



The Maldens and Coombe Heritage Society

(Founded 2012)

WHERE **IS** THE OLD CINEMA IN NEW MALDEN?

Julian McCarthy

Well, I suppose this is a question where the answer is somewhat dependent upon 'when you came in' (to the world as opposed to the film!). As you will have gathered, by now, I tend to go off at tangents and this is no exception.

When did you last hear someone use the phrase 'this is where I (we) came in!?' I can remember a time that this phrase was used and it didn't seem to matter that we watched the second part of a film before the first and then stayed on to see up to the part 'where we came in' – and then got up and left! It sounds ridiculous but people did it and then, I suppose, we joined the two parts together almost taking over the role of film editor in the process. Let's mentally splice the early part of the film that we are watching after the film has ended, onto the beginning and hopefully we will then have the full story!

Even typing this (and knowing I need to bring us back from the tangential path I have taken) it seems ludicrous that we could arrive late and sit and watch a film to the end and then from the end wait for it to start!

So (we're back from that little jaunt now) if you don't remember the Odeon by Shannon Corner (and only arriving on this side of the river in 1976, I don't!) then the old cinema in the question (yes, there was a question at the start of all this and it's still up there at the top of the page!) may, to you, mean the said Odeon, that stood at Shannon's Corner between where the fire station now stands and the A3.



I am still waiting for some stories of people's exploits in this cinema. There must be a thousand and one tales to be told of films, girlfriends, boyfriends, circle, stalls, etc.

But if you actually went to this cinema, the Old Cinema, referred to in the question, would be the Plaza in the High Street.



But if you went to the Plaza, the Old Cinema may mean to you The New Malden Picture Theatre, which is what the Plaza was called prior to being re-branded as the Plaza.



These cinemas have gone and you will note that the question is in the present tense, i.e. where IS the old cinema in New Malden? It IS still here and dates from July 26th 1911, closing in 1922 but not being demolished.

It opened in 1911 and was known as 'The Cinematograph Theatre' (7 Coombe Road), later being known as 'The New Malden Cinema Hall'.

The Surrey Comet stated at the time of its opening:

'PICTURE PALACE OPENED - New Malden now boasts of a Picture Palace, which was open for the first time on Tuesday evening last week. Situate three doors from the railway station, Coombe Road, it is a large palatial hall, the seats being handsomely covered in red plush, and the curtains and fitting of the best, while the pictures exhibited are very clear with an almost entire absence of flicker. It is the intention of the manager to keep the pictures up-to-date and as there so few evening entertainment's from the rapidly increasing population of New Malden it is hoped that the Picture Palace will be well patronised. The films are to be changed every Monday and Thursday, with afternoon shows on Wednesday and Saturday.' (S. Comet 29 July 1911)

And as John McCarthy (of Friends of Kingston Museum) (and no relation) mentions in his article to the Surrey Comet – The large palatial hall is still there!

Today: Picture palace closed

I was disappointed, although not surprised, that no-one seemed to be aware of what is hidden behind the shop fronts of Coombe that will be demolished as part of the proposed redevelopment.

May I therefore remind you that on page 15 of your issue of July 29, 1911, you announced under the heading Picture Palace Opened that: "New Malden now boasts of a picture palace. A large palatial hall, the seats being handsomely covered in red plush, and the curtains and fitting of the best, whilst the pictures exhibited are very clear with an almost entire absence of flicker."

That large palatial hall is still there!

It is the snooker hall of the New Malden Club, who have not only kept it virtually the same as it was as a cinema, but placed where the screen was a plaque referring to this use. I appreciate that it is unlikely that the hall can be preserved but before any-



A hidden gem: New Malden's picture palace in 1912

thing is done I ask the developers, Hemingford Ltd, that they open it to the public for at least a week?

The above 1912 photo [courtesy the Local History Room] shows the entrance. It forms part of my slide

show The Cinemas & Theatres of Kingston upon Thames.

JOHN MCCARTHY
Grove Road
Surbiton

I would like to thank John for his Surrey Comet extracts and highlighting the plight of the building.

What does it look like? Well from the outside not much and hence you would be forgiven for not knowing of its existence. What has Sam's Barbers got to do with cinema history?



Coombe Parade



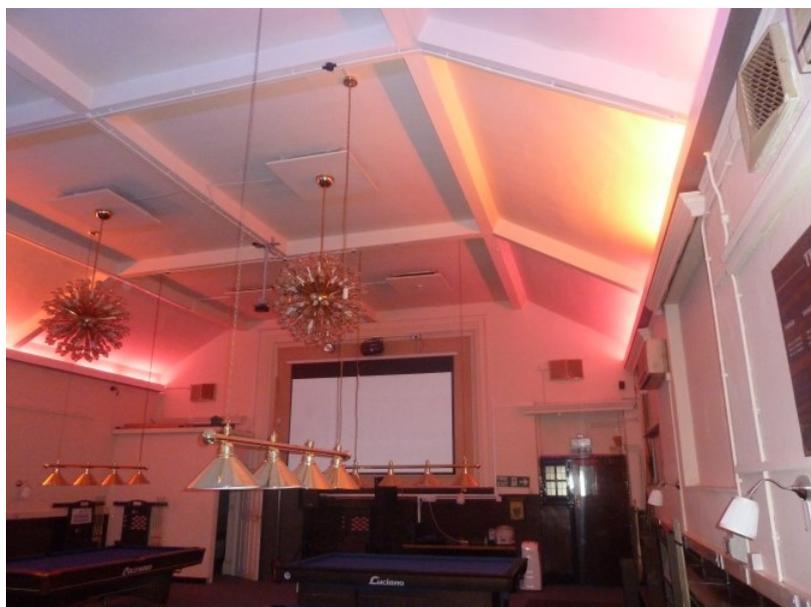
The Old 1911 Cinema (front view)

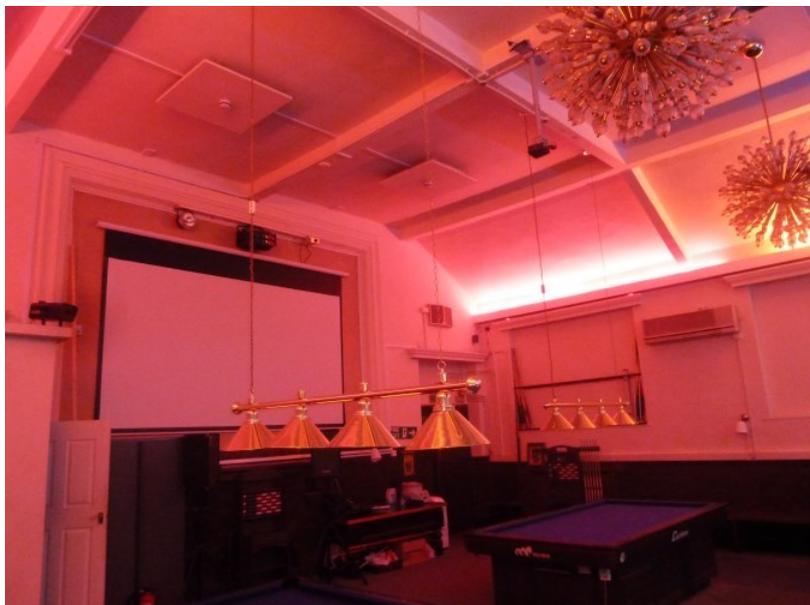
The Maldens and Coombe Heritage Society, 135C South Lane, New Malden. KT3 5HQ
Telephone: 020 8949 3157 Email: maldensandcoombehs@gmail.com



From the rear there is also not much to see but venture inside and the remains of the old cinema can still be seen. The building is used to day as a Pool Hall and Karaoke bar but the old cinema still shouts (if that's the correct term for a cinema showing silent movies (albeit nearly 'flicker free') – its presence!

(I make no apologies for the repetition or, at least, similarity of photos as I wanted to record what I could before this building falls into the hands of developers and is demolished and lost to us all forever. Few know it is here so what chance saving it !?)





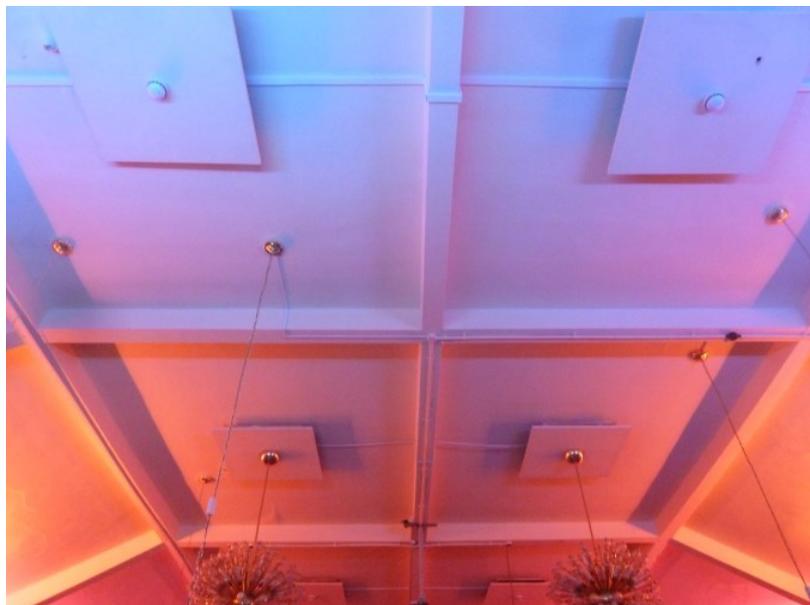
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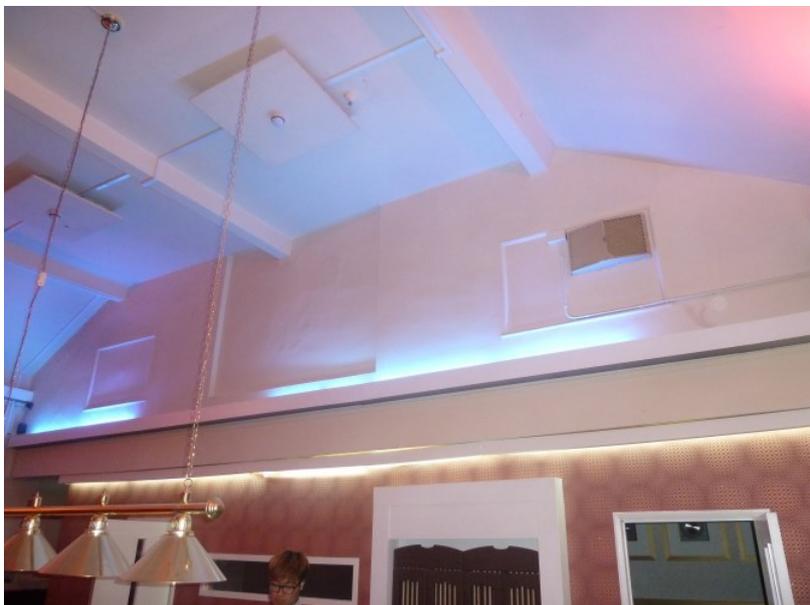
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