

# BRINGING THE BEAT BACK★TO★ BRADFORD

## Written memories



## Written memory by William Steel

I grew up on Little Horton Lane opposite the old bus station. Living there I was only about 400 yards from both cinemas. My earliest memories of the Odeon, probably around 1951 we're going to the Saturday morning pictures, as I remember it cost sixpence. It would start around 10.00am with the national anthem, then a singalong before a cartoon. After that was the serial, something along the lines of Batman or Flash Gordon before a feature film, usually a cowboy flick. It was a wonderful way to spend Saturday mornings.

I can remember Bill Hailey and the Comets playing at the Gaumont although I was just a little too young to go and see them. Speaking of age, I remember the first Dracula film with Peter Cushing, I was too young to go, you had to be 16 to see a X-rated film. Myself and a friend went down to the Gaumont to listen to some of the film from just outside an emergency exit. It was the scene, towards the end, where Peter Cushing was in a horse-drawn carriage hurtling toward Dracula's castle.

Digressing slightly from the Odeon and Gaumont; on Saturday evenings the queue to get into the Ritz used to be around the corner. You could only go in when someone came out. Strange now to look back on going to see a film and starting halfway through, then the intermission and maybe a "B" movie, picking up on the start of the main feature until you got to the point when you came in.

I haven't lived in Bradford for almost 60 years, I now live in Canada, and although it's changed, and not always for the better. It is still home and has wonderful memories of a downtown lad growing up four hundred yards or so from the Town Hall. So many larger-than-life characters; Kate Kennedy, Snowy Mitchell, Jackie Binns and many more.

Best regards and good luck with your project. I will be in Bradford for a couple of days in July; I would appreciate your letting me know where I can look at your project.

### **Written memory by Tim Moon**

For a special cinema event I played music in the foyer with my keyboards within a special three-sided case I had made. I painted it white and added some painted designs so that it looked like a cinema organ. I even wore a bow tie for the occasion. It would have been around the mid-90s I think.

### **Written memory by Martin Mitchell**

I remember being taken to the Odeon to see movies for years when I was young.

One time my uncle took me to see Muppet Treasure Island, all staff were dressed up in costume and there were a lot of bikers queuing to see the movie too. It was great.

Really miss the Odeon. It's always been a distinctive building with its domed towers.

### **Written memory by David Laycock**

I remember going to see Frankie Laine at the New Vic theatre in the 1950s the place was packed out, afterwards we went down the side of the theatre and he opened his dressing room window and sang You're Cheating Heart to the fans below. He then threw out loads of Autograph photos of himself absolutely wonderful. Great memories.

### **Written memory by David Whitford**

[I] remember when the [Twin] Odeon was officially opened. Summer possibly 1969. As an identical twin, myself and Paul entered an identical twin competition and came second or third. We were invited to the official opening of the new Odeon. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Funny Girl were the films. We were both kitted out in our new Saint Bede's school uniforms.

### **Written memory by Pauline Cannon**

That's where I went on my 1st date with my husband of nearly 58 years. We met on a blind date 11th February 1962. I had been to dances before this & absolutely loved it as it was so elegant. Remember going bopping there with my niece (18 months younger than me). Helen Shapiro was in the hit parade at that time. Unfortunately we didn't take photos those days ! –

### **Written memory by Wendy Eastell**

I remember meeting the rolling stones at the stage doors of the Gaumont [when] they were the support act to, little Richard and [the] Everly brothers. We got all autographs [and] I remember Brian Jones so well [as I] thought he was the best looking. We didn't know who they were at the time.

### **Written memory by Sue Barker**

I spent a lot of my childhood visiting the Gaumont where my father - Laurie Lawrance - was the manager. I must have been about 8-years at the time. He left the Gaumont to manage the Majestic but returned to the Gaumont to become the manager of Top Rank Bingo. I remember walking into Bradford from Great Horton on New Year's Eve with my mother to be at the dance. My "Uncle Billy" Hey was band leader I believe.

I wandered around backstage a lot in the theatre bit. I saw Beniamino Gigli sing there and watched ballet from the steps of the dress circle. When I was about 18, I worked in the theatre selling ice creams including the Gene Pitney show. When I was 14, my dad arranged for me to meet Cliff Richard. I went to his dressing room with a pile of autograph books my friends had given me to get signed. He had to borrow a pen! I went back to my seat with the books and don't remember any of the show - I couldn't believe I had just met my hero and was in some kind of trance!

## Written submission from Dave Welbourne on behalf of Lyn Hymers

A friend of mine from Otley, Lyn Hymers (then Lyn Mitchell) saw the Beatles in their Christmas Concert, when she was a young teenager. She wrote the following in her dairy at the time.

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December 1963

At 9.30 Ann and I went to Ann's hairdressers to have our hair shampooed and set. Both turned out nice, but Ann's was a shilling dearer than mine as she had more cut off.

After dinner we went down town Christmas shopping. First we went on our own, then we took Michelle the baby who Ann babysits for.

At six we watched the Merseyside edition of 'Thank Your Lucky Stars' on which we saw the Beatles.

At seven o'clock we set off to catch the coach on which we were going to see "The Beatles" in Bradford. Linda Beecroft's father had arranged it, and we all set off at 7.30. I knew a lot of the people on the coach – Venessa Davis, Toz, Dollar, Margaret Cheetham, Judith Lawson, Denise Entwhistle, Janet Seymour etc.

When we arrived at the Gaumont there were mounted police to keep us all in a long queue, and we joined the queue which went down a long backstreet. The queue didn't move for ages. So we all started pushing and singing: "Why are we waiting?", "We three Beatles", and "All my loving". Slowly, the queue was moving and at last we were at the door and handing in our tickets. We found our way to our seats, and then Ann and I went to buy a Pepsi. When we got back the show had started, and the Barron Knights had started playing. We screamed just to get in practice, and then the compere, Rolf Harris, appeared. Then there were the Fourmost, and the screams came again, and then Tommy Quickly, and the screams came naturally, especially for "Know me now". Then there was Billy J, and the Dakotas. They did a long turn.

There was an interval, and then the Barron Knights were on again singing 'Big Girls Don't Cry'. Then there was Cilla Black. I just clapped for her. I didn't scream of course. Rolf Harris did his act and sang 'Sun Arise', and some more. We all sang and clapped but we knew the

Beatles were next and everyone started shouting for the Beatles, and threw stuff at Rolf Harris.

At last the great moment arrived. At the back you couldn't hear anything for the screams, so we joined the rush for the front. I lost Ann and Linda, or at least thought I would see better if I stayed where I was. I climbed onto a chair back and took my shoes off so I could balance, and had a fabulous view, and could see their faces clearly. Christine and Vanessa joined me and we stood there screaming and waving, and shaking. Meanwhile, Ann fainted for a minute.

We went back on the bus but my throat ached too much to sing or shout. I just sat and watched Toz and Dollar clowning about. We got in at 12.15, and it wasn't long before I was bedded down.