



Information Bulletin 33

2 February 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd
c/o Niamos, Warwick Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5EU

Website - <https://www.hulmehippodrome.org>
Email - info@hulmehippodrome.org.uk
Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

Twitter - @savehulmehip
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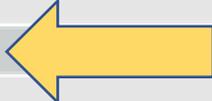
News this week

Hulme Hippodrome is now the 5th most At-Risk theatre in UK

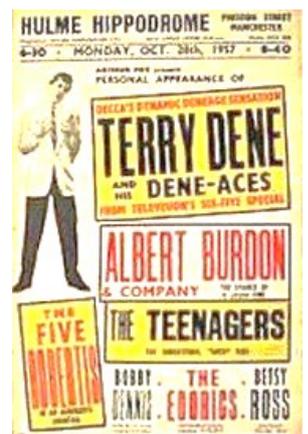
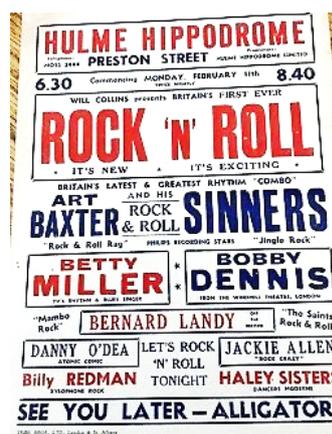
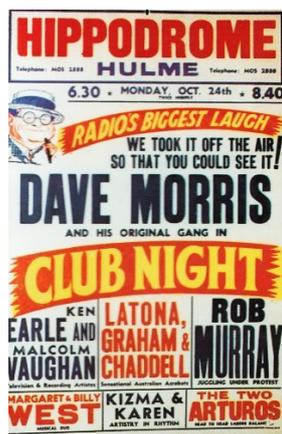
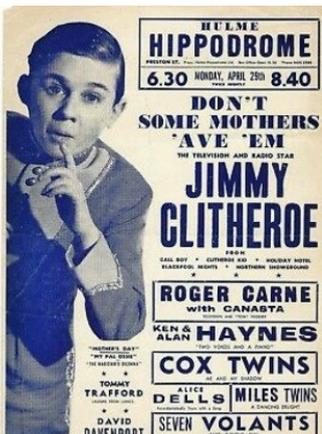
Today (Wednesday) the Theatres Trust unveiled its new list of theatres across the country which are most at risk of being lost to the nation, with Hulme Hippodrome worryingly rising to the number 5 slot.

At the national launch of the updated register for 2022, over 130 participants were told that “uncertainty over an owner’s intentions is very important in adding to the risk of a theatre being lost, and Hulme Hippodrome is the most extreme example of this.” This is covered on page 9 of the Theatres Magazine edition below.
https://issuu.com/theatrestrust/docs/tm_magazine_winter_2022_final_high_res

Theatre	Grade Listing
Brighton Hippodrome	II*
Theatre Royal Margate	II*
Victoria Pavillion/Winter Gardens, Morecambe	II*
Dudley Hippodrome	-
Hulme Hippodrome	II
Plymouth Palace	II*
Victoria Theatre, Salford	II
Groundlings Theatre, Portsmouth	II*
Spilsby Theatre	II
Streatham Hill Theatre, London	II
Theatr Ardudwy, Harlech	II*
Winter Gardens Pavillion, Blackpool	II*
Burnley Empire	II
Garston Empire, Liverpool	-



Our Community Heritage in Posters



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Information Bulletin 34

9 February 2022

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*** Spring Festival ***

Come and join us to find out about the Hippodrome and our campaign to Save Hulme Hippodrome

Sunday 6 March

1.30pm to 3.30pm

Hulme Garden Centre - M15 5RG

All Welcome

It's a fundraiser and a fun get-together, a chance to catch up, meet the committee and volunteers, and hear the latest news

**** Pay only what you can, *but do come anyway* ****

Programme:

- Fun Bingo (part of our 1960s heritage)
- Short Presentation on recent developments
- Campaign merchandise
- Walking tour around the building
- Music and entertainment
- Food and drink
- More to be announced when confirmed

We will have a well-ventilated space undercover, useful if it rains



Information Bulletin 35

14 February 2022

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News this week



Poster

A reminder of our “Save Hulme Hippodrome Spring Festival” on Sunday 6 March, 12.30pm to 3.30pm at Hulme Community Garden Centre, and this lovely poster is now available for display.

All Welcome

‘Amenity’

Today, and with our strong support, we are delighted that Manchester City Council has issued a legal notice to the current owners, requiring them to make a list of **eleven improvements** to the walls and roof of the building, the first two to be finished by 16 May and the other nine by 16 September.

It is an **Amenity** notice, as it only relates to the impact of the poor state of the outside of the building on the neighbouring area. We fully expect the necessary internal and structural repairs notice must surely follow in due course. Legally it is – *Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990* –

The following pages show photographs of the Notice (six pages) as it is displayed on the side of the building.

IMPORTANT - THIS COMMUNICATION AFFECTS YOUR PROPERTY



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
(AS AMENDED BY THE PLANNING AND COMPENSATION ACT 1991)**

**NOTICE UNDER SECTION 215
LAND ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE AMENITY OF THE AREA
ISSUED BY MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**

1. **THIS IS A FORMAL NOTICE** which is issued by Manchester City Council as Local Planning Authority ("the Authority") for the purposes of exercising the powers under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("the Act"), in respect of the land described below in paragraph 2 of this notice ("the Land") and shown edged red on the attached plan.

2. THE LAND TO WHICH THE NOTICE RELATES

Land situated at Hulme Hippodrome, Warwick Street, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5JJ, shown edged red on the attached plan.

3. **IT APPEARS TO THE AUTHORITY** that the amenity of a part of the area of that authority is adversely affected by the condition of the Land and in pursuance of their powers described in paragraph 1, **HEREBY GIVE YOU NOTICE** to take such steps as are set out in paragraph 4 to this notice for remedying the condition of the Land.

4. WHAT YOU ARE REQUIRED TO DO

- 1) Remove all graffiti using a non-abrasive superheated steam cleaner such as DOFF or similar, in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. Where graffiti is on painted brickwork then the brickwork should be repainted with a minimum two coats in RAL 2001 Red Brick. Graffiti to the boarding and roller shutter on the ground floor front elevation should be repainted with a minimum of two coats in RAL 7021 Black Grey.
- 2) Remove all vegetation from all external elevations and treat vegetation roots and external brick with a systematic weed killer in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. Where the removal of vegetation results in the displacement of or the removal of bricks, then these should be reinstated or replaced with matching Accrington style red brick to the same specification and dimensions. Loose and defective pointing should be repointed flush in a lime mortar to match the adjacent in finish, colour and texture.

3) Repair leaks in gutters with self-adhesive impervious membrane and reinstate any missing sections of rainwater goods, ensuring that all gutters, hoppers and downpipes are clear and free of obstruction and that all rainwater run-off is conducted to main drains. Where missing rainwater pipes are connected to uPVC downpipes, then replacements should be in matching uPVC to the same design, diameter, lengths, connections and fixings details in black. Where sections of missing rainwater goods are in cast iron, then these should be replaced in cast iron to the same design, diameter, lengths, connections and fixings details and should be painted in RAL 9005 Black.

4) Remove all green mould and staining using a fungicidal spray.

5) Ensure all window openings are securely closed shut. Remove all flaking paint from the window frames, clean and prepare all external timber prior to painting in matching colour RAL 3005 Wine Red.

6) Remove broken panes of glass and replace with matching glass as follows:

(a) where glass is obscure, replace with matching single glazed obscure glass to the same patterning;

(b) where glass is clear then replace broken glass in matching clear glass;

(c) where glass is coloured within the leaded lights then these should be replaced with glazed matching coloured glass. Any sections of leadwork should be reinstated to the same pattern;

(d) steel shutter sheeting over window openings on upper floors of Wilberforce Close elevation to be removed and repairs to windows carried out as outlined above

7) Re-bed all loose coping stonework and replace missing section with matching sandstone to the same size, specification and profile. Re-bed and repoint to a flush finish in a lime mortar.

8) Re-fix loose and slipped roof slates and lead flashings. Where slates are missing then these should be replaced in matching Welsh Slate.

9) Replace missing sections of window cills using stone indent repair. Carefully cut back defective stone back to sound stone and provide sufficient bed depth to carry out indent repair. Indent repair should match the same profile as the existing stone cill. Stone type should be buff coloured sandstone to match the existing and be pointed up using a flush joint and lime mortar to colour match with the stone.

10) Replace brickwork where missing below the window cills using matching brickwork and pointing. Carefully cut out defective bricks to a depth enough to give a sound base for a replacement brick. Reinstated matching Accrington style bricks to match existing in colour and size. Repoint in a lime mortar that is flush finished and matches the colour and texture of the surrounding mortar.

11) Carry out any work resulting from the taking of the above steps, using materials that match in all characteristics.

5. **TIME FOR COMPLIANCE** is two months for item 1, and six months for remaining items 2 - 11, after the notice takes effect.

6. **WHEN THIS NOTICE TAKES EFFECT**

This notice shall take effect subject to the provisions of Section 217(3) of the Act, or 16 March 2022, unless an appeal is made against it beforehand.

Dated: 14 February 2022

Signed by a duly authorised signatory on behalf of the Council:



Julie Roscoe
Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing

Issued by: Manchester City Council, Development Compliance, PO Box 532, Town Hall
Manchester, M60 2LA Tel. 0161-234 4531, Email
planning.enforcement@manchester.gov.uk

ENF/15321/21

IMPORTANT - THIS COMMUNICATION AFFECTS YOUR PROPERTY



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
(AS AMENDED BY THE PLANNING AND COMPENSATION ACT 1991)**

**NOTICE UNDER SECTION 215
LAND ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE AMENITY OF THE AREA
ISSUED BY MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**

WARNING

This Notice Takes Effect on **16 March 2022** UNLESS AN APPEAL IS MADE AGAINST IT BEFOREHAND

Following the notice taking effect, it is then an offence to fail to take the steps stated in the Schedule of this notice after the end of the compliance period. You will then be at risk of immediate prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, for which the maximum penalty is £1,000 for a first offence and for any subsequent offence. In addition, the Council may also enter the land and take those steps specified in the Schedule and recover any expenses reasonably incurred from the owner of the land. If you are in any doubt about what this notice requires you to do, you should get in touch immediately with Mr J Kelsey, Senior Planning Officer (Buildings at Risk and Trees), Manchester City Council, PO Box 532, Town Hall Extension, Manchester, M60 2LA or by telephoning - 0161 234 4597.

If you decide that you want to appeal against the notice you may only do so by an application to the Magistrates' Court, but you must ensure that you make your appeal before 16 March 2022. An appeal can be brought on any of the following grounds:

Section 217(1)

- (a) that the condition of the land to which the notice relates does not adversely affect the amenity of any part of the area of the local planning authority who served the notice, or of any adjoining area;

(b) that the condition of the land to which the notice relates is attributable to, and such as results in the ordinary course of events from, the carrying on of operations or use of land which is not in contravention of Part III;

(c) that the requirements of the notice exceed what is necessary for preventing the condition of the land from adversely affecting the amenity of any part of the area of the local planning authority who served the notice, or of any adjoining area;

(d) that the period specified in the notice as the period within which any steps required by the notice are to be taken falls short of what should reasonably be allowed.

Below is a list of the names and addresses of the persons on whom a copy of this Section 215 Notice has been served:

1. **Archbishop Gilbert Deya, Trustee Gilbert Deya Ministries, 459-463 New Cross Road, London, SE14 6TA**
2. **Karen Oyanda, Trustee Gilbert Deya Ministries, 459-463 New Cross Road, London, SE14 6TA**
3. **Christiana Abima, Trustee Gilbert Deya Ministries, 459/463 New Cross Road, London, SE14 6TA**
4. **Gilbert Deya Ministries, 1A Throwley Way, Sutton, SM1 4AF**
5. **Gassell Charles Gordon, 17 Hill Barn, South Croydon, CR2 0RU**
6. **Gassell Charles Gordon, 6 Rocklands Drive, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 0FE**
7. **HHM 20 Ltd, 291A Northborough Road, London, SW16 4TR**
8. **The Occupier, Hulme Hippodrome and Floral Hall, Warwick Street, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5FT**

ENF/15321/21



Information Bulletin 36

3 March 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd
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News this week



Sunday

A **reminder** of our “Save Hulme Hippodrome Spring Festival” is on this Sunday 6 March, 12.30pm to 3.30pm at Hulme Community Garden Centre – M15 5RG.

All Welcome

Programme

- 12.30 – Event opens – archive photos and videos, food and drink throughout
- 13.00 – Bee Rosebud – a musician from Hulme with an acoustic set
- 13.30 – Informal presentations, stalls, kids table with model making
- 14.00 – Music Hall performance by Maurice Walsh
- 14.40 – BINGO!
- 15.00 – Walking tour, stalls, meet the group
- 15.30 – Close

Heritage information request

War Plays at Hulme Hippodrome

It seems that Zelda Davees wrote some plays in the 1940s that were performed here, one later being made into a film.

1941 – *Wearing The Pants*

1944 – *Without Them We Perish*

** Any further information welcome **

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Information Bulletin 37

10 March 2022

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Festival Feedback: fun and games, and in a very good way



The events team and volunteers “put on a delightful event! The decorations and activities felt very aligned with the campaign's aesthetic and intentions. Having multiple places to convene and chat kept the atmosphere relaxed and the storytelling of the Hippodrome's history was beautifully set up.”



"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for an incredible event on Sunday. Have had amazing feedback from everyone that was there. Well done on raising those funds and getting people signed up on the mailing list!"



CREDITS – our many thanks to –

Maurice "Moz" Walsh – compere
Verity Riley & Beth Bishop – singers
Sheila Seal – keyboards aka "orchestra!"

Events team: Ella Shepherd, Chloe Dignum,
Annabel Pinchemain, Isabelle Sibanda.

Volunteers: Clara, Sarah, Kate.

Packing Crew: Gamari, Tom, Sine, Tom G,
Taite, Matt.

Garden Centre: all staff, especially Tim and
Janine.

MMU lecturers: Jon, Janine and Cheryl.



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Information Bulletin 38

6 April 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd
c/o Niamos, Warwick Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5EU

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Follow us on Twitter – all the latest HH news!

Tweet

Bev Craig @bevraig

Good to see that beneath the headline that the article references the Councils support to see the Hippodrome restored and are working to support Oli and the group 👉

The Meteor @mcrmeteor · 19h
Cultural venues face an uncertain future as the relentless march of new tower blocks progresses unabated.
Gary Roberts speaks to Oli Wilson about the...

11:44 · 06/04/2022 from Manchester, England ·
Twitter for iPhone

Music at HH – on being popular long before 'pop'

On the day when the exciting new British Pop Archive in Manchester is announced (pages 3, 4), first a look at the “pre-pop” that came before pop music at HH.

“We sing when we’re happy and celebrating – ‘Happy Birthday to You’ – and we sing when we’re down, in an attempt to keep our spirits up.” (Tracey Thorn)

HH opened in 1901, on the cusp of the Music Hall format coming to an end in Britain and it being replaced by the Variety Performance format. However communal singing was also an essential part of the variety format - and the songs for people to sing together in theatre were different from those in church!

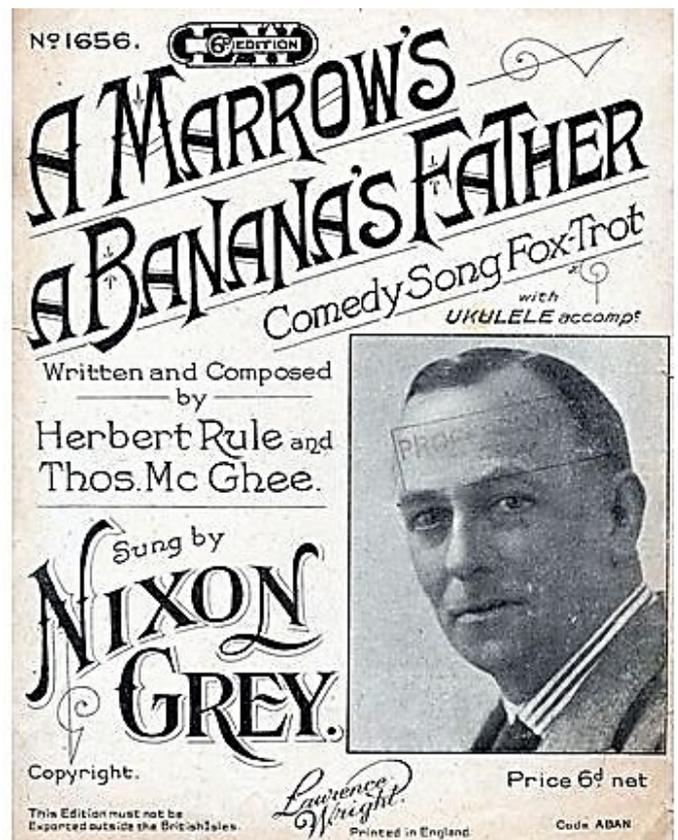
Music and singing were essential, and though it's hard to be certain, it does seem that 1921 was a very good year for music and singing at HH. In his book, Roger Rolls (2000, p47) lists seven different musicals performed at HH for that year, or "operettes" as they were known, where his father played violin in the orchestra pit.

And in 1926 one musical that had its first performance ever at the HH was *June Magic*. This included twelve dancing *Lawrence Tiller Girls* and some songs that

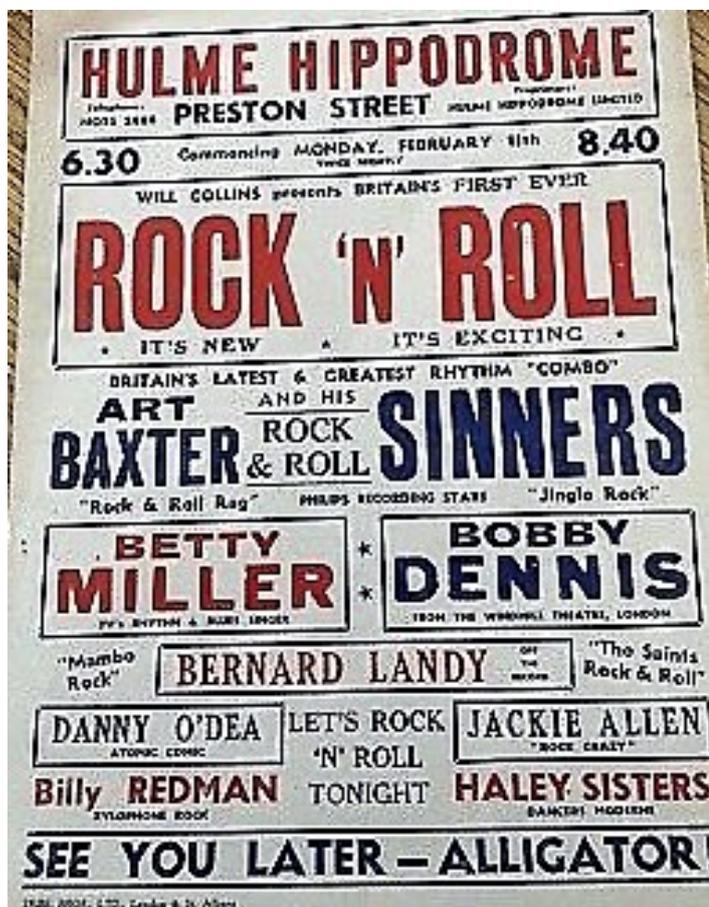
"brought a flavour of the old music hall days: *A Marrow's a Banana's Father* and *Onions Bring Memories of You!*" (Rolls, 2000, p49). Including touring the North West, Broadhead got 16 weeks of shows out of this *June Magic* song-and-dance.

*A marrow's a banana's father
 A marrow's a banana's Dad
 It started life as a gherkin
 So it hasn't done so bad.
 So if you step on a banana
 Remember this my lad
 A marrow's a banana's father
 A marrow's a banana's Dad.*

From the beginning HH included drama plays and farces which only required the in-house orchestra to play "an overture or selections to start the performance plus maybe an intermission and a finale". But from 1940, around the start of the Second World War, the amount of drama increased while variety decreased. One of the reasons for this management decision to shift further into drama might have been to save money by disbanding



the orchestra. (Rolls, p46)



The Playhouse next door was sold to the BBC in the 1950s. And clearly as a BBC studio The Playhouse has a stronger pop music tradition. Even so, with live performances continuing at the HH there was still music at the HH, only now it came from guest bands on the stage.

Credits: with thanks to Chloe Hesford for her postgrad research in progress.

- (1) Tracey Thorn, 2015, *Naked* at the Albert Hall, London: Virago.
- (2) Roger Rolls, 2000, *Variety* at Hulme Hippodrome, Manchester, 1920-1940, Wilmslow: self-published.

BRITISH POP ARCHIVE

at the
John Rylands
Research
Institute and
Library

The British Pop Archive (BPA) was announced on Wednesday 6 April by the University of Manchester and is due to open with its first exhibition on Thursday 19 May, called, **Collection**.

Perhaps as expected, the first exhibition will concentrate on personal items relating to The Smiths, New Order, The Hacienda, Factory Records, Granada Television and Joy Division, such as the sheet of paper with Ian Curtis's original handwritten lyrics for 'She's Lost Control'.

The BPA will be led by the UoM John Rylands Research Institute and Library (the one on Deansgate, not the one on Oxford Road). "It would be great if they could get the Debenhams building as the home of the BPA," said one commentator. However, at this stage it is an **archive** and not also a museum, so items will be safely locked away until requested by an exhibition or a researcher.

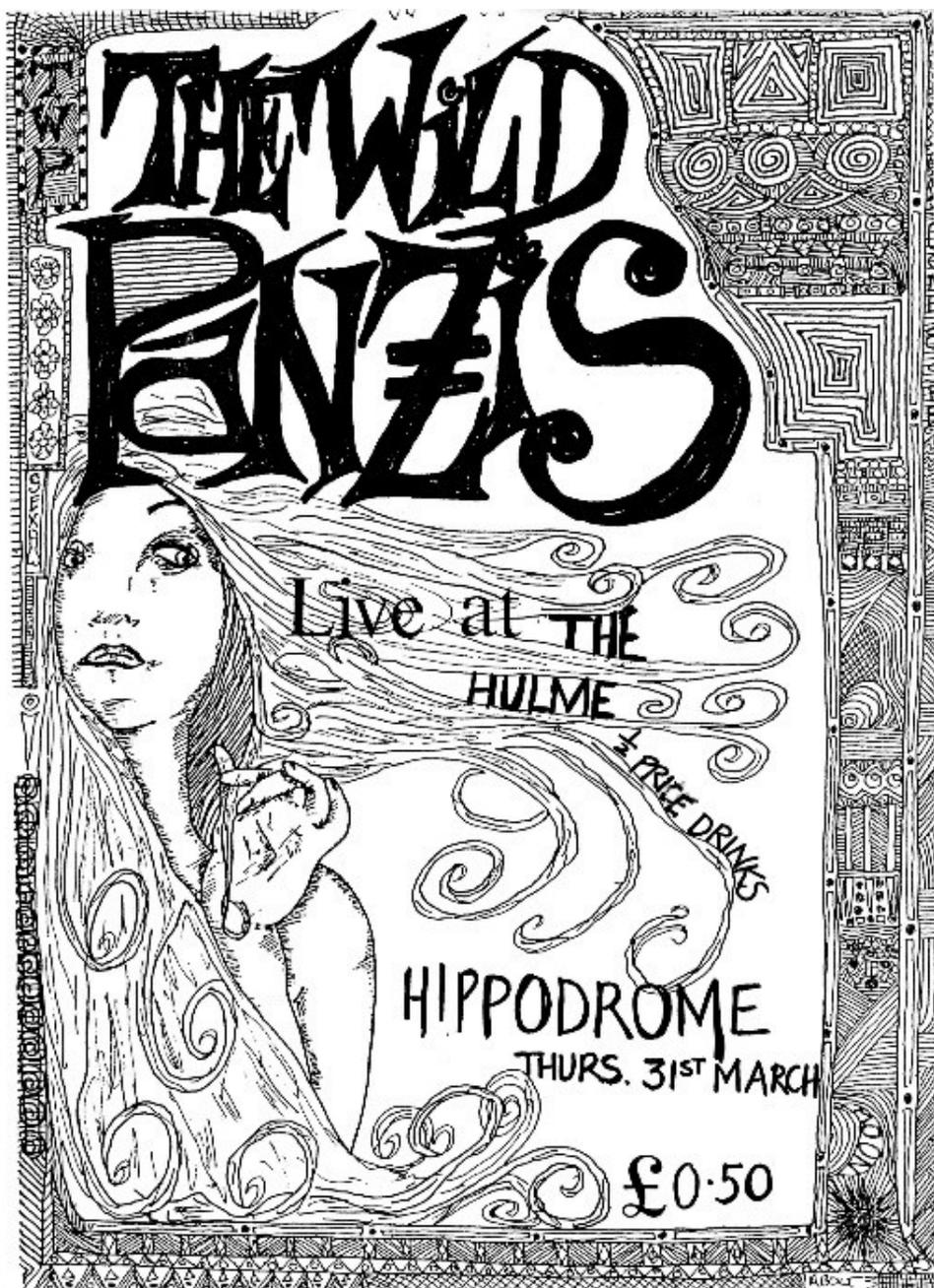


The people driving this project are Jon Savage, the recently appointed professor of popular culture at the University of Manchester, and Hannah Barker, the director of the John Rylands institute and a professor of British history. Mat Bancroft is also helping to curate the archive.

Hannah Barker, Jon Savage and Mat Bancroft (Image Jill Furmanovsky)

The BPA will initially include materials from the Collections of:

- Granada TV
- Ian Curtis
- Rob Gretton ("an entire cellar")
- Andy Spinoza
- Kevin Cummins
- Bob Dickinson
- Jon Savage
- Terence Pepper
- CP Lee
- Jill Furmanovsky (rock photographer)
- Kevin Cummins (rock photographer).



Between The Playhouse and HH – and below the big headline names – there were dozens and dozens of bands and musicians from Moss Side and Hulme who gigged in the building, a less told history of creativity that could well open up now. The vibrant musical histories of Moss Side and Hulme are so much more than the Russell Club aka The Factory, important as that was. Here we have The Wild Panzis in 1988, and at a massive ticket price of 50p ☺

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Information Bulletin 39

1 May 2022

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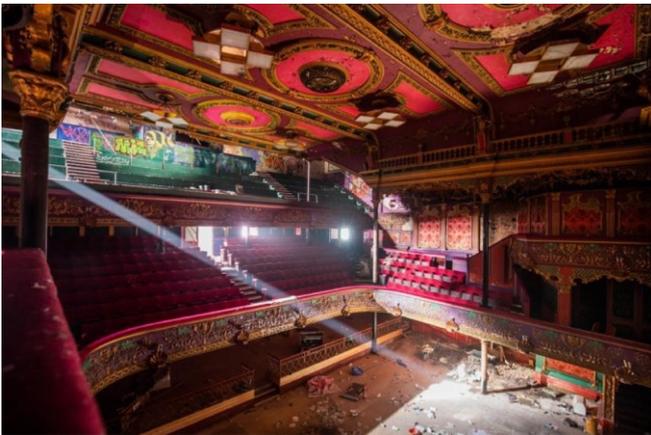
Instagram - [@savehulmehip](https://www.instagram.com/savehulmehip)

Come and meet the Committee

The Directors of the campaign meet regularly on Monday evenings, and with the summer months ahead and warmer and lighter evenings, we want to keep in touch with you as best as possible.

So we shall have some of our meetings in person outside the Hulme Hippodrome on the **second Monday** of each month, 6.30pm. The idea is we will be quite informal and all are welcome to come and chat. We look forward to meeting you.

9th May - 13th June - 11th July - 8th August - 12th September



Heritage Project # 1

We have been very fortunate to have a university student in heritage studies helping us in researching the past performances given on the stage of Hulme Hippodrome over its 120 years, and we hope to share the final report soon.

Heritage Project # 2

We also have a small grant from the University of Manchester for a modest project to interview some people on family memories of going to Hulme Hippodrome. We will be publicising this project in the coming days, and please do get in touch with us if you or a friend would like to contribute your stories. We'll be offering a decent lunch to show our appreciation.

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Information Bulletin 40

10 May 2022

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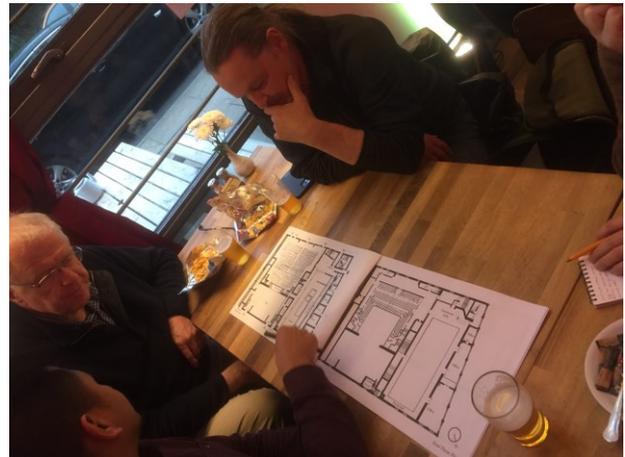
Come and meet the Committee

Yesterday we had our first meeting in person outside the Hulme Hippodrome - on the **second Monday** of each month, 6.30pm. As we said, the idea is we will be quite informal and all are welcome to come and chat. We look forward to meeting you.

MONDAYS: 13th June - 11th July - 8th August - 12th September



Litter picking outside the Hippodrome



A volunteer shares their research on the architectural history of the building.

And a thank you ...

... for the recent emails from people with family members who remember visiting the Hulme Hippodrome, often in the 1950s. We will be making arrangements in the coming weeks to meet up and record these precious memories. And we plan to provide a decent meal to express our thanks.

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Information Bulletin 41

8 June 2022

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Brilliant student project!



A highly talented group of students at the **Manchester School of Architecture** (MSA) have done us very proud. Every year a two-week MSA Live initiative takes place where student teams work together to complete a challenging task – and we're very impressed with their work on the Hulme Hippodrome this year.

The students have made a remarkable **scale model** of the building, including its sister theatre Niamos / The Playhouse (above) and have produced **digital models** of what a good refurbishment could look like (next page).

They have produced a **nine-page report** and we are sending copies (pdf) to all our supporters with this copy of the Bulletin. Our thanks to Professor Dominic Sagar.



Floral Hall Interior



Floral Hall Interior



Floral Hall Interior



Hippodrome Main Entrance



Small green area at front - Floral Hall - Hippodrome auditorium - Niamos

Heritage project

We have received a small grant from the University of Manchester to explore the heritage of Hulme Hippodrome through oral histories and people's memories of visiting the theatre in their youth. We have one event planned so far, and if you or a family member would like to get involved in our heritage project please get in touch.

Come and meet the Committee

This coming Monday evening will be our next meeting in person outside the Hulme Hippodrome. Our 'live' meetings are on the **second Monday** of each month, 6.30pm, on the small green outside the (shuttered) front door. The idea is we are quite informal and all are welcome to come and chat. We look forward to meeting you.

MONDAYS: - 11th July - 8th August - 12th September



Information Bulletin 42

14 June 2022

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Second Monday's – Live at the Hippodrome

We had our second 'real life' meeting outside Hulme Hippodrome on Monday evening, and it was a pleasure to meet **Xinyi Zhou** and **Yanhao Pan**, both Architecture & Urbanism MA students, as well as (Prof) **Dominic Sagar** again. They brought their marvellous scale model to show us (photo on first page), and Dominic's dog Molly helped us with our usual litter pick session, fascinated with a plastic milk carton.



Coronation Street TV stars who started out at The Hipp

Bill Waddington

Bill Waddington played in panto at the Hulme Hippodrome – *The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe*.

Jill Summers

Jill Summers was remembered by people who went to the Hulme Hippodrome as children in the 1950s for her stage act dressed as a *railway porter* with her prop trolley and a couple of cases, telling funny anecdotes and jokes.

Character

Betty Williams
Ena Sharples
Phyllis Pearce
Percy Sugden

Actor

Betty Driver
Violet Carson (& pianist)
Jill Summers
Bill Waddington

This list is an extract from the heritage event recording, details on the next page.

Childhood memories of 'The Hipp' in the 1950s

A big thank you to, left to right in the photo below, **Patricia, Susan, Jeff**, (Mike from the SHH Board), **Maureen and Brenda** for coming to our heritage event on Saturday and sharing their childhood memories of going to 'The Hipp' mostly in the 1950s. Fittingly, we met at The Edwardian hotel, which used to be The Free Trade Hall, from the same era as Hulme Hippodrome.

We have around two hours of precious audio recording which we'll be processing in the coming weeks, including a written record which will hopefully be of future use to other researchers and archivists.

Our thanks again to the University of Manchester for the small grant which contributed, not least to the splendid afternoon tea service. And our thanks to Stephen and his helpful colleagues at The Edwardian who coped with us turning their meeting room into a recording studio!





Information Bulletin 43

19 June 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

Website - <https://www.hulmehippodrome.org> Twitter - [@savehulmehip](https://twitter.com/savehulmehip)
Email - info@hulmehippodrome.org.uk Instagram - [@savehulmehip](https://www.instagram.com/savehulmehip)
Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

Exterior improvements – Hippodrome goes to Court

On Valentine's Day, 14 February 2022, Manchester City Council issued a notice to the owners of the building to make improvements to the exterior of the building. This is known as a Section 215 Notice, or an Amenities Notice. It had 11 requirements, which we have summarised here. Number 1 had to be done within two months, all the rest within six months. Obviously the owners have not started these works ...

1	Remove all graffiti , repainting brick and shutters
2	Remove all vegetation and repair the brickwork
3	Repair all rainwater gutters and downpipes
4	Remove all green mould
5	Ensure all the windows are repaired and now shut
6	Replace all the broken glass in windows and doors
7	Repair all the stonework
8	Repair all the roof slates and lead flashings
9	Repair all the stone window cills
10	Replace any defective brickwork like for like
11	Use fully matching materials for all these works

... and instead the owners of the building have predictably appealed against this Notice, so it's off to court. A date has been set for the first hearing – **Friday 29 July 2022**, 1.30pm at Manchester Magistrates Court. Technically it is Manchester City Council vs The Owners, so we'll be in the public gallery taking a very close interest. There is a possibility of a second hearing, depending on legal arguments at the first one. All credit to the council on going the distance here, and no credit to the owners who we believe have been playing everyone in authority along for more time while they let wet weather and the holes in the roof continue to do their damage.

Thanks also to [The Mill](#) for covering our campaign this week, Thursday 16 July.

A full copy of the Section 215 Notice has been copied to supporters with this edition of our Bulletin – using the wonders of modern phone technology to scan the public notice posted on the building.

Calling for more memories of The Hippodrome from 1950s ...

You may recall we recently held a powerful event with some of our older supporters, to hear and record their childhood memories of visiting 'The Hipp' in the 1950s to see various shows and pantomimes. Extracts of this event will be broadcast on the ALL FM 96.9 community radio - <https://allfm.org/> **Tuesday 5 July, 10-11am.**

... to 2010s



But Hulme Hippodrome was also in use during the 2010s decade as well – for example the Youth Village group around 2012 and the squat in 2017-18 with various gigs, some being called all-night raves.

Were you or your friends there?

If so, we'd love to hear your memories of the building, the times and the lives too.



We are planning to organise some informal drop-in recording sessions near to the Hippodrome / Garden Centre / Kim's Kitchen in the summer weeks – please get in touch with Cat or Tony by email etc and watch out for further details.

Campaign Diary

Tuesday 5 July, 10-11am	All FM 96.9, HH Memories from the 1950s
Monday 11 July, 6.30pm	Meet the Committee, at the Hippodrome entrance
Friday 29 July, 1.30pm	Magistrates Court (see main news item)
Monday 8 August, 6.30pm	Meet the Committee, at the Hippodrome entrance
Monday 12 September, 6.30pm	Meet the Committee, at the HH entrance



Information Bulletin 44

4 July 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
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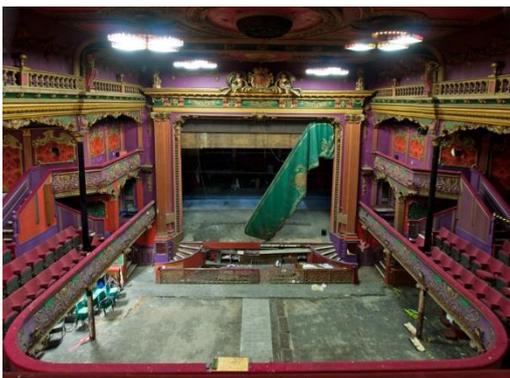
Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

Blog from Chloe Hesford, our Graduate Placement



For my placement as part of the Heritage Studies MA course I was placed with the Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) organisation. I was the only student to be placed with this organisation and my primary task was to conduct research and help create a bibliography and record of resources relating to Hulme Hippodrome available in the different archives across Manchester. This is in the aim of helping the organisation to have a better understanding of the buildings historical and community value. The organisation set up last year in response to the building being put up for auction and advertised as having the potential for property development. The SHH campaign, the Theatres

Trust and the Council wanted to protect the historic theatre and were able to get this information removed and the auction stopped on the day it was meant to be held. The building has been sold and there are continued concerns over the intentions of the new owners and the threat to the heritage site.



Shocked

Now the building remains vacant and in an ever-worsening state of repair. One of my first meetings with Tony Baldwinson involved walking to Hulme to visit the theatre. At this point I had only seen images online of the theatre most of which show the beautiful and ornate interior so the reality of the building's current state came as a bit of a shock. It

Figure 1 Hulme Hippodrome interior,
<<http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/how-we-help/theatres-at-risk/180-hulme-hippodrome>>

was difficult to stay positive throughout the tour. When we arrived, I saw the whole building had been boarded up and signs of the buildings were put up to warn people off from trying to enter. Looking at the entrance you can see few traces of original features: some remaining stained-glass windows and dull outlines of possible original Hulme Hippodrome and Broadhead Theatre

Company signage can be made out beneath the moss. The visit was made more bleak when Tony informed me of the dire state of the roof and that in the worst-case scenario it could collapse before I even finish my placement.



Figure 2 Pigeon nesting in outside wall of Hulme Hippodrome, Tony Baldwinson's own image.

Black History

Thankfully, the building and its roof are still standing as I write this at the end of my placement! During my time with the Save Hulme Hippodrome organisation I have conducted archival research at archives around Manchester and used online newspaper archives to research the different variety acts that have performed at Hulme Hippodrome and focussed particularly on its Black History, something the organisation had little information on and wanted to develop deeper. I first stumbled on a blog post written by Sara Whitfield, 'Tracing the history of Hulme Hippodrome', in which she discusses a range of Black performers who have appeared at HH including Harry Scott and Eddie Whaley, Cassie Walmer, Will Garland, Shirley Bassey, Chris Gill and Ike Hatch to name a few.

I made contact with Whitfield to get information on the sources she used to write this blog post as it is not referenced. She informed me that she primarily used The British Newspaper Archive (BNA), a digital newspaper archive, to search through the various Manchester and Salford newspapers that published from the opening of Hulme Hippodrome (initially called the Grand Junction) to present day. I conducted lengthy research on the BNA to find the sources she used and more. I found the following article from the *Manchester Evening News*, 4 May 1954, particularly interesting describing a successful show of 'Hot From Harlem' which was Shirley Bassey's second paid theatre production. Hulme Hippodrome was also host to her first paid performance as a singer in *Memories of Jolson* 17th September 1953.¹ It is amazing to know that HH was a part of establishing such an icons early career!

A Remarkable Talent

Will Garland, perhaps the most significant Black practitioner in British musical theatre before 1950, performed at the Hulme Hippodrome several times². Will Garland was a remarkable talent, having experience as a performer, producer,

¹ *The Stage*, 17th September 1953, p.2.

² *Manchester Evening News*, 03rd July 1915, p.1; *Manchester Evening News*, 29th June 1915, p.2; *Manchester Evening News*, 30th June 1915, p.1; *Manchester Evening News*, 01st July 1915, p.1.

writer, choral director, musician and bass singer. His presence in British theatre is substantial, and according to Whitfield is only recently starting to be understood in full, mostly thanks to her research. It is great to have a talent like Garland attached to the HH's history and heritage.

Garland performed in shows that he had produced as well as *Coloured Society* (produced George Sax's revue).³ Sax was a Manchester based producer, most likely white since no reference to his identity is made. The name of his show is very on the nose and is problematic. However, the show is a significant part of Garland's career; within a year of being in the show, Garland had taken it over and went on to produce and run it for some years.



dancing—and jazz is the broad base of this all-coloured show. Apart from the comedy, some of which is almost pantomime stuff, the show is snappy and colourful, and there's plenty of good music in it.

Shirley Bassey sings old and new blues tunes with real zip, and Simmy Russ is a first-class trumpeter.

Woods and Jarrett, have a smooth piano and tap-dance routine, and Eddie Williams sings and puts over a good selection of crisp new jokes. Cyril Lagey has a couple of good comedy sessions.

The speed and agility of the dancers makes the average British chorus line look as old-fashioned as a hansom cab.

P. J. B.



Figure 4 Manchester Evening News, 'The Theatres and The Halls', 29th June 1915, p.2

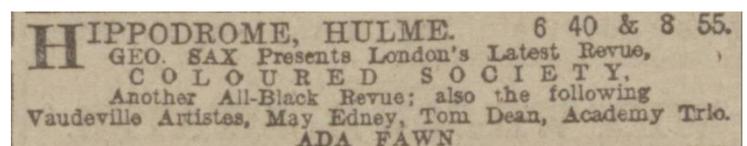


Figure 5 Manchester Evening News, 03rd March 1917, p.1

Figure 3 Manchester Evening News, 04 May 1954, p.2

Boxing and Wrestling

WRESTLING AT HULME

GOTZ v. CARROLL.

Last night J. Carroll, the British champion light-weight wrestler, met the German champion Peter Gotz, who offered £25 to any Englishman who was not thrown in thirty minutes. The scene was the Hulme Hippodrome, which was crowded. The conditions included the offer that if a throw were obtained against the German the money would be paid over. The contestants were on the mat for 22 minutes. The Englishman after three minutes had Gotz in difficulties, and almost gained the victory. The German recovered, and it was a hard and earnest struggle to the end, which was not at all satisfactory to the audience. Carroll was several times near throwing his opponent. Suddenly Gotz, with a leg hold, summer-saulted Carroll, who appeared to fall on his side. The referee ruled otherwise, and the audience rose against the decision. An explanation was impossible in the noise, and the curtain was rung down.

Figure 6 The Manchester Guardian, 30th Nov 1906, p.3

I also had some surprising finds through my newspaper research. Firstly, as we already know the Hippodrome when it first opened was host to an array of performances, I was shocked to find that this included boxing and wrestling. This report in the Manchester Guardian entitles 'WRESTLING AT HULME: GOTZ v. CARROLL' details the events

³ Manchester Evening News, 03rd March 1917, p.1.

occurring during the wrestling match held at the Hippodrome between an English wrestler and a German wrestler.⁴ The article states that the crowd were exceptionally rowdy after it appeared the Englishman lost to the German after a close victory which resulted in the match ending and the crowd ushered out before a winner was declared. This gives a real insight into working class nationalism since they responded negatively when it looked like the English fighter had lost to the German. This also gives an insight into how the working class in Hulme at the time behaved when visiting the variety performances at the theatre.

VANISHING KANGAROO REAPPEARS

An illusionist's kangaroo was captured by police after it had been seen hopping along Cornbrook Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, early yesterday. It waited in a city police cell to be bailed out by the Great Levante, who makes it disappear every night.

Jo-Jo, who is six months old and two feet tall, vanishes regularly on the stage for the illusionist. On Monday he vanished completely from Hulme Hippodrome. Mr Levante's manager said: "He must have been taken, because he could not just wander about without being spotted."

I also found an article about an illusionist's disappearing kangaroo, ironically disappearing. The kangaroo was found by police on a street in Old Trafford. Presumably the kangaroo didn't make his escape alone and must have been taken by someone as the article states.

Figure 7 The Manchester Guardian, 06 Oct 1955, p.19.

A Foundation

Additionally, I attended a board meeting to hear the progress the organisation is making and their plans going forward and visited the organisation's Spring Festival, a community outreach event held at Hulme Community Garden Centre. My research and report on my findings provided the organisation with a great tool to better understand the buildings historical and community value. The bibliography I compiled of archive material and resources relating to Hulme Hippodrome is especially helpful for the organisation who have no archive, collection or record of materials for the theatre and is a foundation for them in compiling documentation for the building's significant history and community value. It has been a pleasure to be a part of the organisation's work and I hope to continue supporting their efforts to save this theatre.

Campaign Diary

Tuesday 5 July, 10-11am	All FM 96.9, HH Memories from the 1950s
Monday 11 July, 6.30pm	Meet the Committee, at the Hippodrome entrance
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Monday 12 September, 6.30pm	Meet the Committee, at the HH entrance

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⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30th Nov 1906, p.3.



Information Bulletin 45

17 August 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
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Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

Hulme Hip in the press

In case you have not seen it, on Monday the Manchester Evening News carried a long article on the precarious position of the Hulme Hippodrome, the link is below. It's a credit to the journalist that it is well researched with current news and interviews, not just old pictures and the old inaccuracies. The Playhouse & Niamos also get included as the sister theatre next door.

“ HM Land Registry say two applications to register transfer of Hulme Hippodrome were received in January 2021. “The applications were not satisfactory so we had to raise queries on them. Following the lack of a satisfactory response within the stipulated time, the applications were cancelled,” a spokesperson said. “As the transfers must be registered to take legal effect, the legal ownership of the property remains in the names of those who are named on the title register,” they added. ”

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/vanishing-kangaroo-controversial-preacher-bingo-24722856>

Hulme Hip in the courts

On 29 July 2022 the issue of getting the outside of Hulme Hip repaired was heard in the Magistrates Court in Manchester.

On the one hand, Manchester City Council's barrister was telling the Deputy District Judge that the repair works required by their Section 215 Notice was totally in order, and the owners needed to stop dragging their feet and get on with the works.

On the other hand, a company called HHM20 Ltd had their barrister say that they claim to own the building and want to appeal against the Notice.

In the public seats were two members of the Gilbert Deya Ministries who were permitted to address the court, and they both said that the building still belonged to them and not to HHM20 Ltd.

Directors from the Save Hulme Hippodrome campaign were also in the public seats. The Deputy District Judge decided that the appeal by HHM20 Ltd against Manchester City Council should be heard, and set the date for a two-day hearing in January 2023. An unofficial summary of the court hearing is available on request.

Hulme Hip in the legal mix

A legal complication is that two organisations are claiming that they own Hulme Hip - the Gilbert Deya Ministries charity which bought the building in 2003 from the Mecca bingo company, and a shell company linked to a south London property developer in London called HHM20 Ltd who claim to have brought it from the charity on 11 January 2021.

But as the MEN press article explains, 18 months later the Land Registry is still showing Gilbert Deya Ministries as the legal owners of Hulme Hip, and we know that some attempts by solicitors for the property developer and for HHM20 Ltd to change the register to show the Hulme Hip in the company name have been officially declined.

And in law, what the Land Register says is final proof of ownership.

So, resolving the issue of Hulme Hip's disputed legal ownership is very much the current focus of the Save Hulme Hippodrome campaign, in order for us to clear the way to Hulme Hip being bought for reputable community use.

Older News

The BBC at Hulme Hip (before The Playhouse)

Many people know by now that The Playhouse (Niamos) was owned by the BBC for use as a radio and television studio from 1955. But maybe less known is that before they purchased The Playhouse, the BBC was recording variety shows at Hulme Hippodrome on Sunday evenings for radio broadcast, plus a few live radio broadcasts from Hulme Hip. (source: The Guardian, 25 Nov 1955)

Morecambe and Wise (comedians)

Around 2010 Ernie Wise's widow Doreen sorted out a number of old boxes in their home which included "dozens of reel-to-reel tapes and acetate discs [which] were, in fact, long-lost recordings of Ernie Wise and Eric Morecambe's earliest attempts at comedy, some dating back to the early [1950s]." These are now known as 'The Garage Tapes'.

Doreen said, “We used to travel the country to do all the shows on the road, and then we’d drive back every Sunday night to Manchester to do Variety at the **Hulme Hippodrome**. Ernie would pay the sound engineer a few shillings to keep a recording, and later he took his own Grundig tape recorder with him.” The reference to a ‘sound engineer’ might suggest that these were times when the BBC were using Hulme Hippodrome for radio recordings before they bought The Playhouse next door as a permanent studio. (source: The Sunday Telegraph, 2 May 2010)

Frankie Vaughan (singer, actor)

He started out aged 14 at the Lancaster College of Art singing in dance bands. He visited London and came second in a radio talent programme singing in a duo with Irene Griffin. “They had no intention of working up a permanent act; it was the only way that Frankie could get on the show. Then, he had his first big break: at the **Hulme Hippodrome** where he topped the bill at the then huge sum of £100 a week.” (source: The Guardian, obituary, 18 Sept 1999)

Arthur Lowe (actor)

Well known first as a serious actor on Coronation Street before his best known role in Dad’s Army, he was born in Hayfield, Derbyshire. As a young man he was in the army during the 1939-1945 war and was acting to entertain the troops.

After his demob he joined “the Frank H Fortescue Company at the **Hulme Hippodrome**, Manchester, where he met his wife, Joan Cooper, then the leading lady; she later played Dolly, sister of Private Godfrey [in Dad’s Army, and] after three years in rep, Lowe arrived in London.” (source: The Independent, 30 Oct 1994)

Don Estelle (actor, singer)

Born in Crumpsall in 1933 and best known as a comedy actor in It Ain’t Half Hot Mum. He first joined “the Manchester Kentucky Minstrels, a local charity group”. From the company name we can estimate that this was a blackface performance, now offensive.

After a radio recording singing he “gained his first experience in front of theatre audiences by singing one song 12 times a week in the show The Backyard Kids at the city’s **Hulme Hippodrome**. ... On his days off from working as a warehouse manager he] found work as an extra at Granada Television, making his debut throwing darts in the Rovers Return in Coronation Street.”

Arthur Lowe, who was also acting there, suggested to Don Estelle that he should contact Jimmy Perry and David Croft, where he got some small parts in Dad’s Army. Perry and Croft went on to write It Ain’t Half Hot Mum. Estelle later said he didn’t agree that the TV show was racist.

(sources: The Independent, 4 Aug 2003; MEN, 15 June 2022)

Barry Took (writer, comedian, presenter)

Born in London, he was called up to the RAF in 1946 where he played trumpet in a dance band for the troops. “The Canadian talent scout Carroll Levis gave Took an audition in 1951. He not only passed, but sailed through to the finals on Levis’s radio series ... From that August Took turned full-time professional, making his debut at **Hulme Hippodrome.**” His later catchphrase was from his act where he would walk on stage and say to the audience, ‘I expect you are wondering why I sent for you.’

(source: The Independent, obituary, 1 April 2002)



Hulme Hip and its bingo history

We have a good start on the history of Hulme Hip as a theatre up to the 1960s, but it was also a bingo hall from 1962 and the details of its “middle age” are less well known. We know there were some internal alterations, but the details of these and the social history of this period is less well known. We also know that it was formally renamed as “Mecca Bingo Preston Street” though people probably still called it the Hulme Hip. The metal sheeting on the side wall was added by the Mecca company. It was around this time that the so-called “slum clearances” devastated the community in Hulme, and these are stories we need to hear. Were the bingo nights a welcome respite from all the changes? Did people travel back to Hulme for bingo after being moved out, to keep in touch with friends? How did the large snooker room work, and who used it?

All information and contacts very welcome please.

Campaign Diary

Monday 12 September, 6.30pm - Meet the Committee, at the HH entrance



Information Bulletin 46

11 September 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
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The Hip model to visit Central Library

We are pleased to announce that the delightful scale model of Hulme Hippodrome made by students at MMU's **Manchester School of Architecture** will sometime soon be on public display at Central Library, St Peters Square. We plan to add some old programmes and photos. A special thanks to Service Graphics (M3 4AQ) who have helped us in making a backlit poster. And our special thanks to **Manchester City Council** and the library staff for making this possible.



Mike Bath (Save Hulme Hippodrome) and Siobhan O'Connor (Manchester City Council) discussing the design options for the forthcoming display at Central Library

This model is excellent publicity - it opens up the building's ordinary exterior to show inside the 'hidden gem' that is the glorious auditorium of Hulme Hippodrome.

Central Library might first be needed for displays relating to the life of The Queen, so we will publicise the dates of our exhibition as soon as we know them.

Come and meet us this Monday evening

- Monday 12 September, 6.30pm
- Outside Hulme Hippodrome, top end of Warwick Street (M15 5EU)
- Come and chat with the committee
- We will have our usual litter-pick followed by a short walk to Kim's for refreshments and more discussions.

“1001 Follies” – a connection to Peggy Lee & Frank Sinatra?

At the end of this Bulletin are the images of a printed programme for a Variety Show at the Hulme Hippodrome at the end of May 1951. From early research it was a show that toured across the country for many months, playing a week at a time many towns and cities such as Bristol, Brighton, Lewisham, and Dudley.

It would be interesting further research to know if the **Sonny Burke** mentioned in the programme is the same person as this - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonny_Burke

“American composer, musical arranger, big band leader, and producer. ...

In 1955, he wrote, along with Peggy Lee, the songs to Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*. ... He wrote the music for number of popular songs, including "Black Coffee" [and he wrote for Mel Tormé] ... Burke was an active arranger, conductor and A&R man at major Hollywood record labels, especially Decca Records where he worked with Charles "Bud" Dant. ...

Later Burke became musical director of Warner Bros. Records / Reprise Records and was responsible for many of Frank Sinatra's albums, and was producer of Sinatra's recording of "My Way"

Hulme Hip in the press

In the last Bulletin we mentioned that the Manchester Evening News carried a long article on the precarious position of the Hulme Hippodrome, and there have been more articles, for example this extract is from The Meteor:

“Manchester’s cultural venues face an uncertain future as the relentless march of new towering apartment and office blocks progresses unabated. Developers have their eye on the Hulme Hippodrome, a venue steeped in Manchester’s illustrious musical heritage.

Gary Roberts speaks to Oli Wilson about the campaign to save the theatre.”

Will Hulme Hippodrome be saved from the wrecking ball to become a creative community space?

By Gary Roberts | April 5, 2022

Features



Manchester's cultural venues face an uncertain future as the relentless march of new towering apartment and office blocks progresses unabated. Developers have their eye on the Hulme Hippodrome, a venue steeped in Manchester's illustrious musical heritage.

Gary Roberts speaks to Oli Wilson about the campaign to save the theatre.

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Manchester's abandoned and 'historic' hippodrome 'crying out to be restored'

Many locals are wanting to see the abandoned building brought back to life

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Comments

By **Phoebe Barton** Nostalgia Writer

06:13, 2 AUG 2022

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Inside Manchester's Hulme Hippodrome, 2013. (Image: Getty Images)

Manchester's Hulme Hippodrome has been left empty and decaying since its closure in 1986.

The [MEN recently shared photos](#) showing the inside of the Grade II listed building in its dilapidated state. We received many comments from people who are "saddened" by the theatre's appearance, with some desperate for it to be saved.

Whatever happened to Preston Street?

The following press cutting from 1962 shows how the community and their homes around Hulme Hippodrome was about to be demolished in the largest 'regeneration' (as it was then) scheme in Manchester since the war. It stretched from Stretford Road all the way to Loreto College. **Preston Street** had been a main road in Hulme with large shops and trams - now all gone - and only one pavement remains as a footpath from the Hippodrome to the Junction Hotel pub at the top end of the old road. It was these demolitions that led to many of the houses in Hulme being replaced by the four problematic 'marmite' Hulme Crescents.

1,280 HOUSES TO BE CLEARED

Slum redevelopment

The biggest area to be recommended for slum clearance in Manchester since the war will be visited by the corporation health committee on Tuesday as a preliminary to formally “declaring it” for clearance.

There are 1,280 houses in the area in Hulme, which is roughly bounded by Stretford Road, Upper Moss Lane, Moss Lane West, Embden Street, Warwick Street, Derry Street, Cossack Street, Preston Street, Longworth Street, Ward Street, and Clopton Street. The general area being redeveloped the corporation as a series of neighbourhood units, the first of which is now being built in the St George's district, off Chester Road.



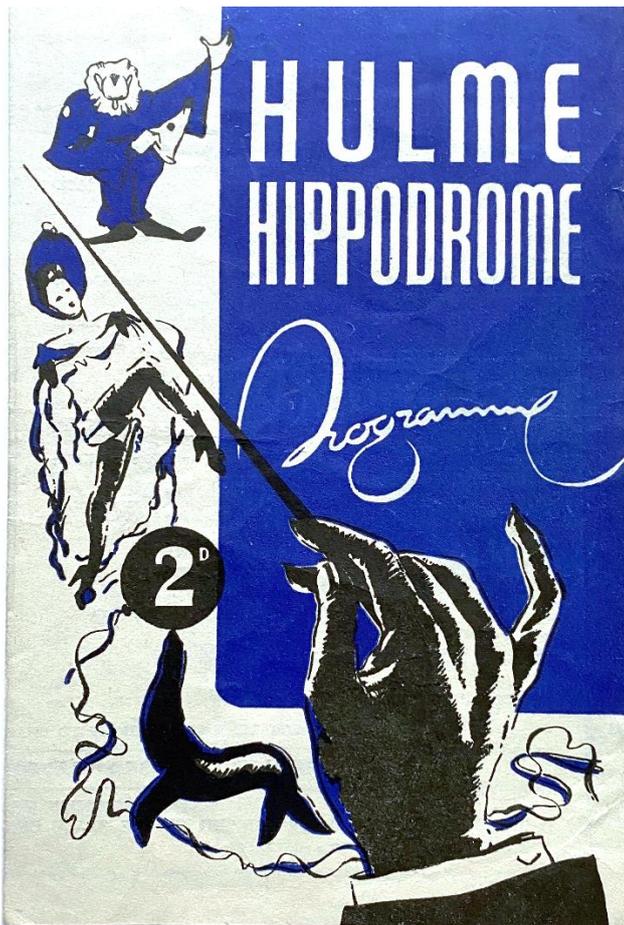
The latest area includes the Playhouse Theatre, now used by the BBC, and the Hulme Hippodrome Theatre, which has just been taken over by Mecca Ltd, and is to be converted mainly as a hall for bingo and horsey-horsey. A corporation official said that they would not necessarily be affected by the clearance of neighbouring properties. Their future would be considered separately when the proposals to redevelop the area were considered.

The liaison group of housing, health, town planning, and finance committee members would have to decide whether to acquire the theatres when the houses were being taken over for demolition. (ends)

www.hulmehippodrome.org

“Corporation” = an older term for what became Manchester City Council

A two-penny programme for the Hip, May 1951



Week commencing
MONDAY, 28th MAY, 1951

Grand Variety

BRITAIN'S PREMIER LIGHT COMEDIAN
RANDOLPH SUTTON

★
THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE
JOYCE GOLDING
★

"LET ME TELL YOU"
ENOCH
FROM THE HAPPIDROME
and FULL SUPPORTING COMPANY

Kieobric (Modern) Printing Co. Ltd. (T.U.), M/er. 2.

HULME HIPPODROME

W. H. COLMAN, Director of Entertainments FOR JAMES BRENNAN PETER ROBERTSON, Resident Manager

Week Commencing **MONDAY, MAY 21st, 1951** **TWICE NIGHTLY at 6-30 and 8-40**

JACK TAYLOR presents

"1001 FOLLIES"

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PUPPETS The Entire Company 2. THE JOHN JOYCE LOVELY LADIES with Sonny Burke Sophistication Personified 3. SONNY ROY The Funny Boy 4. A COUPLE OF TRAMPS ? ? 5. THE TELEGRAPH BOY Arthur White 6. MUSICAL MELODIES Seamus O'Doherty 7. MISS BLOSSOM'S BOARDING HOUSE ... Arthur White and Karina 8. BRING ON THE WOMEN Sonny Roy with Pat Seddon, Tonia Wickham, Una Reeves, Marjory Holt and Margo Rands 9. ADAGIO—Karina with Vadio & Hertz. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. MORE MUSICAL MELODIES Seamus O'Doherty 13. KARINA presents her MINIATURE WRESTLERS 14. THE PENSIONER'S PINT First Chelsea Pensioner Arthur White Second Chelsea Pensioner Victor Neale Royal Air Force Officer Sonny Burke W.R.A.C. Margo Rands Barmaid Patricia Seddon 15. STARRY NIGHT Karina, Sonny Burke, Seamus O'Doherty, The John Joyce Girls 16. PARODIES Sonny Burke & Sonny Roy 17. KNOCKABOUT ... Karina, Sonny Roy, Sonny Burke & Pat Seddon 18. OPERATIC ARIA Soprano—Karina 19. MUSICAL INTERLUDE Karina & Sonny Burke 20. FINALE The Entire Company
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. THE JOHN JOYCE LOVELY LADIES 11. GOOD-NIGHT NURSE Arthur White, Karina, Pat Seddon 	<p style="text-align: center;">General Manager Ernest C. Colclough Manager Robert Gill Wardrobe Mistress Mrs. J. Farnham Musical Director Robert Gill (For JACK TAYLOR LIMITED)</p>
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THE MANAGEMENT RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THIS PROGRAMME WITHOUT PREVIOUS NOTICE

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Information Bulletin 47

25 September 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

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SPECIAL EDITION: Morecambe and Wise

Summary:

Morecambe and Wise became famous nationally from 1952 being in fourteen variety shows on BBC radio, and then in their own show, all recorded at the Hulme Hippodrome, Manchester

~~ BOOK EXTRACT ~~

Like so many northern comedy acts emerging in the 1940s and 1950s, including Ken Dodd, Ken Platt and Dave Morris, Eric and Ernie got their first big chance at broadcasting thanks to Ronnie Taylor, variety producer at the BBC in Manchester. The senior variety staff at the BBC in London tended to be career BBC men - the infamous 'suits' - or those who'd come up through the dance band side of broadcasting.

Taylor had performed regularly on the radio before moving over to become a writer, co-writing the scripts for the *Old Mother Riley* radio shows with Kitty McShane. His connection with the Manchester end of the Corporation began in 1949 when he started contributing scripts and songs to the *Variety Fanfare* series. When the show's producer, Bowker Andrews, died suddenly in 1951, Taylor took over and began subtly shaping the whole of the north region's entertainment output.

Ronnie Taylor was my favourite as a boss because he was such a clever bloke, said producer Johnny Ammonds, one of Taylor's protégés, in 2005. 'He could do anything really. He was marvellous. I have no hesitation in saying that he was the nicest and cleverest boss I ever worked for at the BBC.'



Comedy was very much his strength. ...

Between May 1952 and March 1953, Taylor gave Morecambe and Wise fourteen *Variety Fanfare* bookings, turning them into semi-regulars. It was quite a gesture of faith, given their paucity of broadcast credits before this, but such a leap was characteristic of Taylor's willingness to back talent. ...

Billed as 'high-speed variety from the north of England', with at least six acts per show separated by musical links, the *Variety Fanfare* run was great experience and exposure for a young turn, bringing them into the same orbit as Austrian piano duo Rawicz and Landauer, basking in the success of their hit recording of Richard Addinsell's Warsaw Concerto, and veterans like Arthur Askey, as well as up-and-coming acts including Bob Monkhouse, Barry Took and singer Jimmy Young.

The shows came from the **Hippodrome** theatre in the Manchester suburb of **Hulme**, a great place for generating the right atmosphere for the broadcasts. Capturing that atmosphere was another matter, as Peter Pilbeam explains.

'We had a permanent outside broadcast control room in the circle, which was in fact a garden shed. No sound insulation whatsoever, it was an impossible place get a decent balance out of anything. We heard more through the walls than we did from the loudspeaker. We did some good stuff there, though.'

When the *Variety Fanfare* commitment came to an end, Taylor's thoughts turned to giving Eric and Ernie their own radio show, at first only on the north region Home Service. *You're Only Young Once* was to be the title, the show was to run for six weeks on Mondays from 9 November 1953, the stars were to receive 20 guineas [£21] a show, and Blackpool-based writer Frank Roscoe, who was a regular at Broadcasting House on Manchester's Piccadilly [Gardens], was brought in to write the scripts.

The shows were recorded on Sunday nights at the **Hippodrome**, requiring a mad dash from wherever they'd been performing on the Saturday before haring off to the following week's engagement. For the first recording, they had to travel from Stockton to Manchester, then back off to Newcastle.

In the second week, it was Newcastle-Manchester-Hull. The plan was to record two shows on the second session, and the plan was to record two shows on the second session, and give Eric and Ernie a week off yo-yoing to and from Manchester, but a special session had to be scheduled for the 'off' week after a recording fault at the previous session.

The downside to Frank Roscoe's prodigious talent was that he was in high demand and ended up spreading himself a little too thinly.

'Frank Roscoe was our writer,' Eric explained in 1973, 'it would be more accurate to say we had a share of him. For oft were the times he'd be working on three scripts, one for us, another for Ken Platt, and a third for Al Read. Oft too were the nights we went to the microphone with mimeographed pages of scripts that were still wet.'

If this sounds like a fanciful tale, it is backed up by Johnny Ammonds, who remembers the scripts being assembled largely at rehearsal. 'Eric and Ernie used to bring their gag books to Piccadilly on a Sunday. Ronnie Taylor, shortly after I got the radio job, said to me, "Can you work a Roneo machine? That's one of the main qualifications for the job." Because on Sunday nobody was in.'

However haphazardly the show was assembled, it proved to be an instant hit with northern audiences, and the decision was taken to extend the run by three shows, taking the series into the new year. Becoming a successful headline act meant an increase in their earning potential. For their first broadcast in 1947, they had received a mere 8 guineas [£8.40p], which rose to 15 guineas [£15.75p] for their second appearance just four months later. However, there they stuck until September 1952, when they were given a rise to 20 guineas [£21].

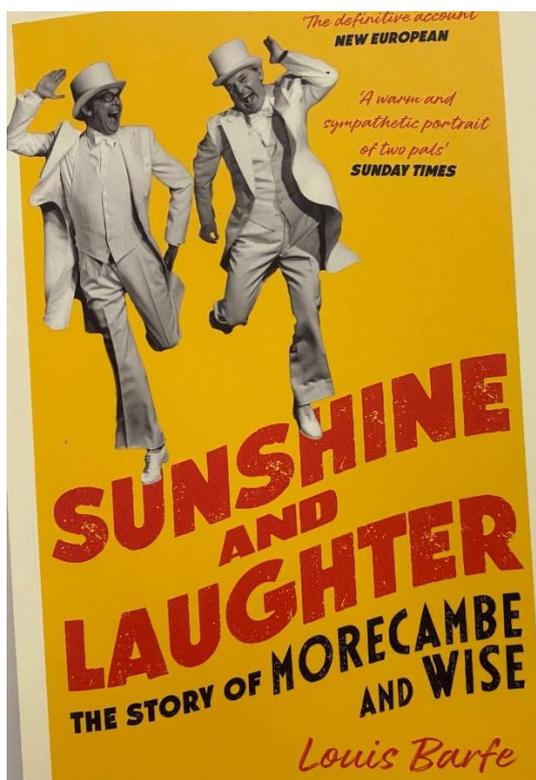
(Barfe, 2021, pp51-55, bold added)

To read more, the book is:

Louis Barfe

Sunshine and Laughter: The story of Morecambe and Wise.

Apollo books (2021).



And from a recent letter to us:

Recollections of Peter Pilbeam, BBC Programme Engineer

“My memories mainly are of a programme called *Variety Fanfare* which was recorded on Sunday evening back in the early 1950s when I was still a Programme Engineer. That programme was a launch pad for several artistes. I remember Frankie Vaughan appearing as a warm-up artiste on several occasions. It's fair to say that others who became names in the business appeared at one time at least in the series, produced by the late, great Ronnie Taylor who went on to make Al Read a name.”

Peter Pilbeam (in correspondence kindly via Dr Martin Dibbs, 8 September 2022)

Audio tapes of some of these early broadcasts were rediscovered in 2009

NEWSPAPER EXTRACT

When Ernie Wise's widow, Doreen, saw the clutter in the eaves above her garage while moving house last year, she decided a good spring clean was the only thing for it. "There were just so many boxes and suitcases filled with old scripts, records and tapes, I thought I'd just have a grand old time clearing out the junk and burning the whole lot," she says.

Thankfully, the boxes escaped the fireplace. Instead, Mrs Wise handed them over to her late husband's agent, who discovered that they contained pure comedy gold from Britain's most famous comedy double act. The dozens of reel-to-reel tapes and acetate discs were, in fact, long-lost recordings of Ernie Wise and Eric Morecambe's earliest attempts at comedy, some dating back to the early Fifties. Among the 45 hours of material were the duo's original pier-show recordings from their summer tours, their appearances on the *Variety Bandbox* (sic) radio show, previously unheard comic ditties, and a complete set of Morecambe and Wise's first BBC radio series from 1953, *You're Only Young Once* - recordings which had been considered lost for ever.

The material has not been heard since it was first performed more than 50 years ago, long before Morecambe and Wise hit the big time with their famous television shows in the Seventies. But, this week, Radio 4 will air *Morecambe and Wise: The Garage Tapes*, featuring some of the best bits.

Sunday Telegraph, 2 May 2010

- - - - -

“BBC BUYS HULME PLAYHOUSE For Use as Studio

The BBC has completed negotiations for the purchase of the Playhouse Theatre, at Hulme, Manchester, and will use it as a sound studio for the variety programmes produced at the North Regional Headquarters of the BBC Manchester which have hitherto been staged (mostly for recording) on Sunday evenings from the **Hulme Hippodrome**.

The Playhouse will also be used as a permanent studio for the BBC Northern Variety Orchestra. It will be equipped with a permanent control room. It is also intended to make use of: it as a television studio (for productions in which a bona-fide theatre setting is necessary), in addition to the BBC television studios in Dickenson Road, Manchester.”

25 November 1955, Manchester Guardian (bold added)



Information Bulletin 48

18 October 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

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URGENT ACTION – SIGN OUR ONLINE PETITION

On Friday last week we were alerted that the Charity Commission have taken legal control of the Hulme Hippodrome building.

They have previously told us they will transfer the building to a disgraced property developer in south London – a disqualified director and someone who has had 14 of his companies closed by the Courts.

We are calling on the Charity Commission to transfer the building to us, fully funded by a local angel investor, at no cost to the public purse.

You can sign here => [Google Form](#) (please scroll down to sign)

See the letter from **Lucy Powell MP** to the CEO of the Charity Commission, on p3.

Your Invitation to our **Exhibition Launch**

Tuesday 1 November 2022, 6pm to 7.30pm
Central Library (ground floor), St Peters Square, Manchester

- See the students' intricate scale model of the building and memorabilia
 - Meet the committee and many other supporters
 - Light refreshments and heritage displays
-

To: Helen Stephenson, CEO, Charity Commission

Dear Helen Stephenson,

We the undersigned all urge you to help in saving the Hulme Hippodrome, a 120-year-old Variety Theatre and Grade 2 listed building in Manchester, saving it for future community benefit and well-being, and at no cost to the public purse.

In 2003 the disgraced charity Gilbert Deya Ministries purchased the Hulme Hippodrome for religious meetings. The building has been shuttered since 2018, and on 11 January 2021 a minority of the charity trustees attempted to transfer the building to a disgraced property developer. Other trustees have given statements that they did not know of nor consent to this attempted transfer and that the requirements of charity and property law were not followed. The Land Registry has also refused to allow the transfer to the property developer. The property developer is based in south London and is a disqualified director until 2025, he was described officially as “a confidence trickster” by a government investigator in June 2014 after the High Court closed 14 of his companies, and in February 2021 he showed his hand by advertising the Hulme Hippodrome site as suitable for residential apartments.

Now, on Friday 14 October 2022 we understand that the Charity Commission has invoked its powers under Section 69 of the Charities Act 2011 and has taken legal control of the 120-year-old Hulme Hippodrome building, removing control from all of the Gilbert Deya Ministries trustees.

We are concerned that Charity Commission staff might be about to override the legal objections of the Land Registrar and use the Section 69 powers to complete the stalled transfer to the disgraced property developer, even though a fully-funded community alternative is on the table.

Time is of the essence.

An angel investor of good reputation is working with Save Hulme Hippodrome Ltd to return the building to community use, and the most recent full-price offer letter is dated 6 October 2022. We understand that their solicitors are standing by to complete the conveyancing for community benefit as soon as the Charity Commission is ready to proceed. A sheet of [technical details](#) is available on request.

Yours sincerely,

You can sign here => [Google Form](#) (please scroll down to sign)

Copies to:

Susanna McGibbon, Permanent Secretary, Government Legal Department, and Sarah Healey, Permanent Secretary, Dept for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

18 October 2022

From Lucy Powell, MP

To: Helen Stephenson, CEO Charity Commission

Dear Ms Stephenson

I am writing regarding Hulme Hippodrome, a Grade-2 listed theatre in my constituency, which is currently unused and deteriorating. Last year, a number of local residents established a non-profit company, Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH), with a view to acquiring the building, restoring it and bringing it back to use as a local cultural and entertainment hub.

For the past eighteen months, it was believed that the owners of the Hippodrome, Gilbert Deya Ministries (GDM), had sold the building to a London-based property developer (Charles Gassell Gordon) for £450,000. However SHH have recently become aware that the transfer of the title deed was denied by the Land Registry due to irregularities with the sale, and GDM remained the owners of the building. Furthermore I understand that the Charity Commission have now issued GDM a Section 69 notice and taken complete control of the building.

Before becoming aware of this development, SHH wrote to the owners with a fully funded offer to purchase the building for £450,000, the same amount GDM had previously accepted from Charles Gassell Gordon. Now with the Hippodrome officially in the hands of the Charity Commission, SHH are hopeful that their offer will be accepted and that work can finally commence to restore the building and bring it back into its former use.

The group have the strong backing of Manchester City Council and a number of organisations, including the national Theatres Trust, who have been providing SHH with practical and legal support. A local wealthy investor is lined up to pay the costs and just this month, I understand the investor tabled a legal written offer for £450,000 to GDM. SHH are a bona fide constituted community group with written proof of funds. They are ready to take ownership and begin the work needed to ensure the Hippodrome can once again become a cultural and entertainment hub for the local community.

I would therefore be grateful if you could let me know what plans the Commission have to sell the building and what procedures will be in place to determine which offer is ultimately accepted. I would also strongly urge the Commission to consider the impact on the local community, who have for years campaigned and sought to save the building. With the SHH's offer, there is now an opportunity to bring the Hippodrome back into public use as a cherished and beautiful centre for arts and culture for generations to come and I would urge the Commission to consider their offer favourably.

With best wishes

Lucy Powell

Labour & Cooperative Member of Parliament for Manchester Central



Information Bulletin 49

26 October 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
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History of the BBC at Hulme Hippodrome

~ on Sundays in the 1950s ~

#BBC100

Hulme Hip - Ken Dodd was on the same stage bill as Max Miller around 1951, later making radio programmes. (BBC, 2002)

Hulme Hip - Morecambe and Wise appeared on stage and got their big break with 14 radio programmes in 1952-53. (Barfe, 2021)

Hulme Hip - “the *Variety Fanfare* run was a great experience and exposure for a young turn ... including Bob Monkhouse, Barry Took and singer Jimmy Young.” (Barfe, 2021)

Hulme Hip - “I remember Frankie Vaughan appearing as a warm-up artiste”. (Pilbeam, 2022)



“Very happy days, the Hulme Hippodrome”

Ken Dodd

History of the BBC at Hulme Hippodrome

After the second world war the BBC was expanding its output again across Britain. The BBC in Manchester needed to find new venues to make their radio as well as TV programmes. So the BBC bought both a former film studio in Rusholme and The Playhouse theatre space in Hulme.

Less well known is that the BBC also rented space in theatres, especially on Sundays when they were not normally used for public performances. (BBC, 2002)

The details are still emerging through the mists of time with new research. The best information at the moment confirms that the Hip was used on Sundays from around 1951 to 1956 to record two radio programmes each night, using the BBC's outside broadcasting teams and equipment.

One source suggests that as well as renting the Hip, The Playhouse was also rented on Sundays during these years for a further two programmes. This was before it was bought outright in 1955 and then fitted out for full-time use as a studio, becoming operational in 1956.

Probably the highest profile programme made in the Hip in the early 1950s was *Variety Fanfare*. It seems to have started in the late 1940s, and in 1951 with a new producer it moved to the Hip. This producer was Ronnie Taylor, who is credited as giving the "first big chance" to Ken Dodd, Ken Platt, Al Read, Dave Morris, and Morecambe and Wise. (Barfe, 2021, p51) More research is needed on the female artists from this era who are missing so far from many historic accounts.

The Save Hulme Hippodrome campaign has also kindly had correspondence from Peter Pilbeam, a BBC programme engineer and later a BBC producer who worked in the Hip on Sundays including on *Variety Fanfare*. (Pilbeam, 2022)

Sources of confusion can be that *Variety Bandbox* was being made in London while *Variety Fanfare* was made in Manchester. There is also little research on the BBC Northern Variety Orchestra (started on 1 April 1951) which was the forerunner to the better-known BBC Northern Dance Orchestra (started in 1956). Perhaps the Northern Variety Orchestra played on Sundays in the Hip or in The Playhouse?

Barfe, Louis., 2021, *Sunshine and Laughter: the story of Morecambe & Wise*

BBC, 2 April 2002, Radio 4, *Palace of Laughter* [audio, transcript available]

Pilbeam, Peter., 8 September 2022, Correspondence with SHH Ltd



History of the BBC at Hulme Hippodrome - 1950s

Audio Transcript

Palace of Laughter, BBC Radio 4, 2 April 2002

Contributors and clips:

1. Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter
2. Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician
3. Ken Platt, resident comedian, *Variety Fanfare*
4. Cliff Hayes, local historian
5. Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer
6. Ronnie Taylor, BBC producer
7. Al Read, comedian
8. Ken Dodd, comedian
9. Morecambe and Wise, comedians
10. Roy Chappell, singer
11. Cardew Robinson, comedian
12. Les Dawson, comedian
13. Jimmy Clitheroe and Peter Sinclair, comedians
14. Peter Goodwright, impressionist

“Very happy days, the Hulme Hippodrome.”

Ken Dodd

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Welcome to Manchester. I'm standing near the site of the old Playhouse Theatre and Hulme Hippodrome, two theatres which stood back-to-back, where I spent some years working on BBC variety shows such as, *What Makes A Star?* and with many great performers, including the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra¹. The Playhouse and the Hippodrome are long gone², but they were crucial to the development of radio variety entertainment in Britain.

All Saints is only about five minutes away from the site of the former Hulme Hippodrome and The Playhouse and at All Saints, there's a music shop owned by Johnny Roadhouse, who, of course, was the leader of the sax section with the Northern Dance Orchestra. And you played in the Playhouse many, many times, John.

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

Around about 35 years. I spent 35 years of my life in that beautiful little theatre, there's a little of Hulme; next to the Hulme Hippodrome. The BBC took all the studios, I should say in the 50s, I think it was around the 50s. Before that, my recollection of it was it was used by Frank H Fortescue as players, which they used to do a different show every week and I always marvelled at the fact how did they manage to learn a new show every week.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Going into the Playhouse, which is something we did every Monday morning, you and I, and although we talked about theatres seeming glamorous, it wasn't always very glamorous there, was it?

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

There was one boiler for two theatres, the Hulme Hippodrome next door there, the adjoining theatre and the Playhouse. Now, in those days, coke was in very short supply. And when the deliveries hadn't arrived, it was cold. It was hailing sleet, rain, snow, whatever would come through the roof. And would come right down onto our music as we were playing live broadcast. And we used to have to get up and shift around.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

It was most extraordinary sight because the sax section was sitting around with umbrellas.

¹ The lesser-known BBC Northern Variety Orchestra started in Manchester on 1 April 1951, initially conducted by Ray Martin, but mostly by Vilém Tausky and assisted by Alyn Ainsworth. It was followed by the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra in 1956.

² Update: The Playhouse is open with a community group, and Hulme Hippodrome is shuttered.

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

Oh, we did. Actually, we actually had to get umbrellas to keep the rain off as we were doing live, national live shows.

Ken Platt, resident comedian, (clip of their act from *Variety Fanfare*)

Hello, I won't take my coat off, I'm not stopping.

A pal of mine's got married to a very tall thin girl. Oh, she's thin. She works at the petrol station as a dipstick.

I met him the other night staggering all over the road drunk as a monkey. He is always getting drunk. He went home sober once and the dog bit him.

He went dashing into a pub one night. He said to the barmaid, he said, how much money did I spend in here last night? She said, oh, about ten pounds. He said, thank goodness for that. I thought I'd lost it.

And he's got a very peculiar complaint. Every time he sneezes, it makes him very amorous. And he grabs hold of women. He does. I said what are you taking for it? He said, snuff.

Cliff Hayes, local historian

We're actually stood in what was the stage door for the Hulme Hip. And what was the Playhouse at the back of us. So, you've got two theatres back-to-back. This place that we're talking about now, which we know is the Hulme Hip opened on 1901 on the seventh of October as the Grand Junction Theatre. And the only thing that sort of left to give a mention of it is the Junction pub, which is just over on our left now. In 1905 they swapped names, and this became the Hulme Hip.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

The Playhouse had been at Repertory Theatre. Next door the Hippodrome was a variety theatre. So, it seemed natural, I suppose to think, well, this is the place where you get an audience on a Sunday, and I think we used to rent them at first on the Sunday. Then we bought the Playhouse, but still carried on renting the Hippodrome. And in those early days, I mean, there was a phenomenal output from Manchester, and we used to record two shows at each place on a Sunday.

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

The Hulme Hippodrome was where we used to work. Originally, when I first worked went to work for BBC for these shows before they bought the Playhouse, which was next door of course, they used to do it from the Hulme Hippodrome on every Sunday night to see and the show that we used to do was called *Variety Fanfare*. That was the main show of the week. It was a really fast show. The Chordettes linking the music, and Ray Martin was conducting the orchestra.

Ronnie Taylor, BBC producer

The speed was the sort of essence of what we were trying to get across. It was a continuous piece of sound linked with music, and the music went behind

announcements. And then the applause came in and the artists started. It was a pretty, I suppose, quite an impact maker as far as radio is concerned in those days. And they did give us the opportunity in the North to introduce quite a lot of names since when they become quite big. I mean, Frankie Vaughan did one of his earlier radio shows, there are Morecambe and Wise, they made some of their early programme appearances. Al Read of course, he came up in *Variety Fanfare*, and after about three or four shots on the radio, he then developed a programme idea which we formulated together and became the Al Read show.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

Ronnie Taylor used to write and produce the Al Read show, which was the biggest thing on radio, I believe, once got more listeners than the FA Cup Final before the FA Cup Final went on television. It was on once a month, we'd be recording two shows, say at the Playhouse. And after the first show, he then went next door. And after the show at the Hippodrome, he recorded the first spot again. The next week, he did the same with this middle spot. The third week, he did the same with the last spot. And the fourth week, he recorded the whole Al Read show at one go. So, he now had three efforts with all audience reaction for each part of the show. And he could edit it, he could even alter it for the final recording. So it was a pretty good show.

Al Read, comedian (clip of their act, The Driving Instructor)

Now steady, you're coming to a very busy crossing. Slow down, slow, down, slow, down, slow, down, slow down. Now you know how you break you break. You break you break, you break you break, you break you break, you break. You'll have to get those three pedals sorted. Now go around the other side of the bus. Let's go back to the first lesson learning to turn round. Now then, left hand down, left down left down. Left down, right down, left down. Left, Down, Left down. Oh, you're left on Whoa, whoa, whoa. When I say left down, I mean, left down facing me. Is that clear? Now we'll start again. Now you have to come forward on your other lock. No, your other lock. Your other lock. Your other lock. You're on the pavement. Whoa, whoa. Look, if you try to turn it over, I'll bring you block and tackle.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

In the early days, one of the landmarks of Hulme that used to stand regularly outside the Playhouse, and that was your personal transport.

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

Oh that. I had a few weird cars in my time. Yeah, this was the way this is the hearse. It was a Rolls Royce hearse, yes, 1931 I think it was. From the CWS funeral department of Salford and I had nearly the whole of the band in the back of that one, believe it or not, they wanted transporting from the theatre to the hotel. So, I said it was a difficult thing. - It had an angel body on it. - And then they got in, and then halfway to the hotel I told them what it was, and they were sure they heard a knocking sound, it was the back axle actually knocking bit but they thought there was something going on in the back.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

In the 1950s and 60s, Manchester was the centre of variety broadcasting on the BBC, and many northern comedians, Frank Randall, Ken Dodd, Norman Evans and Les Dawson to name but a few performed here. James Casey was one of the BBCs most seasoned comedy writers and producers, and it was he who spotted the talent of the young Ken Dodd.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

First time I saw Ken Dodd was at Sunderland Empire. I was working there with my father, Jimmy James. And Ken was the first spot comic. And he did a tremendous week. And later on, when I joined the BBC, I said to Ronnie Taylor, who was the boss then, the funniest man in his country under 50 is Ken Dodd, but I don't know what you do with him on radio. And he said, well do something. So I recorded a half hour pilot, and later on we did a radio series.

Ken Dodd, comedian

Midday Musical, which they used to record on a Sunday evening, that's when I first got my first title. Jimmy Casey, James Casey. As he went on into the compere, he said, I know, here is, The Nut from Knotty Ash, and then they laughed. And I said, what was that, what was that all about? It was the one joke that I can't see because I've lived there all my life and I can't see anything funny or laughable. But Knotty Ash. Didsbury? Yes. Clapham? Absolutely, but not Knotty Ash, I think it's beautiful. Then he got me a radio series called *It's Great to be Young*. And that was my first radio series from the Hulme Playhouse produced by Jimmy Casey in it was Peter Goodwright. Judith Chalmers long before she was *Wish You Were Here*? Or there. Or anywhere.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

I remember recording a show of Ken's. And I suddenly laughed, which is very rare sitting in the box. And I turned to my secretary and I said, What am I laughing at? It's a lousy line. And I wrote it about six years ago. And the father said, You'll marry our Dolly or else. And he said, Let's have a look at your Else, she can't be worse than your Dolly. And I laughed. But it was the fact that he had got me going. And this is what he does to an audience. He gets an audience hysterical and they laugh if he raises his finger.

Ken Dodd, comedian (clip of their act)

First of all, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say how tickled I am, how tickled I am, at the kick-off. Have you ever been tickled at the kick-off misses? You shouldn't play rugby. Always having a try? By gum.
In the show, we're gonna do all sorts of experiments. I'm always experimenting. I once put sunglasses on a hen. It was three weeks trying to hatch out a black pudding.
We want to bring you we want to bring you the theatre atmosphere. All the people listening at home, pretend you're in the balcony, climb on the top of the sideboard and drop nuts on your granddad's head.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Sharing a stage with Ken Dodd, Judith Chalmers and Peter Goodwright on *It's Great to be Young* were two comedians for whom the show would mark the start of a glittering broadcasting career, Morecambe and Wise.

Morecambe and Wise, comedians (clip of their act)

And so to our new radio feature. / I was there. / The discovery of the steam engine. / I was there. / Our scene is England in the year 1825. / My name is Day. I was a delicate child. / Really? / I was a weekday. / So, you work with the great George Stephenson. Were all in your family engineers? / Yes, my father built the Forth Bridge. / Really? / He had to, the first three fell down. My uncle was also brilliant man. He invented a car that ran on water. / What happened? / It sank. / It must have been fascinating work. / A lot of the time we were assisted by James Watt. One day we're all sitting in the kitchen and suddenly Watt pointed to the kettle on the gas ring. / Yes, go on. / He said, look at that, steam is coming out of the kettle, it's trying to blow the lid off. Isn't that marvellous. / What do you say? / It certainly was, we haven't lit the gas yet.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Cliff Hayes is a Manchester historian. Cliff - what was so special and so different about the Hulme Hip, and the Hulme Playhouse?

Cliff Hayes, local historian

You could go through an A to Z of who's who in English theatre. You could go past on a Sunday night and the laughter was coming out the building. You could feel the waves of laughter coming out the place. Hulme has a part of our history and our Manchester history that will make us tender and remembering the best side of life.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

But of course, it didn't always go on the crest of the wave, did it? In fact, it shut at one stage, wasn't it? 1949?

Cliff Hayes, local historian

Yeah, just after the war bingo started to come along. The cinema came along and the theatre was just redundant. They tried one or two different things, amateur plays, but he finally shut at the end of 48, start of 49. Both of them shut.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

So, what happened then?

Cliff Hayes, local historian

A lady called Dorothy Squires actually put money up, and her and Billy Dainty opened it up as variety in 1950 and gave it a new lease of life. There had been the Fortescue

players, which are well known locally and they came on the back of her, but it was her, she was married to Roger Moore at the time and living in Cheshire, and she decided to put money up and reopen it, and it was a success.

Ken Dodd, comedian

I played the Hulme Hippodrome as a sort of, I would fill in a guest artist if you want to put it politely, in about 1951, 1952. The gentleman who owned the Hippodrome was Jimmy Brennan, James Brennan. And he put me into one of these revues, and usually were 'bearskins and blushes,' *Strip! Strip! Hooray!* - all these sort of saucy titles. And on the first one, I played that with Ted Lune, Ted Lune was the top of the bill. And he was the first one to say, "Now, I've got a letter from me mum," and he used to read letters from his mum with all the jokes in. And that would be a full revue. All sorts of acrobats and jugglers and girls singing and whatnot. One more piece of history certainly for Ken Dodd at the Hulme Playhouses. I once had the honour of being on the same bill on the radio show as Max Miller, *the Max Miller*, the man, the granddaddy of all comedians, was on that bill and I was on with Max Miller and he was a lovely man. Very happy days, the Hulme Hippodrome.

Roy Chappell, singer

I was working there on the 21st of October 1955. And it was a talent show. I was doing an Al Jolson act you see, makeup³ and everything. So, everybody else could go out to the pub or to the cafe. And I couldn't. So, I spent a full week in the in the dressing room, made up for two shows, we did the two shows a night. And I couldn't go out for a butty. But I remember it was a good place, a nice place to work. And each act had to introduce the other act, the next act you see. But the fellow before me, it was a bloke called Checker Wheel and my cue to come on was, when the fell on his head and he said, "I've just broken my contract." And that was cue for me to go on. And that's all I got. So, nobody knew who I was because I was in makeup.

Cardew Robinson, comedian (clip of their act)

How'd you do?

You'll see by my scarf, you will see by my cap, I belong to an old public school. My bat is not straight and I don't play the game. And I think of a sportsman a fool. So have no illusions that I am what I'm not, I'll tell you right now that I'm dread. My name's not Carruthers or Carstairs or Craig, I'm called Cardew the old school cad.

Who played manly games and the cricket for fun? Not Cardew the Cad of the School. Who behind the pavilion played games with a blonde, Cardew the Cad of the School. When sports day came round and the school took the track, who down by the river stretched out on their back, with a dirty French book with a bright yellow back? Cardew the Cad of the School.

I love the old school, dear old St Fanny's. Over the school door was a school crest, a lovely crest, of two brass monkeys in fur coats. The end of my shocking career lies in the answer to this question.

Who makes TNT in the chemistry class? Cardew the Cad of the School.

³ This makeup would be 'blackface', now seen as offensive.

And at last left the school through a large pane of glass? Cardew, and some of the school.

Who though he could never obtain a degree, was as crafty and cunning as cunning could be, and will end up no doubt a successful MP? Cardew the Cad of the School.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Of course, Laurel and Hardy⁴ played the Hippodrome, didn't they?

Cliff Hayes, local historian

[See footnote] Yes, they played it more than once they played it in the 20s. And they played in the 50s.

And not many people know this, but Stan Laurel's first ever stage appearance was at Ardwick. He had a real affinity for Manchester, and when in the 50s, he appeared in Manchester, he actually took the day off, and he turned up at Pendlebury Children's Hospital with a load of lollies that he'd bought himself, and went around the children's ward, shaking hands and being silly and making, cheering the children up. I can't find anyone to say a bad word about Stan.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

A very kind man.

Cliff Hayes, local historian

Well, they thought he was wonderful. He really turned everything on for the whole of the afternoon. Now, he was due on at 7.30 and 9 o'clock at the Hulme Hip, and he spent all day in them two children's wards.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

In 1955, the BBC moved its variety department from offices in Piccadilly [Gardens] to the Playhouse theatre. Unlike the plush and gold at the Hippodrome next door, the Playhouse had been a repertory theatre, and was decorated in the style of the 1930s: dark shiny wood and chrome. The decor didn't matter too much, for we producers it was only a place to work. But when the audience took their seats, the theatre came to life.

Les Dawson, comedian (clip of their act)

The last time I played this place I had the audience with me all the way. But I shook them off at Flixton.

There was a young man from Bombay, who sailed to China one day. He was strapped to the tiller with a sex-starved gorilla, and China's a bloody long way.

I'll never forget. My auntie Fanny by mistake, put senna pods in the current cake, and the only advice we could give, was skip to the loo my darling.

⁴ Only half right – only Stan Laurel played at the Hip, as a teenager. Details on Hip's Wikipedia page.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

We did used to get buses - people would come in coaches from different places. I once used that to defeat the BBC's strict rules. We were having some difficulty in getting audiences at one time. So, I contacted a fella in Liverpool who used to have coaches and do mystery trips. And I said it right, I will pay for two coaches. And you can take the people on a mystery trip, and they'll pay you and you finish up at the Playhouse Theatre in Manchester, and they see a show. So, we at least had 100 people straightaway. Later on, of course, I was told this was completely against regulations. And I said, well, I'm very sorry, I won't do it again. I didn't need to.

Jimmy Clitheroe and Peter Sinclair, comedians (clip of their act)

I didn't know you were upstairs granddad. / Oh, I'm just getting ready to go out. / What is it tonight? Darts? Snooker? Eyes down for a full house? / What do you know about housey-housey? / We play at school in the history class. / History class? What's the history master doing teaching you housey-housey? / Oh, he's not there. You see, for the last month every time we've had chemistry, Charlie Thompson makes a test tube full of sulfurated hydrogen. And just before the history class, it pours it over the radiator. It smells just like bad eggs. / I know that ...

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

Audiences got used to coming to the Playhouse and the Hippodrome because, not only did we have a terrific output on Radio 2, the Light Programme then, but we had terrific output on regional radio. There was a thing called *Northern Variety Parade*, which had a different show every week of the year virtually. And in the summer, we used to do Blackpool Night for fourteen weeks, which was the best variety show in the summer. So, it was this terrific variety connected with Manchester. And in fact, the year before I joined the BBC, 1955, I realised I had written on seven shows that year. So, it was like, what's the date and which show I'm writing this week? It was a great experience of course.

Jimmy Clitheroe and Peter Sinclair, comedians (clip of their act)

... Mugs return. / What's that? / Oh, it's not a number, it's what the lookout shouts when the history masters coming. / Oh dear, what a school.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Of all the people you worked with at that time, and it's 50 years ago now, who do you remember?

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

Well, I remember the some of the original people there was Ken Frith, a real character. He used to have a handlebar moustache, brilliant piano player, but he never got on really well with Alyn Ainsworth. Because even Alyn couldn't make him play exactly the sorts of things that he wanted him to play a particular style. But he was a very brilliant man, no doubt about that.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

What used to amuse me was that people would come on to the front of the stage and do their act, they didn't realise what stars they had behind them. I don't just mean as musicians. I mean as characters. For instance, Alyn Ainsworth was pretty well known as a character, was he not?

Johnny Roadhouse, BBC musician

Yeah, he was a lovely bloke. Now, let's be honest, that without him that the BBC wouldn't have had an orchestra like they have, the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra. And that's obviously because he was the brains behind it. All he lived for was his music, there had been nothing else in his life, and he's a brilliant bloke. There's no doubt about that, and disciplinarian and how he had managed to control that lot of characters I don't know, because they were real, lots of individuals, there's no doubt about that.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

In the 1960s and 70s as variety went into decline, the BBC kept the Playhouse afloat with pop acts such as The Beatles, Freddie and the Dreamers, Gerry and the Pacemakers, appearing there. But by the 1980s, BBC policy had changed. And in 1986, the BBC finally said farewell to the Playhouse and gave it back to the local community. I remember it well. In a star-studded evening of entertainment, many of the performers who'd appeared there over the years came to pay tribute, including the great impressionist, Peter Goodwright.

Peter Goodwright, impressionist (clip of their act, first as himself on stage)

Thank you very much indeed. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is a wonderful theatre for me. In this theatre I did my very first broadcast and I met and saw the great people, the great stars, who I loved and admired so much in those days. People like Albert Modley:

(in character)

How do all. I saw a notice this morning. It said, Wanted – Caretaker. Must be large, aggressive, strong and fearless. I thought by gum, that would just suit the wife.

(as himself on stage)

And Rob Wilton:

(in character)

The day war broke out ...

(as himself on stage)

Our time, unfortunately, on this broadcast is limited. Now I say, thank you Playhouse, thank you audiences, for being part of my life. I'm honoured to have been part of your life. Goodbye.

Jimmy Casey, BBC writer and producer

It was the birthplace of most of the comedy in this country, I think. People started there, or performed there on their way up. Then often went and did their shows in London. But more comedians and artists were created in the Playhouse Theatre Manchester than anywhere in Britain.

Cliff Hayes, local historian

It has been the founding ground for many, many of the great names and it really is a shame that we can't bring— I mean, we think we want theatre back in Manchester. And this place is just waiting to be reborn. If somebody will do it, it would be wonderful. It was here, you know, that the BBC had a wonderful farewell. They had everybody who was anybody came down. It was a great night. You're in the middle of Hulme. You're in the middle of a very intimate area of Manchester and you've got a wonderful theatre. Let's do something about it.

Geoffrey Wheeler, BBC presenter

Peter Goodwright, Jim Casey and Cliff Hayes with their own recollections of the Playhouse Theatre in Manchester. You also heard from Ken Platt, Ronnie Taylor, Ken Dodd, and Al Read, Cardew Robinson, Les Dawson and Roy Chappell, Morecambe and Wise, and the Clitheroe Kid⁵.

Next week, we're in Blackpool at the Grand Theatre. Till then, goodbye.

© BBC 2002, main text

Save Hulme Hippodrome – www.hulmehippodrome.org

⁵ Jimmy Clitheroe

Morecambe and Wise became famous nationally from 1952 in fourteen variety shows on BBC radio, and then in their own show, all recorded at the Hulme Hippodrome

BOOK EXTRACT

Like so many northern comedy acts emerging in the 1940s and 1950s, including Ken Dodd, Ken Platt and Dave Morris, Eric and Ernie got their first big chance at broadcasting thanks to Ronnie Taylor, variety producer at the BBC in Manchester. The senior variety staff at the BBC in London tended to be career BBC men - the infamous 'suits' - or those who'd come up through the dance band side of broadcasting.

Taylor had performed regularly on the radio before moving over to become a writer, co-writing the scripts for the 'Old Mother Riley' radio shows with Kitty McShane. His connection with the Manchester end of the Corporation began in 1949 when he started contributing scripts and songs to the *Variety Fanfare* series. When the show's producer, Bowker Andrews, died suddenly in 1951, Taylor took over and began subtly shaping the whole of the north region's entertainment output.

Ronnie Taylor was my favourite as a boss because he was such a clever bloke, said producer Johnny Ammonds, one of Taylor's protégés, in 2005. 'He could do anything really. He was marvellous. I have no hesitation in saying that he was the nicest and cleverest boss I ever worked for at the BBC.'

Comedy was very much his strength.

...

Between May 1952 and March 1953, Taylor gave Morecambe and Wise fourteen *Variety Fanfare* bookings, turning them into semi-regulars. It was quite a gesture of faith, given their paucity of broadcast credits before this, but such a leap was characteristic of Taylor's willingness to back talent.

...

Billed as 'high-speed variety from the north of England', with at least six acts per show separated by musical links, the *Variety Fanfare* run was great experience and exposure for a young turn, bringing them into the same orbit as Austrian piano duo Rawicz and Landauer, basking in the

success of their hit recording of Richard Addinsell's Warsaw Concerto, and veterans like Arthur Askey, as well as up-and-coming acts including Bob Monkhouse, Barry Took and singer Jimmy Young.

The shows came from the **Hippodrome** theatre in the Manchester suburb of **Hulme**, a great place for generating the right atmosphere for the broadcasts. Capturing that atmosphere was another matter, as Peter Pilbeam explains.

'We had a permanent outside broadcast control room in the circle, which was in fact a garden shed. No sound insulation whatsoever, it was an impossible place get a decent balance out of anything. We heard more through the walls than we did from the loudspeaker. We did some good stuff there, though.'

When the *Variety Fanfare* commitment came to an end, Taylor's thoughts turned to giving Eric and Ernie their own radio show, at first only on the north region Home Service. *You're Only Young Once* was to be the title, the show was to run for six weeks on Mondays from 9 November 1953, the stars were to receive 20 guineas [£21] a show, and Blackpool-based writer Frank Roscoe, who was a regular at Broadcasting House on Manchester's Piccadilly [Gardens], was brought in to write the scripts.

The shows were recorded on Sunday nights at the **Hippodrome**, requiring a mad dash from wherever they'd been performing on the Saturday before haring off to the following week's engagement. For the first recording, they had to travel from Stockton to Manchester, then back off to Newcastle.

In the second week, it was Newcastle-Manchester-Hull. The plan was to record two shows on the second session, and the plan was to record two shows on the second session, and give Eric and Ernie a week off yo-yoing to and from Manchester, but a special session had to be scheduled for the 'off' week after a recording fault at the previous session.

The downside to Frank Roscoe's prodigious talent was that he was in high demand and ended up spreading himself a little too thinly. 'Frank Roscoe was our writer,' Eric explained in 1973, 'it would be more accurate to say we had a share of him. For oft were the times he'd be working on three scripts, one for us, another for Ken Platt, and a third for

Al Read. Oft too were the nights we went to the microphone with mimeographed pages of scripts that were still wet.'

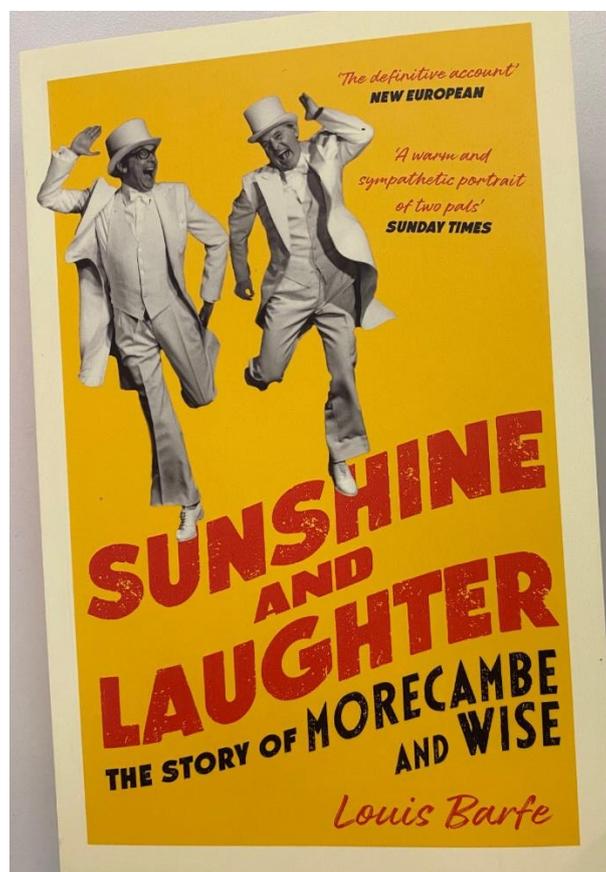
If this sounds like a fanciful tale, it is backed up by Johnny Ammonds, who remembers the scripts being assembled largely at rehearsal. 'Eric and Ernie used to bring their gag books to Piccadilly on a Sunday. Ronnie Taylor, shortly after I got the radio job, said to me, "Can you work a Roneo machine? That's one of the main qualifications for the job." Because on Sunday nobody was in.'

However haphazardly the show was assembled, it proved to be an instant hit with northern audiences, and the decision was taken to extend the run by three shows, taking the series into the new year. Becoming a successful headline act meant an increase in their earning potential. For their first broadcast in 1947, they had received a mere 8 guineas [£8.40p], which rose to 15 guineas [£15.75p] for their second appearance just four months later. However, there they stuck until September 1952, when they were given a rise to 20 guineas [£21].

(Barfe, 2021, pp51-55, bold added)

Louis Barfe

Sunshine and Laughter: The story of Morecambe and Wise.
Apollo books (2021).



Recollections of Peter Pilbeam, BBC Programme Engineer

“My memories mainly are of a programme called *Variety Fanfare* which was recorded on Sunday evening back in the early 1950s when I was still a Programme Engineer. That programme was a launch pad for several artistes. I remember Frankie Vaughan appearing as a warm-up artiste on several occasions. It's fair to say that others who became names in the business appeared at one time at least in the series, produced by the late, great Ronnie Taylor who went on to make Al Read a name.”

Peter Pilbeam (in correspondence via Martin Dibbs, 8 September 2022)

Audio tapes of some of these early broadcasts were rediscovered in 2009

NEWSPAPER EXTRACT

When Ernie Wise's widow, Doreen, saw the clutter in the eaves above her garage while moving house last year, she decided a good spring clean was the only thing for it. "There were just so many boxes and suitcases filled with old scripts, records and tapes, I thought I'd just have a grand old time clearing out the junk and burning the whole lot," she says.

Thankfully, the boxes escaped the fireplace. Instead, Mrs Wise handed them over to her late husband's agent, who discovered that they contained pure comedy gold from Britain's most famous comedy double act. The dozens of reel-to-reel tapes and acetate discs were, in fact, long-lost recordings of Ernie Wise and Eric Morecambe's earliest attempts at comedy, some dating back to the early Fifties. Among the 45 hours of material were the duo's original pier-show recordings from their summer tours, their appearances on the *Variety Bandbox* radio show, previously unheard comic ditties, and a complete set of Morecambe and Wise's first BBC radio series from 1953, *You're Only Young Once* - recordings which had been considered lost for ever.

The material has not been heard since it was first performed more than 50 years ago, long before Morecambe and Wise hit the big time with their famous television shows in the Seventies. But, this week, Radio 4 will air *Morecambe and Wise: The Garage Tapes*, featuring some of the best bits.

Sunday Telegraph, 2 May 2010

**“BBC BUYS HULME PLAYHOUSE
For Use as Studio**

The BBC has completed negotiations for the purchase of the Playhouse Theatre, at Hulme. Manchester, and will use it as a sound studio for the variety programmes produced at the North Regional Headquarters of the BBC Manchester which have hitherto been staged (mostly for recording) on Sunday evenings from the **Hulme Hippodrome**.

The Playhouse will also be used as a permanent studio for the BBC Northern Variety Orchestra. It will be equipped with a permanent control room. It is also intended to make use of: it as a television studio (for productions in which a bona-fide theatre setting is necessary), in addition to the BBC television studios in Dickenson Road, Manchester.”

25 November 1955, Manchester Guardian (bold added)



History of the BBC at Hulme Hippodrome

1950 ~ 1956

BBC Recordings at Hulme Hip (from files in archives)	Start Date	End Date
Cinderella (Pantomime excerpt)	1950 - 5 Jan	-
Fanfare / Variety Fanfare	1950 - Feb / March	1954
The Norman Evans Show	1950 - 10 Dec	-
Home James	1951 - Sept / Oct	1952 - April / May
Al Read Show	1952	1955
Showtime	1952 - 8 June	-
Spice of Life	1952 - Oct to Dec	1953 - Jan
You're Only Young Once	1953 - Dec	1954 - Jan
You're Welcome	1954 - Jan	-
The Charlie Chester Show	1954 - Jan	-
Spotlight	1954 - Jan	-
Make Yourself at Home	1954 - Jan	-
Judge for Yourself	1954 - Mar	-
What Makes a Star?	1954 - May	-
A Landscape in Melody	1954 - May	-
Northern Lights	1955 - Oct	-
Keep 'Em Laughing	1955 - Oct	-
Mixed Blessings	1955 - Oct	-
Spotlight	1955 - Oct	-
Double Trouble	1955 - Oct	-
Call Boy	1955 - Nov	1956 - Dec

The BBC Written Archives Centre, based in Caversham, holds a file relating to the Hulme Hippodrome (N4/685) which covers 1941 - 1961. With our thanks to the staff there for these details.

October 2022



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13 November 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

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Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

Twitter - [@savehulmehip](https://twitter.com/savehulmehip)
Instagram - [@savehulmehip](https://www.instagram.com/savehulmehip)

We say again to the Charity Commission - Hurry up and transfer the Hip lawfully

Many thanks to the almost 200 people who signed our open letter to the CEO of the Charity Commission, demanding action on their delays for nearly two years in not resolving the limbo legal status of the Hip's ownership.

We have had essentially a frustrating holding reply to our open letter, saying not much, so we have written again.

The sentiment we have expressed is: *Resolve this now, transfer it lawfully, and finally do the decent thing.*

To recap, a property developer in south London tried to get ownership of the building in January 2021 with the agreement of just one of the three property trustees of the charity which bought the Hip in 2003. The Land Registry has refused to accept the flawed attempt to transfer the title ownership, rightly so.

We thankfully have an angel investor with good provenance who has made a written offer to purchase the Hip at above the independent valuation, subject to contract.

At the end of this Bulletin is a copy of our latest letter to the Charity Commission. All your continuing support and lobbying is very welcome, many thanks again.

Music at the Hip



Salford Media City band, Hulme Hip, 2012

Singing and playing music has been a golden thread for more than a century at Hulme Hip. In working class culture communal singing wasn't just for church or temple or chapel; nor just for football matches. Musical skills have always been valued, from Gracie Fields singing as a young woman on the Hip stage in 1915, to Shirley Bassey doing the same forty years later, to the 15 local bands one night just ten years ago each getting their

moment on stage to show their skill and talent.

Many children are now at risk of losing any access to making music, whether by singing or by playing. The government has said that every child should have at least an hour a week of musical education; but many councils in England this year have had to cut school music services entirely. While the arts news has been much about grants for opera, which has its place, some MPs have been asking about children's and community music.

How could somewhere like Hulme Hip help? Let's look for lessons from our heritage in the 1950s and in the 1980s.

In 1956 there was a punk music revolution in much of Britain, only at the time it was called Skiffle. In Manchester during the Skiffle era one music shop sold over 100 new guitars to young people in one week, according to Billy Bragg's excellent book on this neglected era in working class music making. And Skiffle bands played at Hulme Hip, drawing in the younger audiences.

The same thing happened again in the 1980s, this time described by Mark Kermode in 2018, the film critic and musician who was living in Hulme as a young student back in the day.

"If someone did a rock family tree of all the bands that didn't make it in Manchester in the 1980s, it would go on for absolute miles. One of the weird things about [this] period was,

particularly in Hulme where I lived, everyone was in a band; most people were in two or three at the same time. It was all incredibly internecine. I remember being in a friend's flat in Charles Barry Crescent, and A Guy Called Gerald was down one way, and Russians Eat Bambi were down that way, and Jamie who ran The Kitchen recording studio was upstairs – it was more like a crèche for musicians than it was a housing estate at that point. So, yes, it would make a brilliant family tree but it would be so hard to unravel."

And some of these bands were playing at the Hip in the 1980s, this time in the Floral Hall. And similarly in 2012.



Finally to get all economical, it was from the 1950s mix that The Hollies, Bee Gees, Freddie and the Dreamers, and many others found their passion and place in 'the business'. And from the 1980s bands mix we gave the world *Madchester*. In schools and in local and accessible music venues like the Hip it is essential to keep the musical base of the community thriving.

- For more on the musical history of the Hip, please see our Wiki page.

Launch of our Exhibition Display at Central Library



It was good to meet up with our supporters, including new ones, at our evening launch event in Central Library on 1 November evening, chatting over a modest buffet.

The live Instagram video of the event can be seen on catchup.

Earlier this year a group of students in one of the *MSA Live 2022* projects at the Manchester School of Architecture hand-made a detailed 1:100 wooden scale model of Hulme Hippodrome and Playhouse.

As shown here, the model opens out to show the interior layout of the two auditoriums and the Floral Hall, surrounded by photographs of actors from Coronation Street who appeared on the Hip stage in the 1950s. The display will run until the new year.

Our thanks also to Siobhan and her colleagues in **Archives+** and Central Library events team for their assistance in setting up the display and launch event.



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Ms Helen Stephenson, CEO
Charity Commission
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Sent by email

Tuesday 8 November 2022

Dear Ms Stephenson,

[Redacted name and title] replied to us on your behalf about the ownership of the Hulme Hippodrome in Manchester.

His reply came two weeks ago. He stated that “Even though there was a technical issue with the title records at HM Land Registry, ownership had passed to Mr Gordon”.

Despite his claim as of today HM Land Registry still shows the property as being owned by Gilbert Deya Ministries (GDM). Their records have shown this status since early last year. We have to believe this to be the true state of affairs.

As you know we have a keen interest in buying this property and we have the full support of Manchester City Council and of Lucy Powell MP for Manchester Central. We have the required funds to buy the building.

We believe that Mr Gordon is using the lack of clarity over ownership to delay essential repairs to this Grade 2 listed building hoping that the weather will eventually make the building unsafe and thus irreparable. Mr Gordon is currently appealing against a Manchester City Council Section 215 notice to make good the external features of the building and is already reneging on promises he has made to the Court to carry out surveys on the state of the building. His intentions are clear.

Since the Charity Commission now control the affairs of GDM we must conclude that between the Land Registry and yourselves inaction is assisting Mr Gordon and contributing to the demise of a building which the people of Manchester wish to rescue and turn into a valuable cultural asset.

As long as neither the Charity Commission nor the Land Registry resolve this matter we have nobody from whom we can buy the building and Manchester City Council have nobody whom they can hold responsible for its repair.

We will use all means at our disposal to keep the hopes of the local population alive.

We look forward to seeing this matter resolved and the building saved,

Yours sincerely,

Tony Baldwinson, Secretary,

Signed on behalf of the Board of Save Hulme Hippodrome Ltd



Information Bulletin 51

29 November 2022

Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

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Instagram - [@savehulmehip](https://www.instagram.com/savehulmehip)

#BBC100 - Live at the Hippodrome

Recently we have been kindly allowed by the BBC to visit one of their archives and inspect a file of letters concerning their bookings of Hulme Hippodrome, mostly for recording variety shows for radio.

While we await permission from the BBC to share images of these letters, we can share now a broad summary of the facts revealed by this file.

Avid readers of our excellent Bulletin will already be well aware of how the Hip was the launch pad for Morecambe and Wise on the radio, with their own series recorded live at the Hip. And the table on the next page reveals all the programmes recorded at the Hip that we currently know of.

Why did the BBC choose to buy the Playhouse and not the Hip ?

The BBC needed more studio space in the 1950s as radio expanded after the war, and even more so when TV became popular. BBC engineers visited the Hip but reported that it was unsuitable for music programming with an orchestra of 70 musicians plus sometimes a choir as well. Inside the Playhouse the BBC Northern Dance

Orchestra played while sat in the auditorium, not on the stage, and this setup worked acoustically. But they couldn't do the same in the Hip because of its different layout.



Credit

With our thanks to the staff at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham.

File ref:
N4/685/1

No advertising

Perhaps a key piece of information to emerge was how important it was to the BBC that Hulme Hippodrome wasn't mentioned in connection with the BBC because this would be seen as a form of advertising, which was forbidden. Contrast this with the BBC's *Live at the Apollo* where today no-one bats an eyelid about advertising Hammersmith Apollo, which is welcome.

But back in the 1950s the ‘no advertising’ rule was written into the venue hire agreement. So it was harder for the Hip’s use to become common knowledge in the community. By contrast, when the BBC later bought the Playhouse theatre next door in 1955, they could hang a massive BBC sign outside.

Titles and Years	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
Al Read Show, The			•	•	•	•	
Call Boy (aka The Clitheroe Kid)						•	•
Charlie Chester Show, The					•		
Cinderella (pantomime)		•					
Gracie Fields Programme		•					
Home James		•	•				
Judge for Yourself					•		
Keep 'Em Laughing						•	
Ken Platt Show						•	
Landscape in Melody, A					•		
Make Yourself at Home					•		
Mixed Blessings						•	
Norman Evans Show, The	•						
Northern Lights						•	
Ring That Bell						•	
Show Goes On						•	
Showtime			•				
Spice of Life			•	•			
Spotlight					•	•	
Tip Top Tunes		•					
Variety Fanfare	•	•	•	•	•		
What Makes a Star?					•		
You're Only Young Once (aka Morecambe and Wise Show)				•	•		
You're Welcome!					•		•

Table: BBC shows recorded at Hulme Hippodrome 1950 to 1956

Gilbert Deya Ministries to leave Hulme Hippodrome ?

After two years of legal limbo, the Hip might soon be able to finally shake off its troubled connection with the GDM religious charity and start a new chapter, even though it might then be confirmed as belonging to a disgraced property developer in south London.

The property has been in legal limbo following an irregular transaction on 25 November 2020 between some GDM trustees and disgraced* Mr Gassell Charles Gordon. This meant that GDM trustees then became *owners in trust* and Mr Gordon became the *owner in equity*, both awaiting a legal solution to decide on what will happen with it next.

On 12 October 2022 the Charity Commission used its powers in Section 69 of the Charities Act 2011 to ‘order’ the Land Registry to remove the GDM trustees from the register of ownership but leave it entirely with Mr Gordon, who has already written he will then transfer the Hip onward to HHM20 Ltd.

We were very disappointed that the Charity Commission didn’t use their powers to sell Hulme Hip openly and fairly, as GDM should have done. The Charity Commission disagreed with us.

We have written to the Land Registry asking if they plan to follow this ‘order’ or if they have some other plans.

More news soon, hopefully.

* Mr Gordon is disqualified from being a company director until 2025 and had 14 of his companies closed by the court in 2014, but it is legal in UK law for him to be HHM20’s *manager*.



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Save Hulme Hippodrome (SHH) Ltd, c/o Work for Change
41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

Website - <https://www.hulmehippodrome.org>

Twitter - [@savehulmehip](https://twitter.com/savehulmehip)

Email - info@hulmehippodrome.org.uk

Instagram - [@savehulmehip](https://www.instagram.com/savehulmehip)

Facebook - <https://tinyurl.com/rvr8h4jv>

The Ghosts of Hipp Past

Book Review

The Bread and Butter Thing: A theatrical journey through the North West
by Randle S. Cutts, 2014

64pp A4 format, monochrome images

Self-published, Manchester UK

£15 + £4.95 p&p; cheques to:

Keith Bailey, 1 Avondale Avenue, Bury BL9 5EA

This memoir was written by the late Randle Cutts describing his youthful visits to Hulme Hippodrome in the 1940s and 1950s. His father's firm did some building repairs to the theatre. This account includes details of the remaining theatres in the Broadhead circuit that still existed in his youth, but the main focus is on Hulme Hippodrome, "the Hipp" in his words, and to a lesser extent on The Playhouse. He lived in Prestwich and there was a direct bus to the Hipp. It's clear he knew and spoke to many of the staff at the Hipp from the 1940s onwards.

He says Hulme Hippodrome and The Playhouse were, "the hub and powerhouse of the whole Broadhead circuit. When we view this building complex together with the Junction Inn, we are looking at **the last landmarks of Old Hulme of 100 years ago.**" (p11, emphasis added). In the extract below he tells of the origin of the name of the Junction pub.

Northern Variety

Perhaps the essence of this book is summarised in the Preview where he says, "I wasn't to know it at the time that I was seeing the last kick of Northern Variety, with just several years left of the post war boom." (p5).

This is an under-researched aspect of British popular culture in the 20th century, maybe because the southern or London version of Variety Theatre dominated the later BBC programmes and the Royal Command Variety Performances. Only twice did the annual Royal Variety show come north to celebrate the working-class version, once in Blackpool and once in Manchester.

The BBC at the Hipp

It is very telling that Randle Cutts says nothing of the BBC radio programmes made at the Hipp in the early 1950s, and all his discussions of the artists on the BBC relate only to The Playhouse,

even for Variety Fanfare. This indicates first-hand how much the use of the Hipp by the BBC was kept away from its 'regular' audience members and from the wider community.

This book is recommended reading for researchers of Hulme's social history, and of British working-class popular culture in the 20th century. One could quibble at some of the technical inaccuracies, such as on the BBC recordings, but that would miss the point of this valuable memoir as a window into a moment in time that was almost destroyed socially and culturally as well as physically in the "slum" clearances / urban regeneration of the 1960s.

EXTRACT:

The Junction Inn, Hulme

(aka Junction Pub, Junction Hotel, Grand Junction Hotel)

"It was so called not because it was a railway junction, but because it was a tram junction. *Hulme tram junction* was very unusual. It was almost unique. The streets around Hulme were so narrow that there was insufficient room for two tracks running beside one another. One track was 'outer' towards Stretford and Chorlton. The other was 'inner' towards Manchester. The junction itself was positioned near the Junction Inn. In fact the pub formed an apex to the junction. 'Outer' trams passed the entrance to the Junction Theatre and 'inner' trams passed the entrance to the Hulme Hippodrome. 'Inner' and 'outer' referred to - into Manchester and out of Manchester. The tram stops even had signs on them, *inner* and *outer*, so that passengers would not be waiting in the wrong place.

The entrance to the Hulme Hippodrome was in Preston Street [... up to the 1960s, and there] was a *Pauldens* department store just up the road, a large *Co-operative Society* store and a *Woolworths*."

"The Junction Inn was more than a pro's [professional performers] pub in name only. It was frequented by performers from both Hulme Hippodrome and the Junction Theatre and later still by those working for the BBC at the old Playhouse."

"The Junction pub was much the same as it is today [2014], serving the immediate district, but there are differences. Then the present ground floor was subdivided into two parts with separate entrances from the street and separate bars. The pro's bar was up at the apex end. The walls were covered with signed framed photographs of all the stars who had appeared at the Hulme Hippodrome. The pub furniture was typical of the pro's pubs of the day, round cast iron tables etc. There was [an electric] bell on the main bar which rang when it was known that a particular artiste in the pub would soon be needed onstage. ...The bell was connected to the Hipp. There was also a notice by the side of the bar, near a door stating 'Pros Only'. You see the Junction Inn also had a second function as theatrical digs. Only pros could go through that door upstairs to the top story. The landlord's family lived on the second floor. The digs were on the third floor. There was a fire which damaged the third floor but left the rest untouched. The third floor was dismantled and a flat roof built on top of the second floor.

By far the most astonishing feature of the pub was the existence of a tunnel [a storm drain] leading from the vaults to the theatre's cellars not more than 100 yards away. It still exists but the entrance has now been sealed up."

“Several of the well-known artistes who trod the boards of the Hulme Hippodrome had periods when they were licensees of The Junction Inn, Frank Randle and Ted Lune among them. Remarkable really because Frank Randle was outrageous in his offstage behaviour, while Ted Lune who had a similar style was the opposite offstage.” (Cutts, 2014, pp27-29)

The Ghosts of Hipp Present

Intruders

We understand from a neighbour that the police have successfully disrupted an attempt by a group of criminals to install a cannabis farm inside Hulme Hippodrome a few days earlier in December.

Apparently the intruders had started digging in the basement trying to find the national grid electricity cables under the pavement, obviously a very dangerous situation. This follows a number of local reports of intrusions in recent months.

We also understand that the police were able to confiscate equipment that was being installed, valued at around £40,000.

Anyone with further information is asked to contact Greater Manchester Police on 101, or anonymously if necessary via Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Ghosts of Hipp To Come



We recently commissioned a drone video inspection of the roof, taken on 9 December 2022 on a frosty morning. This screenshot above Warwick Street shows the continuing decay that threatens the future of this historic listed building and community resource.

We plan to make this footage available to the authorities in advance of the next hearing concerning the Hipp’s maintenance (or lack of) by its owners at Manchester Magistrates Court in January 2023. We will compare the decline seen here with our first drone survey made in 2021.



On Warwick Street, looking north



To Old Birley Street and universities, looking east

Better Choices for the Hipp To Come



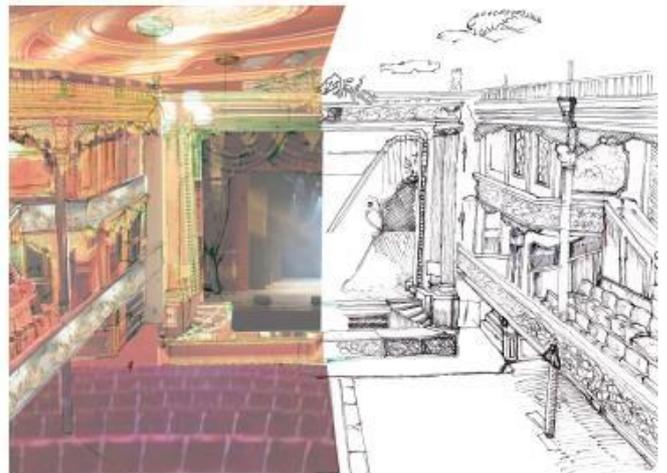
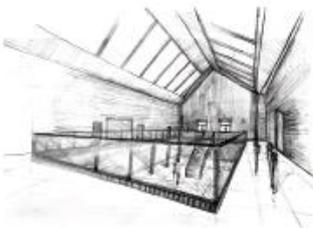
Floral Hall Interior



Floral Hall Interior



Floral Hall Interior



Future design options by students at the Manchester School of Architecture

Our Calendar of 2002

January	February	March
The Hipp to be announced as joint 2nd theatre most at risk of being lost to the nation in 2022	Manchester City Council serves notice on all alleged owners to make external improvements	Our Spring Festival is held next door in the Hulme Community Garden
April	May	June
New research on musical acts at the Hipp, prompted by our Spring Festival artists	Manchester School of Architecture students make a beautiful model of the Hipp	Elders Group meets for an oral history recording, with small grant from Mcr Uni
July	August	September
At the Magistrates Court when an alleged owner appeals against making improvements	Strong local press coverage of the Hipp, with good background information	Book on Morecambe and Wise details how the Hipp launched their national profile using BBC radio
October	November	December
Over 160 supporters petition the Charity Commission to take control of the Hipp for the community	Launch of our Exhibition in Central Library, St Peters Square (ground floor)	New research on the six years of BBC broadcasts from the Hipp in the period 1950-1956