

Kingsway Cinema Story

Kingsway Cinema Dates

Located in the south Birmingham district of King's Heath. The Kingsway Cinema opened on 2nd March 1925 with Clara Bow in "Down to the Sea in Ships" and Max Linder in "Circusmania". Seating was provided in stalls and circle.

Towards the end of its cinematic life it was taken over by the Essoldo circuit. It closed on 3rd May 1980 with John Huston in "The Bermuda Triangle" and the documentary feature "Encounter with Disaster".

It was converted into an Essoldo bingo club, a use it still retained in later years as a Gala Bingo Club, which was closed in 2007.

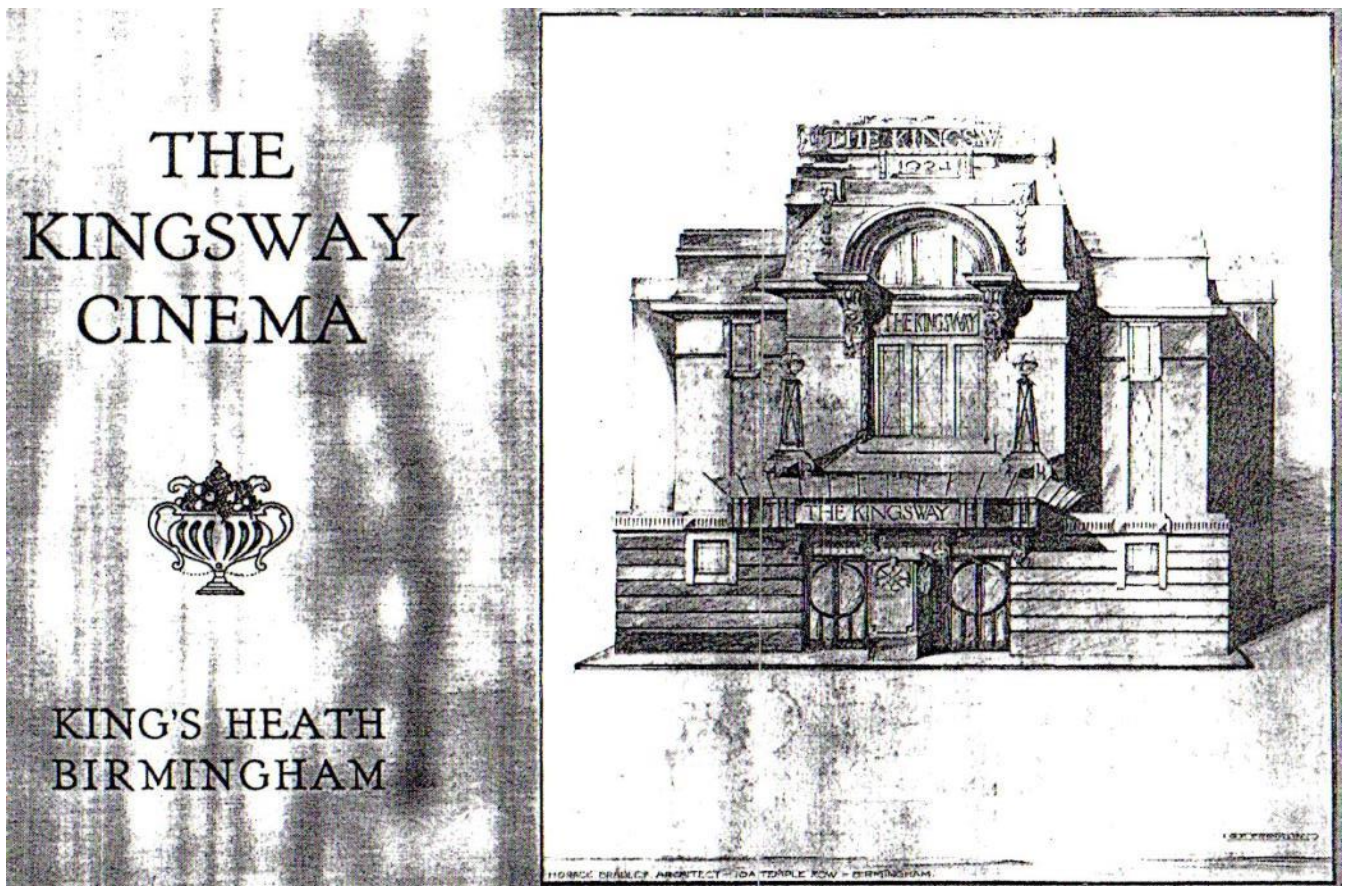
The empty building was badly damaged by a fire which occurred early in the morning on 17th September 2011. Work began on demolishing the building in mid-March 2018. The front façade has been saved and plans are afoot to rebuild as a retail outlet on the ground floor with residential apartments above.



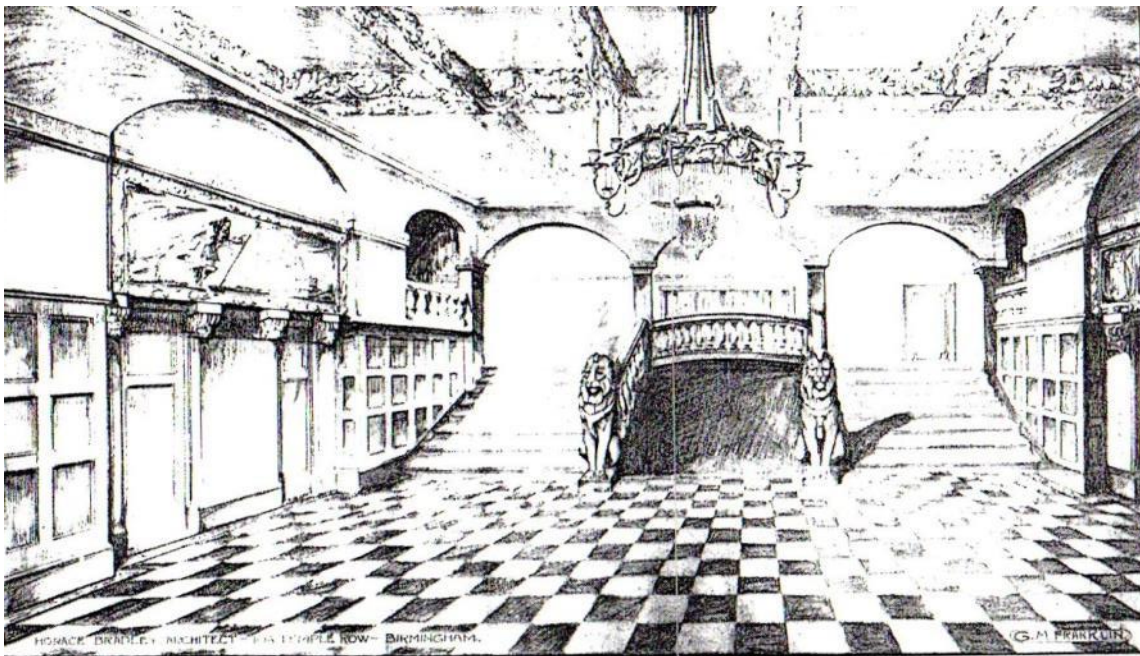
The Kingsway Cinema in the 1930s.

These two booklets would appear to date from the opening in 1924

Kingsway Cinema Booklets



THE KINGSWAY CINEMA, KING'S HEATH BIRMINGHAM			
DIRECTORS :			
GEO. A. PARKER (Chairman)	S. W. CLIFT		
W. H. BULL	W. ASTLEY		
W. W. TURNER	S. W. B. STEPHEN		
.....			
Secretary	-	-	A. KENNEDY
Architect	-	-	H. G. BRADLEY
Quantity Surveyor	-	B. C. BRITTON, P.A.S.I.	
Manager	-	J. H. RICHARDSON	
Musical Director	-	SHIRLEY NORTH	



ENTRANCE HALL

KINGSWAY CINEMA

IN the days of old this was Royal land, truly the King's heath and the King's own way, for Charles the First came here. It is a far cry from those days to 1925. King's Heath is a heath no longer. Houses have grown up, the village has grown and now it is one of the finest suburbs of England's second city.

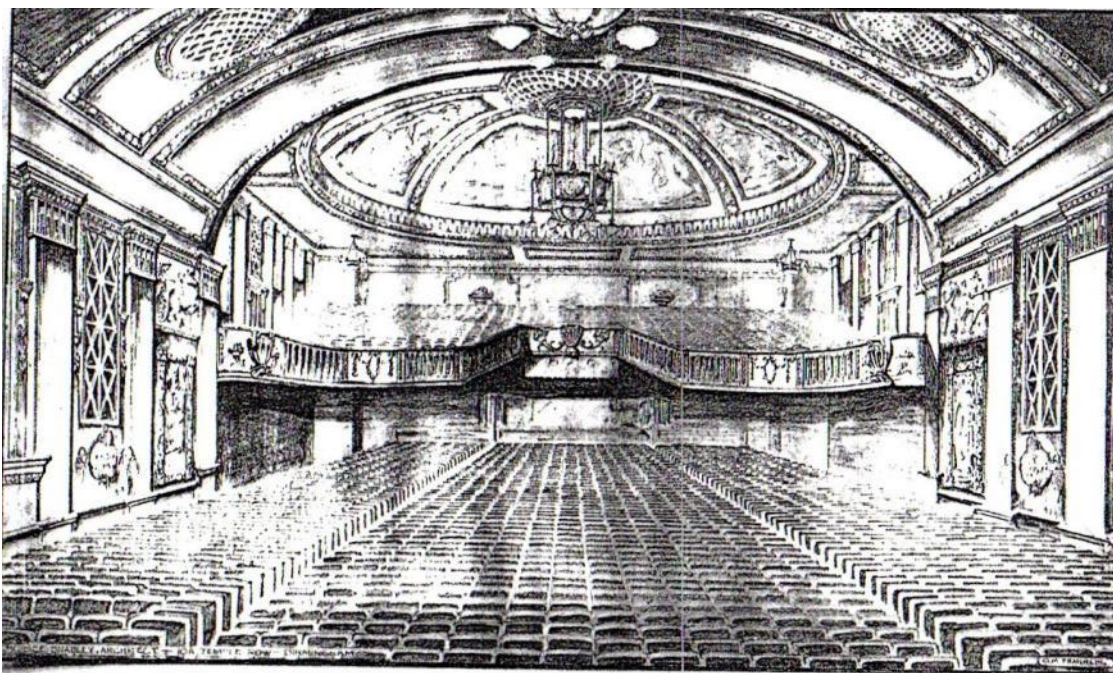
In recent years the district has grown rapidly, and with the growth came the need for high-class amusement tastefully presented.

In 1913 a scheme was launched for the erection of a Super Cinema — troublesome times intervened, and not till ten years later could any material progress be made.

Now, at last, has risen the Kingsway Cinema, noble, beautiful, efficient, luxurious and comfortable. No longer need the residents of King's Heath and Moseley endure the weariness of trams to town for their entertainment — and the more weary journey home. Here, in their midst, is the Kingsway, possessed of a delightful Orchestra, showing every good picture that is issued, and more comfortable than the cinemas in the centre of the city.

In the Entrance Hall and Auditorium are large paintings illustrating the times of King Charles, taken from the originals by Gibbs of Stratford-on-Avon.

The predominant colour of the interior is Orange blended with a delicate Green in wall decoration and reflected in upholstery and carpets, while soft lights of beautiful colours suffuse the building.



INTERIOR

KINGSWAY CINEMA

WITH so experienced an Architect as Mr. H. G. Bradley, who is responsible for many Cinemas including the Coronet, Broadway and Lozells in Birmingham, The Grand, Tamworth, and Bath Cinema, Leamington, the residents of King's Heath are assured of excellence of design in their New Cinema; whilst Messrs. Wilkinson Ltd., the Building Contractors, who have built several Theatres in the Midlands, have enhanced their reputation in the present erection.

The decorative scheme of Fibrous Plaster has been tastefully designed and carried out by the cream of decorators—Messrs. Bryan's Adamanta Ltd.

The whole of the Electrical Work is by Messrs. Millward, Lane & Astley. This firm is carrying out similar work at the Bath Cinema, Leamington, and Capitol, Ward End.

Ornamental Wrought Iron Work and the Front Canopy are made by Messrs. Marly Bros. of Aston, and that beautifully finished Oak Cubicle from which is issued the ticket to give you admission is made by the shopfitters, Messrs. Boyse & Co., while the Leaded Light Windows, so attractively introduced, are by Messrs. Pearce & Cutlers.

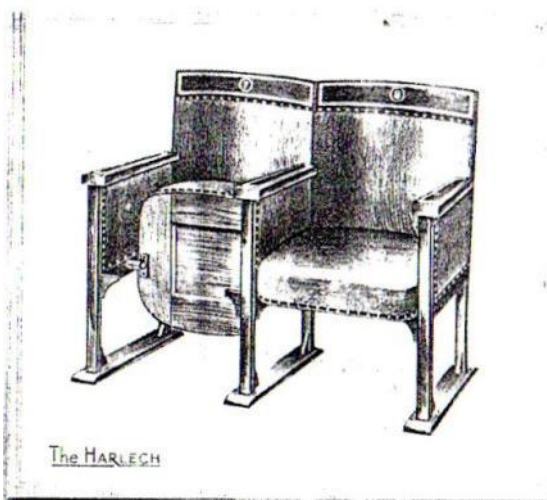
EVERYWHERE inside the Theatre, including the Waiting Rooms, is heated by an excellent system of Central Heating by Messrs. Bagley & Parker; while the atmosphere will always be kept pure by the most efficient Ventilating System installed by Messrs. T. Ash & Co.

All the doors close themselves silently, being their own footmen, and panic bolts are fitted to them so that egress is spontaneous in case of immediate exit being necessary. These and all Brass Work are supplied by Messrs. Walker and Worsey.

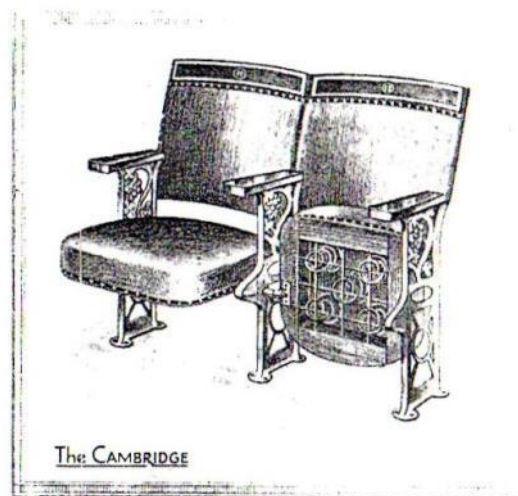
A matter probably not much noticed by the public is the Plumbing and Gas Fitting, but they will be glad to know that these works have been carried out efficiently by Messrs. D. Wiseman & Bros., Ltd., Coventry Road, Birmingham.

The Entrance Halls are tastefully carried out in Terrazzo and Mosaic by Messrs. Panicali Bros., and the composition flooring of the Auditorium is firmly laid on the concrete by Messrs. Art Pavements Co., London.

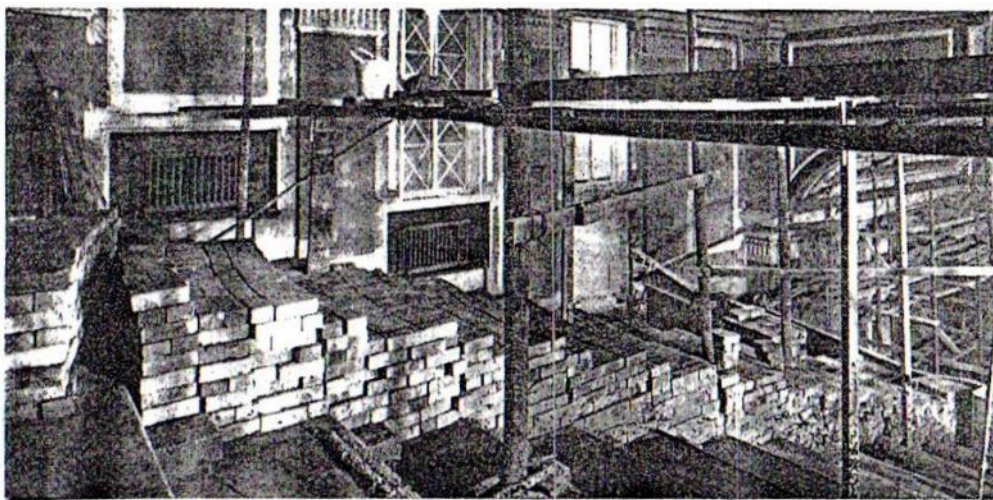
As you leave the Cinema after such excellent enjoyment you will glance up at its noble front adorned with White Terra Cotta, for which Messrs. Gibbs & Canning are responsible, and so wending your homeward way will happily reflect on the perfection of King's Heath Super Cinema, The Kingsway.



HARLECH CHAIRS
are installed in the Balcony
and
CAMBRIDGE CHAIRS
in the Auditorium.



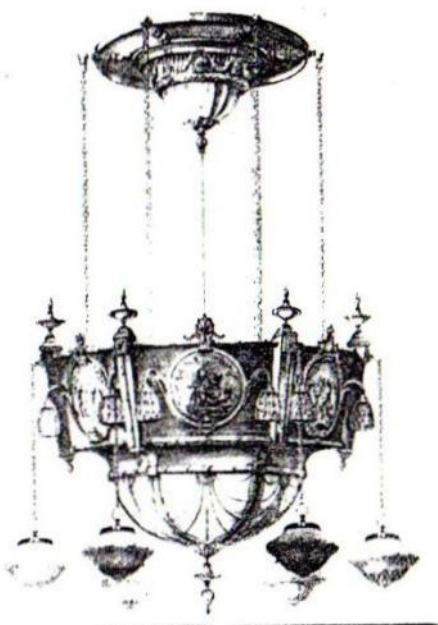
THAT which perhaps appeals most to the Patron is comfort, and here the very best has been secured, for the Chairs are supplied by that eminent firm, Messrs. W. W. Turner & Co. Ltd., who have furnished 85% of Birmingham's Theatres. Their record of furnishing during the last 12 years is 750 Theatres with a total of over 350,000 Chairs.



BALCONY UNDER TEST

THE Balcony of the Kingsway Picture House has been tested to the satisfaction of the Building Surveyor's Department of the City of Birmingham by a super-imposed load of 24 tons on one beam and cantilever as shown on the view above, taken when the full load was on. This load is equivalent to a load of $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwts. per square foot, equal to 5 adult persons to each chair.

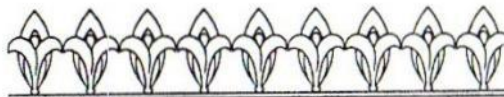
The whole of the Reinforced Concrete Work has been carried out by the Birmingham Concrete Steel Co., 125, Edmund Street, Birmingham, who were also responsible for similar balconies at the Coronet, Small Heath, and Broadway Cinema, Bristol Street, Birmingham.



THE illustration is of the Central Pendant, which is unique and at the same time most artistic.

All the Electrical Fittings throughout the Theatre are in keeping, and are supplied by Messrs. Ingram & Kemp, who are noted for this class of work.

Among some of their contracts we find the King's Suite on S.S. Medina, and the Palace of the King of Siam.

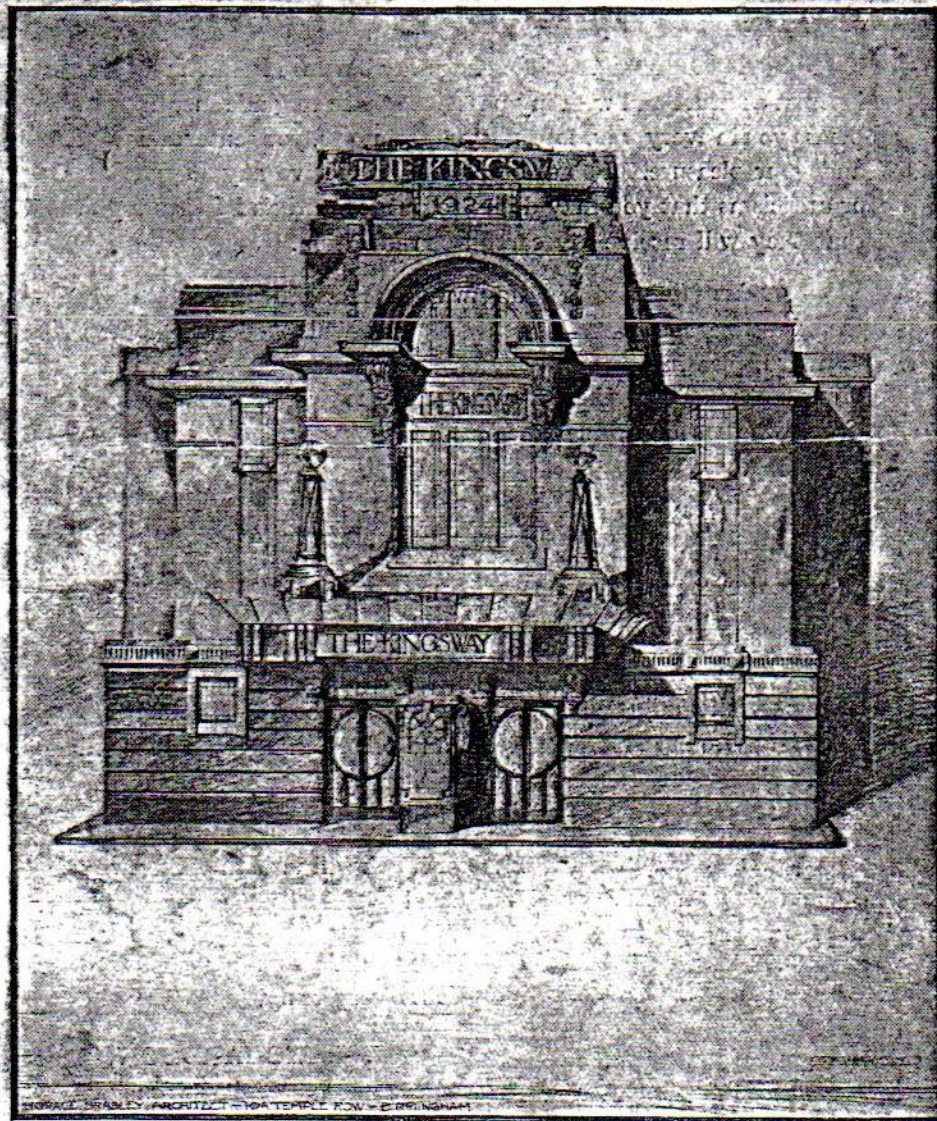


LIST of CONTRACTS

BUILDING CONTRACTS	-	-	-	Wm. Wilkinson Ltd., Hutton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham.
FIREPROOF FLOORING	-	-	-	Art Pavements & Decorations Ltd., St. Paul's Crescent, London.
CANOPIES AND METAL WORK	-	-	-	Marly Bros., Thimble Mill Lane, Birmingham.
HEATING	-	-	-	Bagley & Parker Ltd., Suffolk Street, Birmingham.
VENTILATING	-	-	-	T. Ash & Co., 175, Camden Street, Birmingham.
FIBROUS PLASTER AND DECORATIONS	-	-	-	Bryan's Adamanta Ltd., Gt. Francis Street, Birmingham.
TERRAZZO FLOORS	-	-	-	Panicali Bros., 43, Moor Street, Birmingham.
SEATING AND CARPETS	-	-	-	W. W. Turner & Co. Ltd., King's Heath, Birmingham.
PLUMBING	-	-	-	D. Wiseman & Bros., 262, Coventry Road, Birmingham.
TERRA COTTA	-	-	-	Gibbs & Canning Ltd., Glascote Works, Tamworth.
ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION	-	-	-	Millward, Lane & Astley, 177, Hockley Street, Birmingham.
PAY BOX	-	-	-	E. Boyse, 46, Dartmouth Street, Birmingham.
ELECTRICAL FITTINGS	-	-	-	Ingram & Kemp, 70, Icknield Square, Birmingham.
STAINED GLASS WINDOWS	-	-	-	Wm. Pearce & Cutler Ltd., Bridge Street, Birmingham.
BALCONY REINFORCED CONCRETE	-	-	-	Birmingham Concrete Steel Co., 125, Edmund St., Birmingham.
DOOR FITTINGS, PANIC BOLTS	-	-	-	Walker & Worsey Ltd., 10, Edmund Street, Birmingham.
MACHINES & LANTERNS	-	-	-	Jury-Metro-Goldwin Ltd., Smallbrook Street, Birmingham.

THE
Kingsway Cinema

KINGS HEATH.



Parkes & Mainwarings Ltd., Printers, Coleshill Street, B'ham.

To the Residents of Kings Heath.

Dear Sir or Madam,

Herein you will find a preliminary announcement of the Opening of the Kingsway Cinema, King's Heath, and also a list of forthcoming attractions which, as you will see, includes all the best Pictures at present available.

As the Manager of the Kingsway Cinema, I shall have your interest at heart and with my past experience to guide me, hope to please you in every way, to study your comforts, your entertainment and your pleasure. I shall be pleased to receive any suggestions or criticisms that you may desire to put forward and I assure you that they will receive my careful consideration.

The Music at the Kingsway Cinema will be rendered by the Kingsway Symphony Orchestra, and will be of the highest standard, pleasing to the ear, and, at the same time, appropriate to the picture. The Orchestra will be under the direction of Mr. Shirley North, who has had a wide experience of Cinema orchestration.

The aim of the Kingsway Cinema is to screen the world's biggest film productions at the earliest possible moment after release and you will thus be able to see all the "big" Pictures at your own local Cinema. The entertainment will be pleasing to both young and old.

The prices of admission at the Kingsway Cinema have been carefully adjusted to suit all patrons, viz.:—Balcony 1/6 and 1/-. Ground Floor, Stalls 8d. and 6d. Seats may be booked in advance without extra charge, either by Telephone or at the Cinema.

In conclusion, all I ask is that you will visit the Kingsway Cinema at your *first* opportunity and I feel sure that you will then become a *regular* patron.

Yours very truly,

J. H. RICHARDSON,
Manager.

—: THE :—
KINGSWAY CINEMA
KINGS HEATH.

Grand Opening Night,
MONDAY, MARCH 2nd, 1925.

Under the distinguished patronage of P. J. Hannon, Esq., M.P.
and A. R. Jephcott, Esq., M.P.

Doors Open at 6-o. Commence 5-30 p.m. Continuous Performance.

MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY.

TWO STAR PICTURES.

DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

(A wonderful film.—*Vide Press.*)

Mr. FRED BENNETT (the celebrated baritone),
will sing to the picture.

also

MAX LINDER in his greatest triumph **CIRCUSMANIA**

THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY.

JAMES KIRKWOOD & LILA LEE in

WANDERING HUSBANDS

and

The Love Story of David Copperfield

Current Events and Interest Pictures.

At Every Performance

The Kingsway Symphony Orchestra

Under the Direction of SHIRLEY NORTH.

Continuous Every Evening from 6-30 to 10-30 p.m.

Matinees Monday, Wednesday & Saturday at 2-30.

Northcoming Attractions.

Betty Balfour in "REVEILLE."

"THE TEN COMMANDMENTS."

"THE LOVE STORY OF ALIETTE BRUNTON."

Dorothy Devore in "HOLD YOUR BREATH."

"THE PASSIONATE ADVENTURE." Featuring Alice Joyce
Clive Brook, Marjorie Daw and Victor MacLaglen.

"ZEEBRUGE."

Matheson Lang in "WHITE SLIPERS."

Pearl White in "TERROR."

Johnny Hines in "THE SPEED SPOOF."

Joan Langton in "SINS YE DO."

"THE SEA HAWK."

"THE MOON OF ISRAEL."

"THE SERIES OF MUSIC MASTERS." Direct from the
Tivoli, London.

"CAPTAIN BLOOD."

Victor MacLaglen in "THE BELOVED BRUTE."

"THE GO-GETTERS." Featuring T. Roy Barnes and Seena
Owen.

&c., &c.

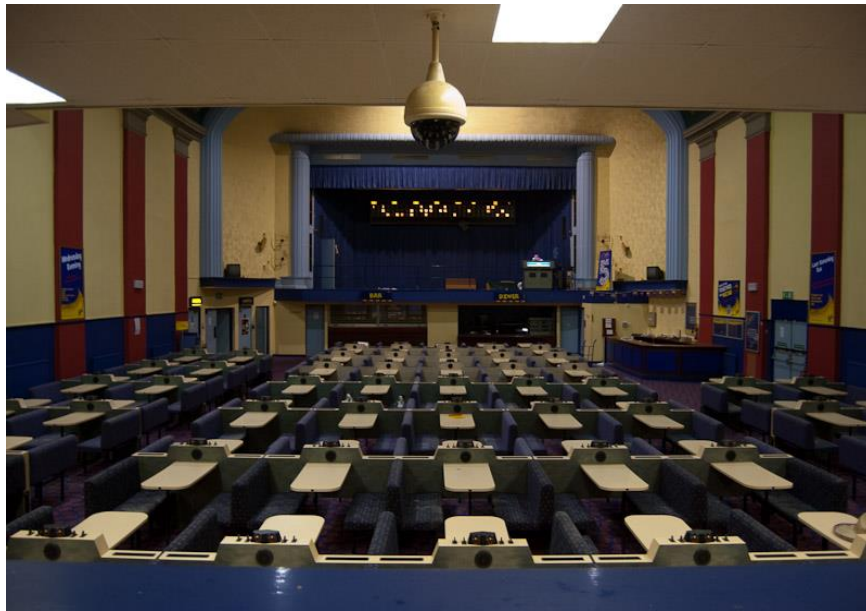
As can be seen from the leaflet/booklet produced for the opening of the Kingsway, it started life as a silent picture house with an orchestra and even a singer to accompany the films and was one of literally hundreds of cinemas built around this time.



The Kingsway Cinema building in its Gala Bingo days. One of the main factors in it closing as a bingo club was the smoking ban inside buildings on the 1 July 2007 in England, it closed sometime after this date in 2007.



The balcony with its posh seats, this remained untouched, a sort of lost world, when the cinema became a bingo club.



The Kingsway cinema in its days as a bingo club.



Looking down from the balcony in the bingo days, note the beautiful ceiling decorations that you would have only seen, in the cinema days, 'when the lights came up' at the end of the film.

The Fire 17th September 2011



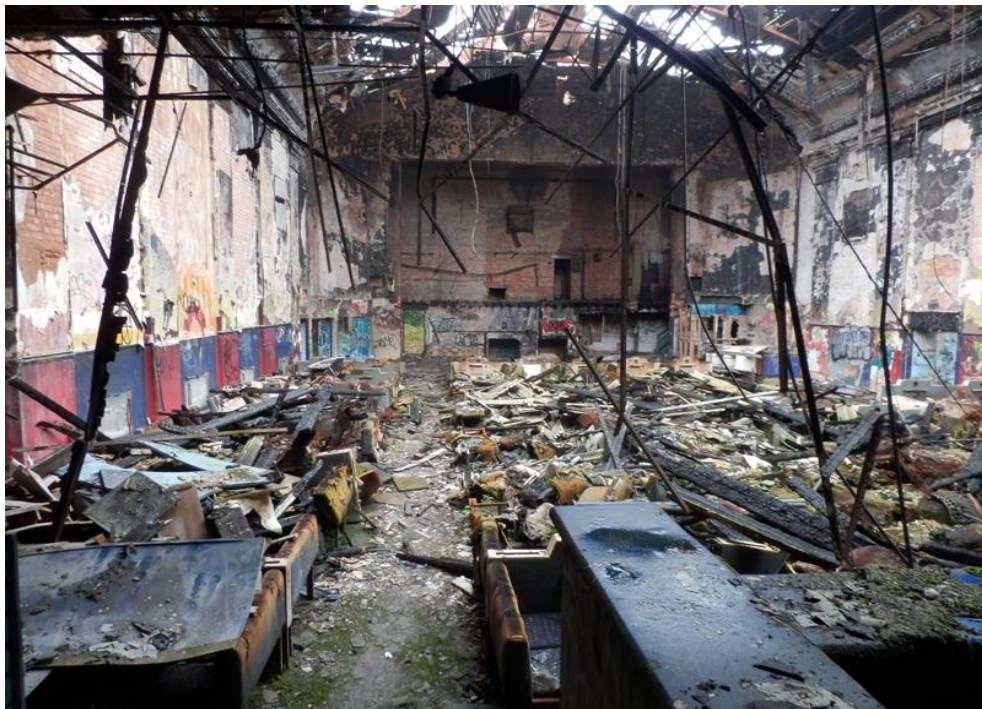
Smoke billowing from the rear of the auditorium during the fire on the 17th September 2011.



Firefighting on the 17th September 2011.



A fire hose drenching the steel roof during the fire.



Inside the auditorium, looking towards where the screen would have been, after the fire.



The remains of the auditorium roof after the fire, this was a view that would be seen for years after the fire.



The inside of the auditorium, having been taken over by nature, before demolition started in 2018.

Demolition Started in February 2018



All fenced off and demolition has begun.



The view from the High Street after the demolition of the auditorium.



The view from the High Street, old Municipal Bank site, after the demolition of the auditorium.



The rear of the foyer block after demolition waiting for the new development to be added to it.

Thanks everyone who has donated pictures and material for this article and if you have any memories or pictures of the Kingsway from the 1920s to 1970s please write them down and scan the pictures. Then send them to King's Heath History Society website because we would love to see them and maybe add them to this article.

Hopefully we will be adding to this article as the development starts to take shape, so watch this space!

Bob Blackham July 2019