantify not only the drinks menu, but also the ideal amount of bar

²⁸ Current commercial outturn figures obtained from a West End theatre operator and made available by The Theatres Trust.

counter, number of staff, and type of equipment that enables them to maximise their secondary spend income.

16.8 Whilst secondary spend is integral to the commercial theatre operator’s business model, the contribution which the theatre makes to the immediate vicinity should not be underestimated. A recent viability study for the Stockton-on-Tees Globe, which is currently in the middle of a major redevelopment largely funded by the Local Authority reveals key data about the ability of a theatre to regenerate a location.

		5-year cumulative 2017 prices	10-year cumulative 2017 prices
Local Impacts			
GROSS	GVA	38,280,902	80,497,462
IMPACTS	Jobs	220	220
Local Impacts			
NET	GVA	13,016,000	27,369,000
IMPACTS	Jobs	87	87
Regional Impacts			
NET	GVA	6,508,000	13,684,500
IMPACTS	Jobs	44	44

16.9 The wider impacts and benefits from a project of this kind are numerous, for instance;

- Entry level jobs suitable for local and the unemployed
- Footfall and additional visitors to the eastern end of Shaftesbury Avenue, this in turn encouraging surrounding retail to expand and prosper.

16.10 Recent theatre sales in the London’s West-End are relatively few, but two key sales have taken place in recent times and it should be noted that in each case the theatre was fully operational.

- Ambassadors’ Theatre: sold for £12million : 444 seats: £27,027 per seat (2019)

- Theatre Royal, Haymarket: sold for £45million: 893 seats: £50,392 per seat (2019)

16.11 At the time of writing most of London's theatreland is closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This places the theatre industry in a very difficult position. Nevertheless, there are a number of positive elements which provide our practice with significant optimism. These may be summarised as follows:

- Capital projects such as the Stockton-on-Tees Globe have not been stood down. The appointed commercial operator ATG has already gone on sale with tickets for 2021, and the organisation continues to plan capital renewals, maintenance and improvements to its venues during closure.
- The Theatresearch practice has continued to work at full pace throughout 2020, and continues to receive new enquiries from theatre clients wanting to look at new capital restoration projects. We are currently preparing reports on a number of potential capital projects both in London and the provinces during this period of inactivity.
- When the pandemic is finally over there will be a shortage of theatres to perform in and any that come on to the market are likely to command a high capital value. This is based on the knowledge that every theatre producer and music promoter, every performer and technician has been stood down for an extended period of time. When theatres re-open it is envisaged that rental costs are likely to rise significantly in line with the demand, and a flood of new and exciting artistic product will compete for the right to perform in public because:
 - Theatre owners have had no significant income
 - Performers have lost their income and will want to tour and work to make up for "lost time". It should be remembered that performance covers a wide range of activities including rock and roll, comedy, opera, drama, circus, dance etc.
 - Creative people have spent extended periods during lock down developing new concepts, ideas and work which they will want to perform as soon as practicable.

16.12 Charcoal Blue's report which was commissioned by the appellant estimates that a reconstructed three level theatre (stalls, dress circle and upper circle) could accommodate approximately 1,000 by today's standards. Whilst this stand alone report by Charcoal Blue provides the appellant with a single assessment of one type of theatre it is fundamental to understand that theatres come in many shapes, sizes and configurations. The ultimate design for any new auditorium would be driven by the commercial operator and their business plan. For instance, the architectural brief could seek to develop a new "found space" akin to the photographs previously reproduced of the Bradford Odeon scheme. It could alternatively seek to present a programme of "one night stands" of comedy and music, in which case the technical requirements would potentially be far more limited, and of course less expensive.

16.13 I have read the evidence of Mr. Jones and Mr. Powling and I agree with the broad conclusions that they reach from my own independent experience. The range of possible theatre types vary enormously and include a "found" space, a traditional proscenium, a thrust stage, a traverse or even a theatre in the round. The Saville Theatre has a diverse history in the productions it has put on and could deliver experiences dependent on a commercial theatre user brief to the architect. Likely refurbishment costs will vary substantially depending on the operator and more importantly the commercial product that is to be staged.

16.14 This lack of understanding of how theatre works on the part of the appellant has encumbered the whole planning process. There is little point in commissioning a study to cost the construction of a new interior when there is no end user in place. It is the end-user and not the freeholder who should define the parameters of the architectural specification – a specification which would be tailored to the requirements of the product that was to be presented upon the stage. Having rejected this marketing option at the outset, it would have been far better to commission Charcoal Blue to undertake an options appraisal to examine the various theatrical configurations in tandem with the commensurate revenue and capital cost impacts associated with these options. A single option design without any formal consultation or negotiation with a commercial operator seems to be an unproductive and misguided exercise which does not engage with the range of opportunities nor examine the true market potential.

16.15 We would urge the appellant to consider undertaking a formal marketing exercise in order to develop a full and detailed user specification which clearly defines the needs and outputs that need to be fulfilled in order to make the site commercially viable as a theatre.

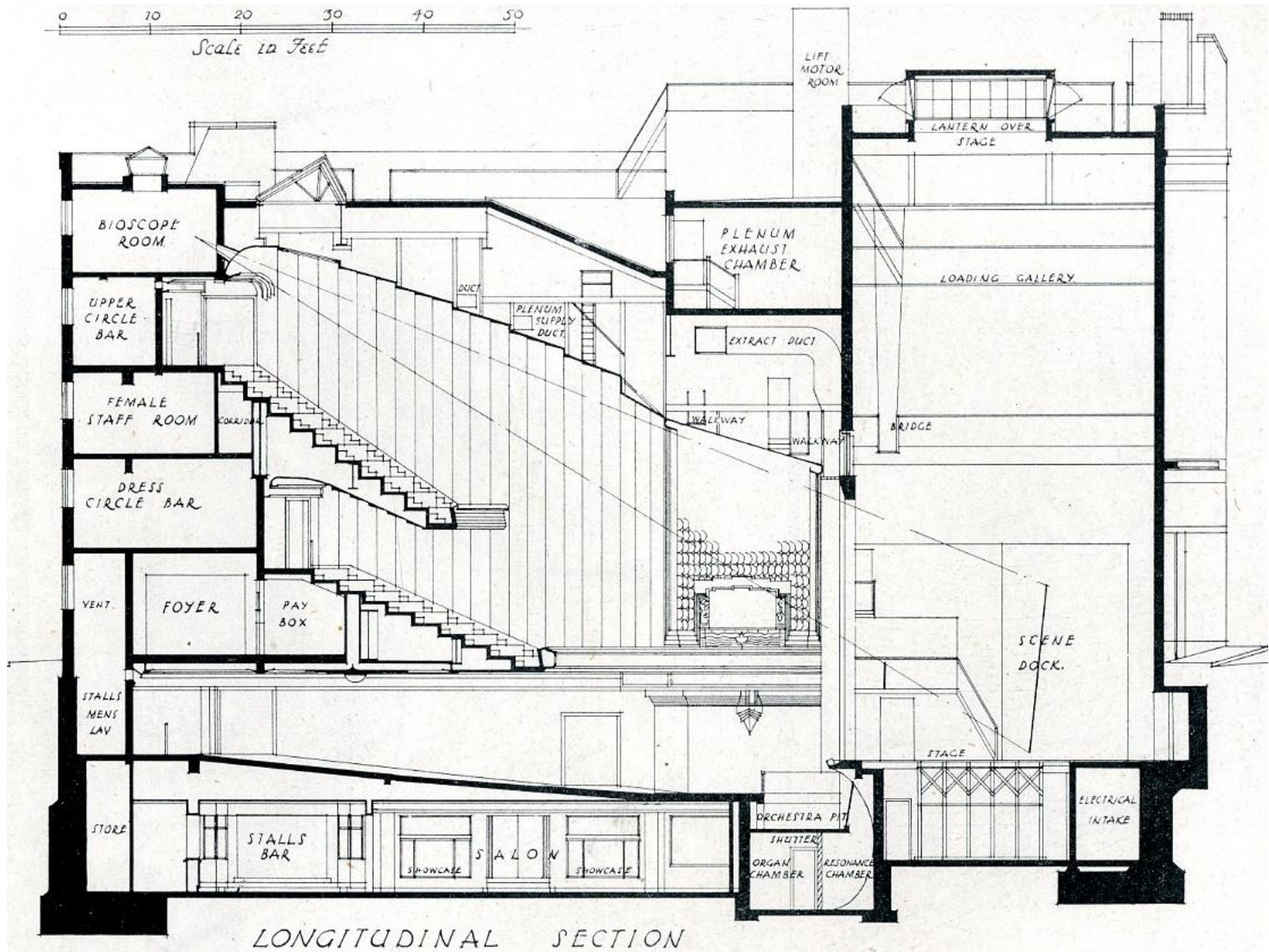
16.16 Finally, it is my firm belief that a commercial theatre operator would be found for this valuable West-End Shaftesbury Avenue site if an independent marketing exercise was carried out.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: The 1931 Architectural Drawings of the Saville Theatre

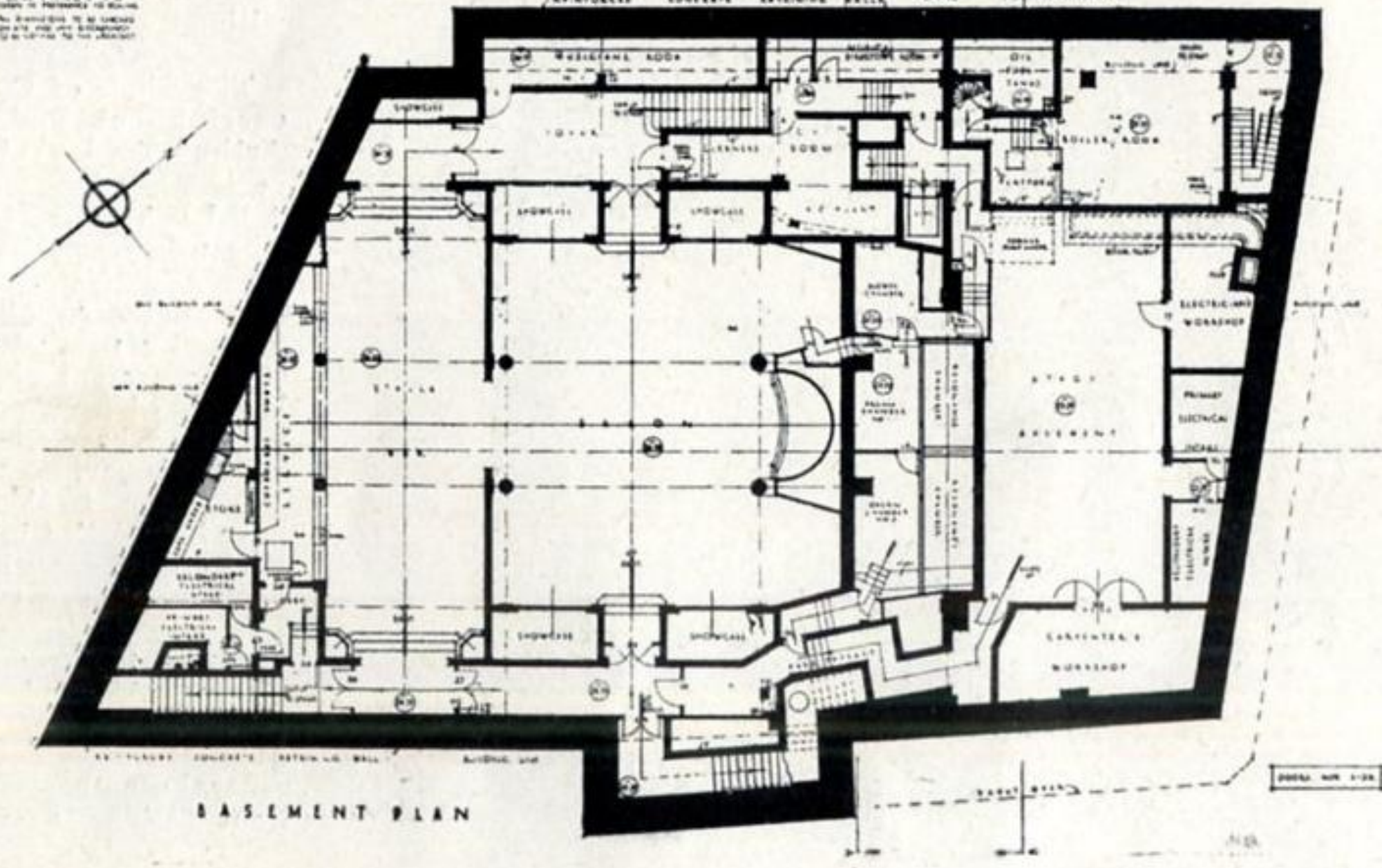
Appendix 2: Bertie Crewe – Theatre Biography

Appendix 3: Historic England Listing Description



NOTE
 Figures shown are to be
 taken in preference to those
 on drawings to be shown
 on site and are intended
 to be correct for the structure

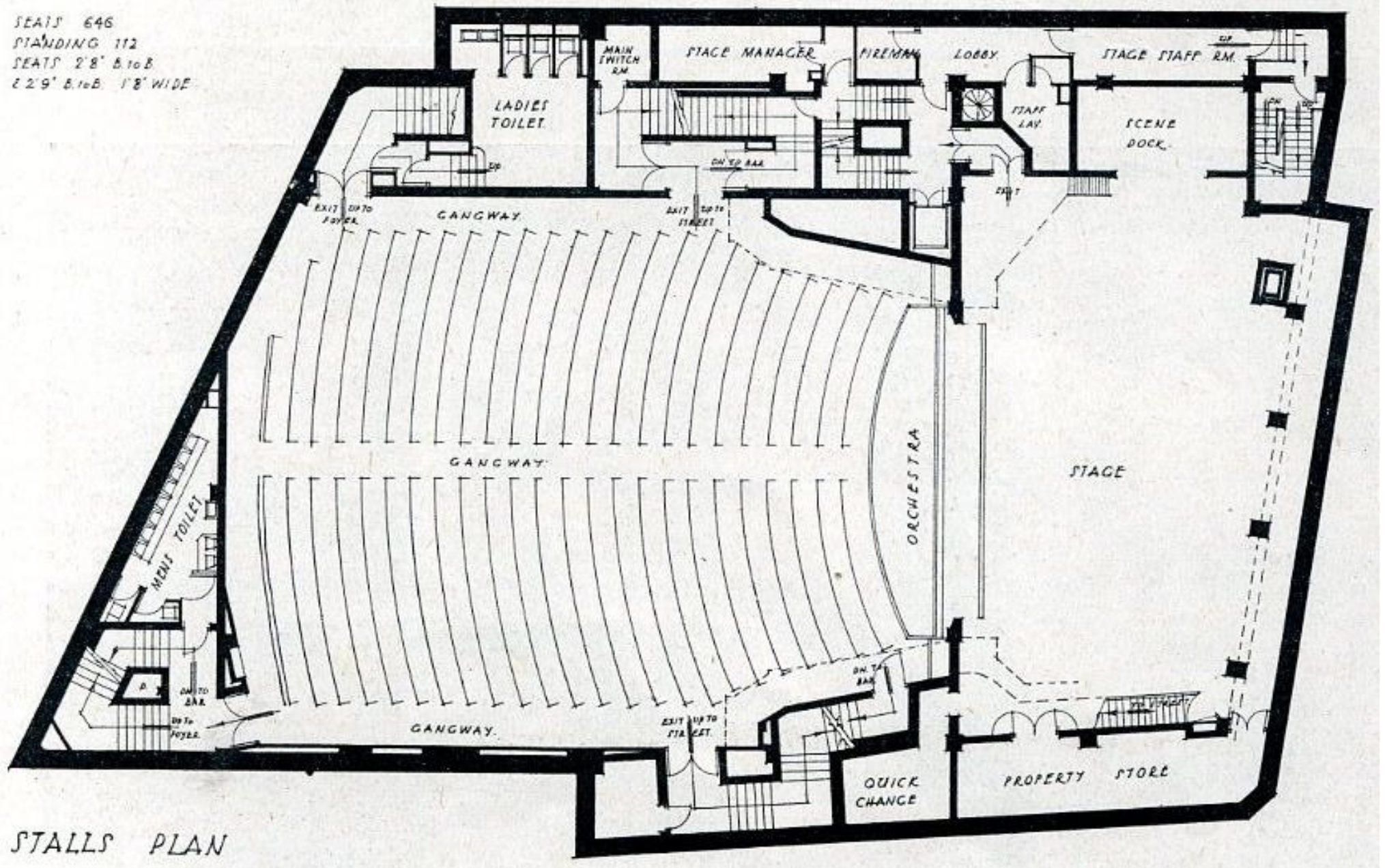
STAINLESS CONCRETE RETAINING WALLS
 CAPACITY OF WALL THICKNESS
 12" = 1000 LB
 18" = 1500 LB
 24" = 2000 LB



BASEMENT PLAN

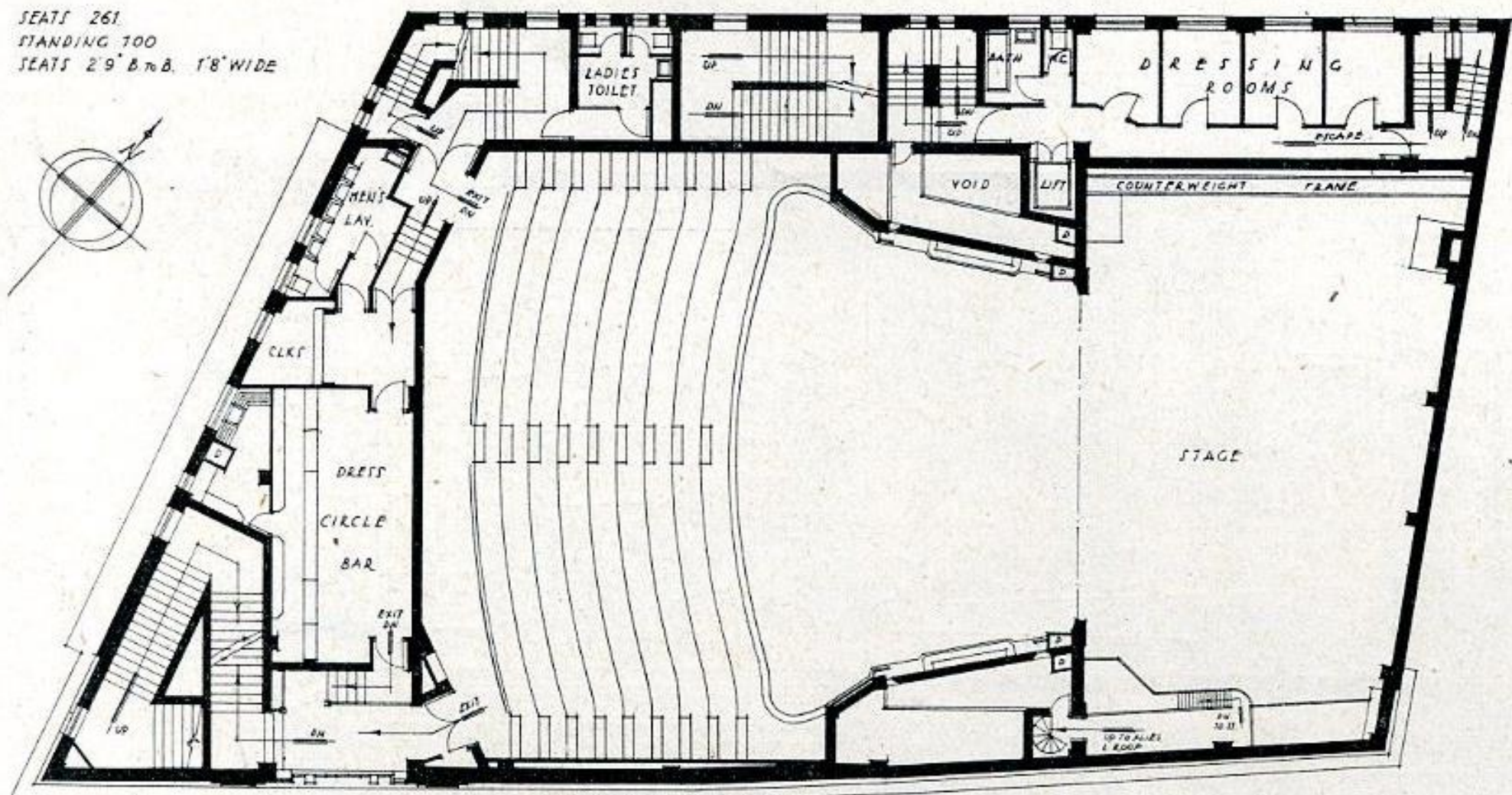
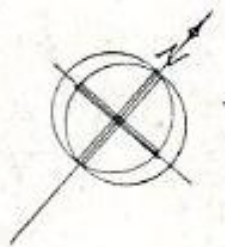
DRG. NO. 1-24

SEATS 646
STANDING 112
SEATS 2'8" B. to B.
E 2'9" B. to B. 1'8" WIDE



STALLS PLAN

SEATS 261
STANDING 100
SEATS 2'9" B.T.O.B. 1'8" WIDE

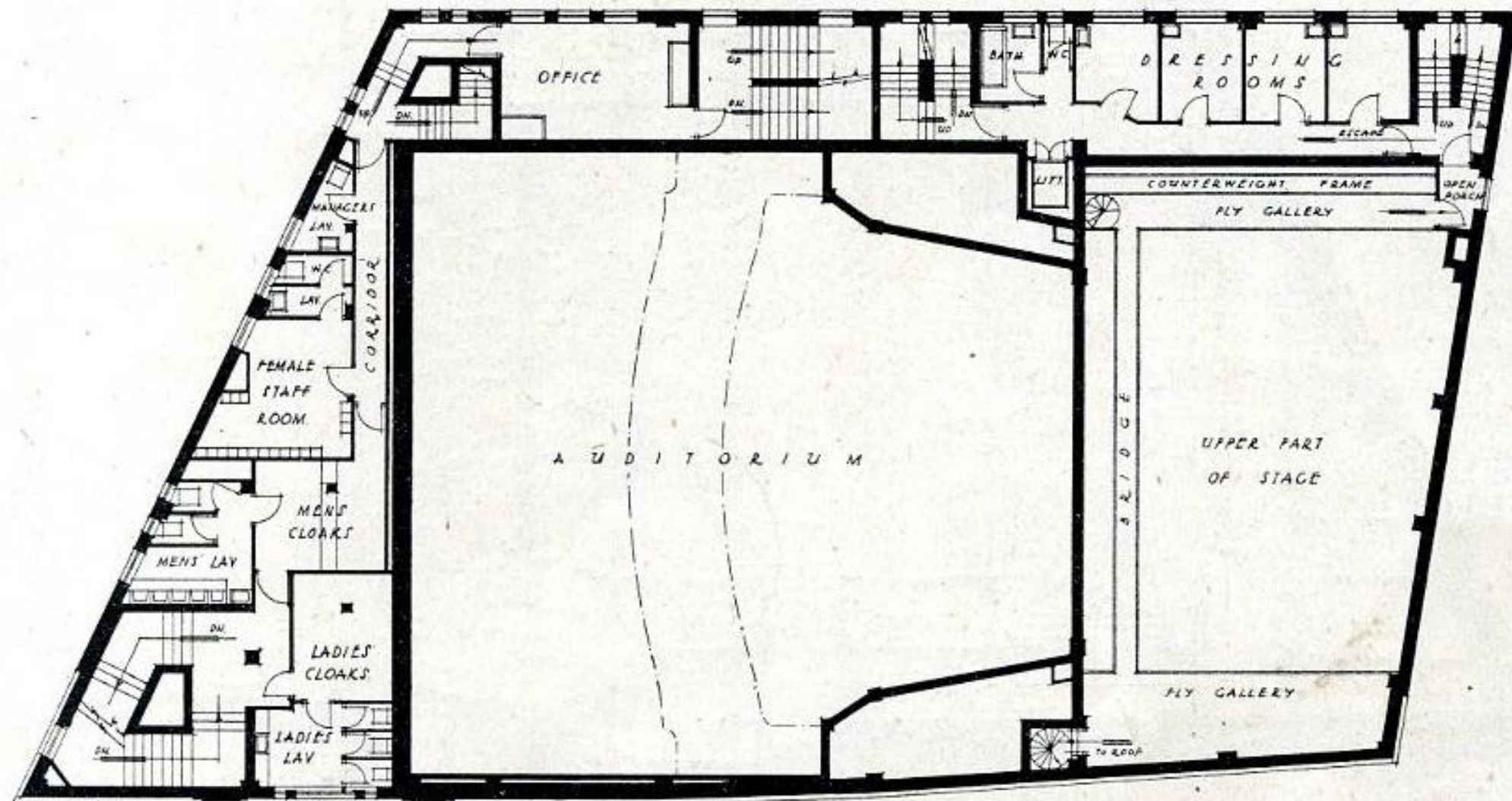


MARQUISE

FLOOD LIGHTING TROUGH

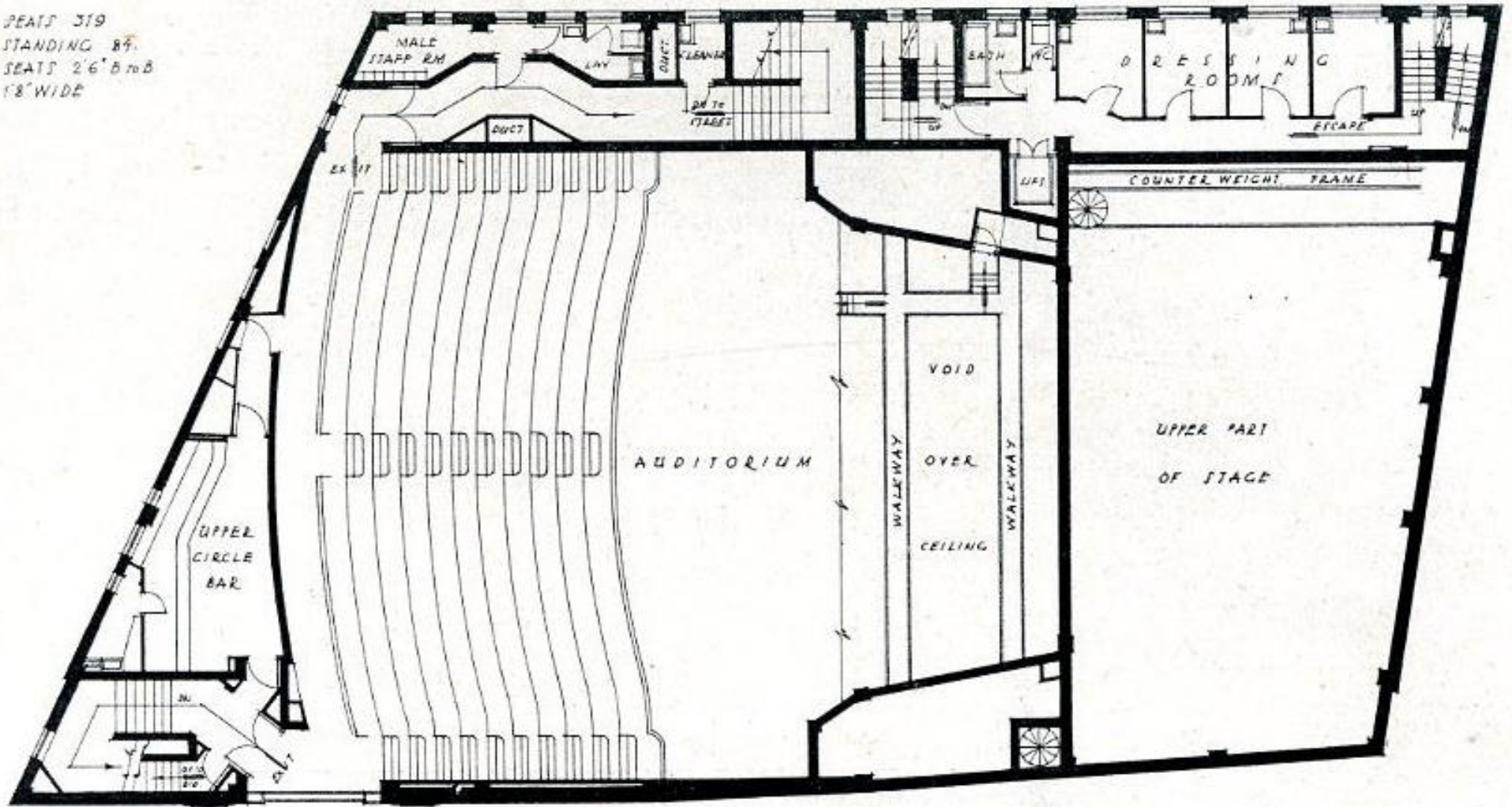
DRESS CIRCLE PLAN

NEW COMPTON STREET



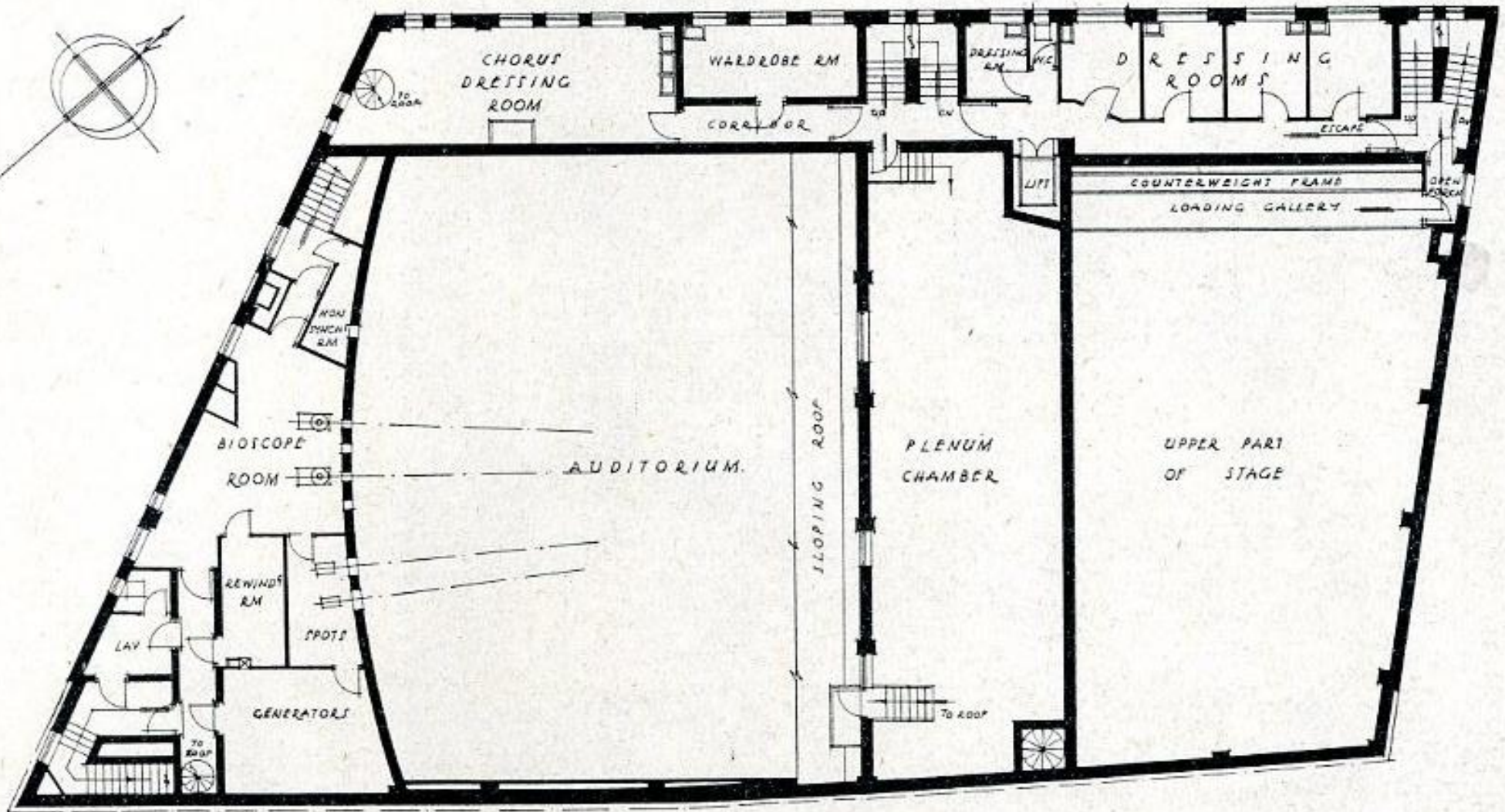
UPPER CIRCLE CLOAKROOM PLAN

SEATS 319
STANDING 89.
SEATS 2'6" B to B
1'8" WIDE



UPPER CIRCLE PLAN

Scale 0 10 20 30 Feet

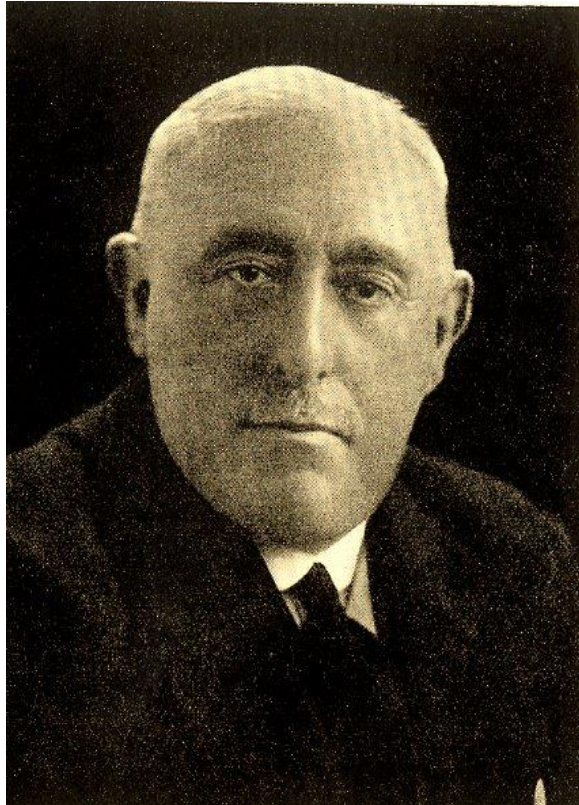


BIOSCOPE PLAN

Bertie Crewe – A Chronology of His Work

William Robert “Bertie” Crewe [1864 -1937]

Architectural education in the office of Clement Dowling, London, and at the Atelier Laloux, Paris, a firm that did the Gare d’Orsay, etc. From Crewe’s architectural practice sprang four theatre/cinema architects who gained fame in the post-boom period: Robert Cromie, J.C. Derham, Edward Jones and Cecil Masey.



Bertie Crewe [1864 -1937]

[From: [theatresearch](#) archive]

“Crewe specialised almost entirely in theatres and, subsequently, cinemas. One of the most dynamic architects of the 1890’s -1900’s, with a florid, at times almost wild splendour, coloured by a mannerist Baroque, probably the influence of his time in Paris. His early work with W.G.R. Sprague was tepid by comparison with his later extravagance (Lyceum, London; Palace, Glasgow; Shaftesbury, London). Crewe’s work is typified by

horizontal balconies tied to ranges of stage boxes set in a frame, the whole making a gorgeous and elaborate frontispiece. His decorative features are inevitably completely three-dimensional, stunning caryatids, giant elephant heads, seated Gods - an invigorating atmosphere for the music halls and melodrama houses which his theatres invariably were. In the London Opera House, he designed a theatre rather more dignified than his music halls, but exuberantly magnificent in the best Continental mode, with borrowings from American giantism, influenced no doubt by his client Oscar Hammerstein. Unlike Matcham, whom in many ways he resembles. Crewe could produce really competent facades which were convincing in both theatrical and architectural terms.”²⁹

²⁹ Sell, Michael & Mackintosh, Iain, *Curtains!!! or A New Life For Old Theatres*, pp.211-212, augmented by Theatresearch

Bertie Crewe - A Chronology of His Work

(extant buildings in **bold** type)

Crewe's surviving theatres are few, and many of the ones listed here are simply theatres where Crewe carried out alterations and reconstruction work, an * denotes that the theatre is wholly by Crewe e.g. internally, externally and without joint authorship:

Provincial and London Theatres

1885: Metropole Theatre, Birmingham

1888: **Royal Court, Sloane Square (with Walter Emden)**

1889: Shoreditch Olympia (with W.G.R. Sprague)

1890: Olympic Theatre, Wych Street, London (with W.G.R. Sprague)

c1890: Alhambra, Brussels

1892: Palace Theatre, Bow, London

1893: **Theatre Royal, Lincoln (with W.G.R. Sprague)**

1894: Camberwell Empire (with W.G.R. Sprague)

1898: Queen's Poplar - *Alterations and facade reconstruction*

1899: Bedford Palace of Varieties, Camden Town, London

1900: **Victoria Theatre*, Salford**

1900: Euston Palace (with Wylson and Long)

1900: Hippodrome, Woolwich

1901: Sadler's Wells, London - *Partly remodelled*

1902: Hippodrome, (Zoo & Hippodrome) Glasgow - External shell survives

1902: Royal Hippodrome, Liverpool - *Alterations* (with A. Shelmerdine)

1904: Palace Theatre, Glasgow

1904: Queen's Poplar

1904: **Pavilion Theatre*, Glasgow**

1904: **Lyceum, London - new auditorium constructed behind Beazley's façade**

1904: Alhambra*, Paris

1904: Orient Theatre, Commercial Road, London

1905?: Alhambra, Brussels* – *burnt down c.1906*

1906: **Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds** - *minor alterations to the auditorium*

1906: Royal Hippodrome*, Belfast

1906: Tivoli Palace, Liverpool

1906: Hippodrome, Coventry

1906: Hippodrome, Paisley

1907: Hippodrome, Sheffield

1908: Hippodrome*, Devonport

1908: Hippodrome*, Portsmouth

1908: Royal Hippodrome, Nottingham

1908: Palace Theatre, Oldham

1908: Hippodrome, Accrington

1908: Empire Theatre, Edmonton

1909: Britannia Theatre, Hoxton - *alterations*

1909: Hippodrome, Southend

1909: Theatre Royal, Blackburn - *rebuild*

1910: Empire Theatre, Kingston (with C.J. Bourne) - *exterior only survives*

1911: London Opera House*, Kingsway, London

1911: Shaftesbury Theatre*, (formerly Prince's Theatre), London

1911: Bedminster Hippodrome*, Bristol

1911: **Empire Theatre*, Burnley** – *currently on The Theatres Trust at risk register*

1913: **Palace Theatre, Manchester** - *auditorium reconstructed by Crewe*

1913: **Palace Theatre*, Redditch**

1913: **Hippodrome*, Golder's Green** - *non-theatrical use*

1913: **Theatre Mogador***, Paris

1913: Hippodrome, Aldershot

1913: The Coliseum*, Dublin (burnt down by Sinn Fein in 1918)

1913: Hippodrome, Oldham - *exterior only survives*

1915: Theatre Royal, Belfast - *Conversion to Cinema*

1917: Hippodrome, Birmingham (alterations)

1921: Queen's Poplar - *Alterations to Circle and Front of House*

1921: Wolverhampton Hippodrome - Internal alterations

1928: **Piccadilly Theatre, London (with Edward Stone)**

1930: **Phoenix Theatre, London (with Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and Cecil Masey)**

1931: **Saville Theatre, London (with T.P. Bennett and Son)**

The Victoria & Albert Museum's *Theatre Collection* also has a collection of theatre designs attributed to Bertie Crewe, but possibly never built. These include: *New Theatre*, Anerley; *Palace of Varieties*, Dublin; *Palace Theatre*, Margate; *Prince of Wales Theatre*, Southampton; and the *New Theatre of Varieties*, Paris.

Very few drawings survive from the Bertie Crewe practice. A few were donated to the Theatre Museum some years ago³⁰ but unfortunately Crewe's office manager and successor Henry Kay³¹ could not find anyone to take the archive when he closed the practice in the 1950s. As a consequence most of the surviving documents were all burnt in Mr Kay's back garden³².

³⁰ see *Sightline*, "Drawing On The Past", by Dr. James Fowler, Vol.23, No.2, April 1989, pp.29-31.

³¹ Not Herbert Kay as quoted in *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914*, p.464 vol.1, pub:Continuum, London, 2001.

³² From a discussion between David Wilmore and Mr.Kay's son in 1996.

Cinemas by the Bertie Crewe Practice

London Cinemas

Balham - Electric Theatre

Battersea - Globe Cinema

Blackheath - Roxy Kinema

Camberwell - Bijou Electric Theatre

Clapham - Globe Kinema

Enfield - Odeon Theatre

Greenwich – Hippodrome

Kennington - Regal: 1937 (with Henry Kay)

Southgate - Odeon Theatre:1935

Strand - Tivoli Palace (with Gunton and Gunton):1923

Woolwich - Beresford Square Cinema

Provincial Cinemas

Bath – Electric Theatre, 1910 (now the Komedia Comedy Club)

Belfast - Royal Cinema (conversion of Theatre Royal)

Birmingham - Electric Theatre, Station Street:1910

Birmingham - Masonic Hall Theatre, New Street:c.1910

Burslem - Electric Theatre

Croydon – Palladium, 1910

Devonport - Electric Theatre Fore Street:1909

Kingston, Dublin - Pavilion Cinema

Leeds - Electric Theatre

Liverpool - Electric Theatre, Scotland Road:1915

Londonderry – Kinema

Longton - Electric Theatre

Manchester - Electric Theatre, Piccadilly

Newcastle-under-Lyne, Electric Theatre

Norwich - Electric Theatre, St. Andrew's Street

Southend - Garons Cinema, High Street:1911

Southend - Palace de Luxe, Leigh Road

Tunstall - Electric Theatre

Walney Island - Vickers Cinema Palace

Other Buildings by Bertie Crewe

London - Forest Gate - Synagogue,

London - Hammersmith - Palais de Danse, Brook Green Road, 1919

London - Skating Rink, Brook Green Road 1910 (same site as the Hammersmith Palais)

London - Wimbledon - Skating Rink – Merton, 1909

London – Regent’s Park - New two-wing extension to The Holme in 1911

Beaconsfield - Survey for Great Central Railway

Gloucester - Skating Rink

Paris - Skating Rink - Rue Amsterdam

[Compiled by **theatresearch** from various sources including: *Curtains!!!* (Ibid.), *Edwardian Architecture* by A. Stuart Gray, and *Theatre Architects in the British Isles*, from *Architectural History*, vol.13, 1970, pp.82-83, *Drawing On The Past* by Dr. James Fowler, *Sightline*, Vol.23, No.2, April 1989, pp.29-31, a typescript originating from the Bertie Crewe office (courtesy John Earl) and information from *The Theatres Trust* database, and the **theatresearch** archive]

Historic England Listing Description

for

The Saville Theatre

Former Saville Theatre

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1271631

Date First Listed: 01-Jul-1998

Statutory Address: Former Saville Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority

County: Greater London Authority

District: Camden (London Borough)

National Grid Reference: TQ 29980 81145

Details

CAMDEN

TQ2981SE SHAFTESBURY AVENUE 798-1/104/1899 Former Saville Theatre 01/07/98

II

Former theatre, now cinema. Designed 1929-30 by T.P. Bennett and Son for A.E. Fournier, theatrical impresario. Steel frame clad in red-brown brick with artificial stone plinth and sculpted frieze to front, and parapet round the building. Rectangular building, originally comprising a theatre on 3 levels, but converted in 1970 into 2 cinemas set one above the other and with large foyer and staircase. EXTERIOR: the elevation is particularly handsome. Rusticated stone plinth with band supports frieze by Gilbert Bayes depicting Drama through the Ages. Moulded band over, above which a blind façade of rusticated brickwork interrupted only by 5 pairs of roundel plaques, and a giant arch over the entrance, framed by simple stone banding with a flat keystone. The arch originally with bronze metal glazing, since 1970 tiled over. Simpler brickwork to side elevations and rear. INTERIOR: remodelled in 1970 and nothing of the 1930-1 work remains on view. The Saville Theatre is remarkable as a fine

composition that incorporates architecture and sculpture with rare intelligence, and which fulfils Bayes' vision of a unity between the two arts. Bayes' frieze is one of the largest and most important works of public sculpture of its age, and won him the silver medal of the Institute of Sculptors for the best piece of applied sculpture of its year. It is 129 feet long and made from artificial stone. It consists of a frieze of dramatic players and dancers set between a broad curtain which is folded round the side of the building. It depicts from left to right: St. Joan; the Chester players; St. George; a Roman triumphal procession; Bacchanalian dancers; a Harlequinade in Commedia dell'arte costume; Shakespearean figures; figures from contemporary drama and (round the corner) a figure in Boer War uniform. The plaques above depict art of Egypt; Assyria; the Italian Renaissance; medieval (initialled); Pompadour; Victorian period (signed); Elizabethan and Georgian.

Listing NGR: TQ2998081145

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system

Legacy System Number: 477977

Legacy System: LBS

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Select Bibliography

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