

THE PICTURE PALACE PROJECT



"They used to come around and spray... to kill the fleas"

"You might go up to the West End... it was 4 weeks before they came to the locals"

"I lived at the pictures! I thought I lived in a dark house 'til I was 15!"

"The Trocadero was wonderful, it was a palace with chandeliers!"

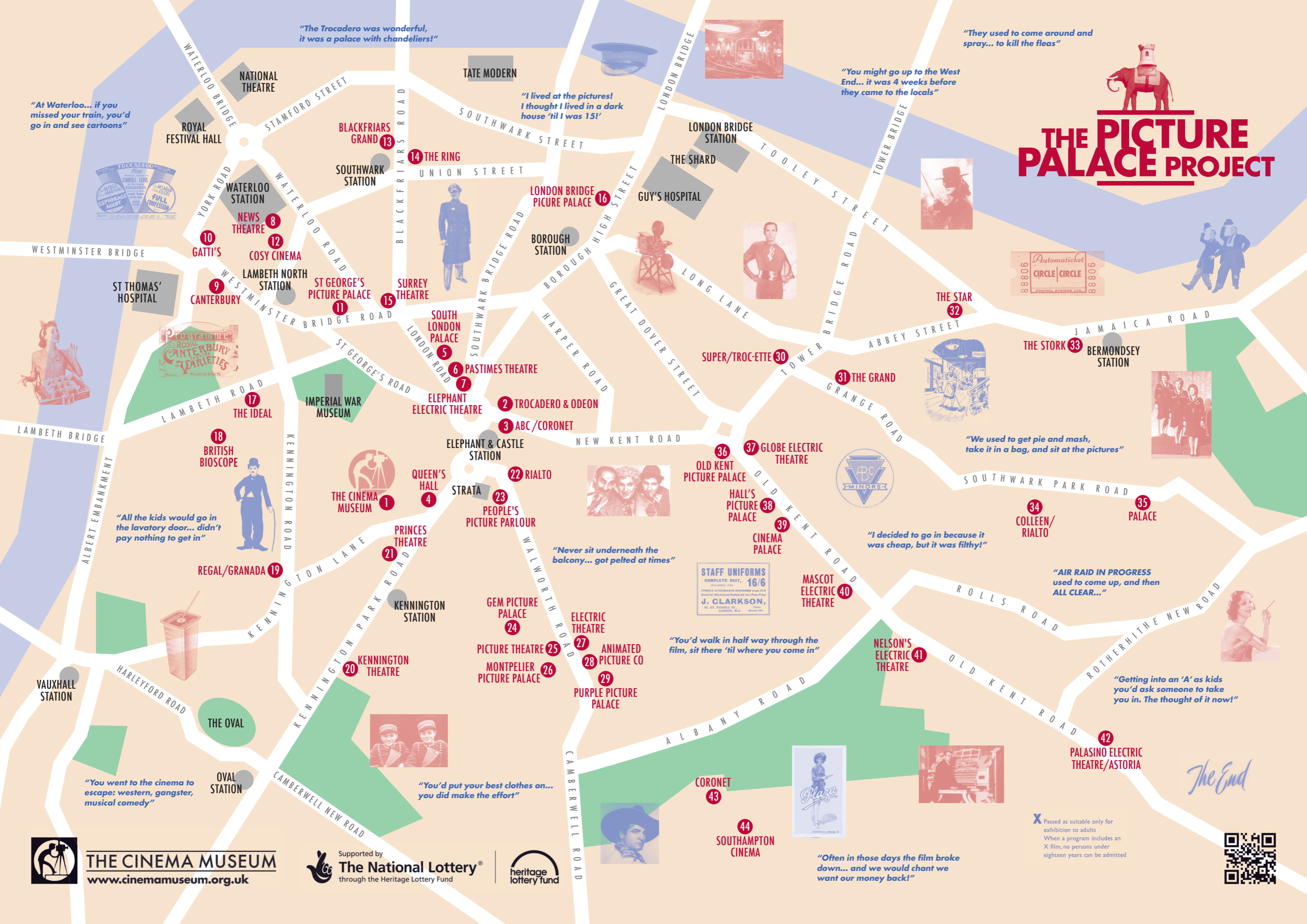
"At Waterloo... if you missed your train, you'd go in and see cartoons"



"Often in those days the film broke down... and we would chant we want our money back!"

X Passed as suitable only for exhibition to adults
When a program includes an X film, no persons under eighteen years can be admitted

The End



THE CINEMA MUSEUM
www.cinemamuseum.org.uk



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THE PICTURE PALACE PROJECT

The Elephant & Castle was once home to an extraordinary number of picture houses and was known as the Piccadilly Circus of the South. This map identifies 42 almost forgotten cinemas in and around Elephant & Castle. The Cinema Museum has collected local people's memories of a golden era. From the 3,500 seat Trocadero at the Elephant to the modest Cosy in Lower Marsh, the cinema was an oasis for many who lived in poor and cramped conditions in 20th Century Southwark and Lambeth.



Interviewed for the project longtime local Bobby Dow explains: "The Trocadero was famous, it was a beautiful palace. It was a dream palace. People worked hard and there wasn't a lot of leisure, but you went to the cinema to see a western, gangster, musical or comedy... the cinema was part of that magic.

You went in and you were transported with chandeliers, gold staircases... looking back it was sheer escapism... wonderful dream palaces."

Nearly all of the buildings have since been demolished, their opulent interiors lost forever. Some have been converted into churches, bingo halls and supermarkets. Many of the local cinemas had their roots in the music halls of the early 1900s, and by the 1940s cinema was booming. In 1946 there were 4,036 in the country.

With the advent of television the cinema was on the decline, but for Museum director Martin Humphries it is vital these days are not lost. "The Cinema Museum is delighted to be doing this project with the local community and it is important that these memories are preserved for future generations. It is fantastic for us to be situated in a place that was once the hub of entertainment in the field of music hall and screen. It is especially important to us that we are based in the old Lambeth Workhouse, where a young Charlie Chaplin briefly lived alongside his mum and brother. We are the only museum to recognise Charlie Chaplin's connection with the area, and the only museum to celebrate the experience of going to the pictures during this golden era."



This heritage project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and aims to get more people in the local area involved in The Cinema Museum.

Rachel and Bill Leigh went to the Trocadero and were married in 1965. "It was courting couples entertainment really, taking a girl to the pictures, especially the back row..."

Gladys Hale lived in Victoria but would often visit family in Lambeth Walk: "As a teenager, Sunday was the day! You'd all dress up to go to the cinema, and girls would look for boys and boys would look for girls, and you'd eye each other up!"



Not all the cinemas were picture palaces. Harry Denis Abs, born off Lambeth Walk, remembers: "There was a place called Gatti's, but of course we used to call it the fleapit. A girl every now and then used to go around with a pump... we all used to say it was for the fleas, but actually what it was there was no ventilation there, and the smell of the kids, you know..."

The Elephant was heavily bombed during the Second World War, but the escapism of the cinema helped locals keep up their spirits. Gladys Hale remembers: "Sometimes you'd just sit through it! You got rather blasé in the end, the cinemas still went on the same."

By the 1950s teddy boys were in action at the Elephant when rock and roll hit the screen. Bill Leigh was at the Trocadero: "There was dancing in the aisle to 'Rock Around the Clock'. Outside the older boys and us used to be rocking the cars, to try to tip them over."



Reg O'Donoghue recalls film ratings... 'H' for horror, 'A' for over sixteen and 'U' for under sixteen. "When we wanted to see an adult film, we'd wait outside and then ask adults going in. 'Excuse me mister, can you take me in?' You couldn't do that now!"



THE CINEMA MUSEUM

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The Cinema Museum is devoted to keeping alive the spirit of cinema from the days before the multiplex. Housed in the workhouse where Charlie Chaplin stayed, it has a unique collection of artefacts, memorabilia and equipment reflecting every aspect of going to the pictures, from the architecture of cinemas to the marketing that promoted films.



TROCADERO & ODEON

1/17 New Kent Road

The Trocadero opened in 1930 as a Super Cinema with stage facilities by the architect George Coles. The theatre had a vast capacity of 3,500 and the largest Wurlitzer organ in Europe. It was replaced in 1966 by a smaller Odeon, then known from 1982 as the Coronet which was demolished in 1988 (not to be confused with the current Coronet opposite).



ABC/CORONET

26/28 New Kent Road

In 1932 the ABC Cinema opened across the street from the Trocadero seating over 2000 people and was an art-deco conversion of the Elephant and Castle Theatre, where a very young Charlie Chaplin performed. It was modernised in 1967 with blue metal sheeting on the facade. Re-named the Coronet in 1986 it is now a nightclub and concert venue.

4 QUEEN'S HALL ELECTRIC THEATRE

134/138 Newington Butts

5 SOUTH LONDON PALACE

92 London Road

6 PASTIMES ELECTRIC THEATRE

61/62 London Road

7 ELEPHANT ELECTRIC THEATRE

55/56 London Road



WATERLOO STATION NEWS THEATRE

A striking example of Art Moderne style with sweeping curves and stylised 1930s Deco signage. The projection booth was in the centre of the ceiling and used a series of mirrors. The cinema had no toilets and patrons asked for a 'pass-out' to use the public toilets on the station concourse. After newreels finished in the late 1950s continuous cartoons were shown. In the 1960s it showed Hollywood 'classics' before closing in 1970.



CANTERBURY

143 Westminster Bridge Road

The 3,000 seat Canterbury Music Hall was equipped to screen films in 1902. From 1914 films were becoming the main part of the programme with some live acts on stage. It was converted into a cinema in the Hyams circuit from 1927. It closed in 1942 after German bomb damage and it was finally demolished in 1955.



GATTI'S

214/216 Westminster Bridge Road

Opened in 1883 as Gatti's Palace of Varieties seating 690 with standing room for 493. Four storeys high with a concave facade to match the curve in Westminster Bridge Road many famous stars of the era appeared including Dan Leno, Marie Lloyd and Harry Lauder. In 1898 the Edison-Thomas Life Size Pictures debuted there and in 1904 Mutograph films were screened. It closed as a theatre in 1924 and converted to full time cinema use until hit by German bombs in 1940 before demolition in 1950.

11 ST GEORGE'S PICTURE PALACE

21 Westminster Bridge Road

12 COSY CINEMA

45/46 Lower Marsh

13 BLACKFRIARS GRAND CINEMATOGRAF THEATRE

54/55 Blackfriars Road



THE RING

197 Blackfriars Road

This former chapel screened films from Sunday to Friday and then staged boxing contests every Saturday night. Despite the fact that it accommodated 1,000 patrons on two levels, it charged a universal 2 pence to see the picture shows.

15 SURREY THEATRE

St George's Circus/ Blackfriars Road

16 LONDON BRIDGE PICTURE PALACE

116 Borough High Street



THE IDEAL

Lambeth Road/Lambeth Walk

Originally a Lambeth Methodist Chapel, it was converted for a pioneering venture by the Rev Thomas Tiplady in 1928 to widen the influence of the church through Cinema Evangelism. It was bombed during World War II.

18 BRITISH BIOSCOPE

94 Lambeth Walk



REGAL/GRANADA

Kennington Road/Black Prince Road

The Regal Cinema opened in November 1937 with Ralph Reader in 'The Gang Show'. It was equipped with a 2Manual Le Fluor (Hammond electronic) organ. From 1949 until 1961 it was a Granada Cinema and then a Granada Bingo Club with wrestling on some nights.



KENNINGTON THEATRE

Kennington Park Road/Park Place

The Kennington Theatre opened as the Princess of Wales' Theatre in 1898, with a capacity of 1,347, and was described as one of the most sumptuous playhouses in Europe. It reopened to stage Cine Variety in 1921, but was finally demolished in 1949 after war damage.

21 PRINCE'S THEATRE

2/6 Kennington Park Road

22 RIALTO

47/49 Walworth Road

23 PEOPLE'S PICTURE PARLOUR

88 Walworth Road

24 GEM PICTURE PALACE

Carter Street

25 PICTURE THEATRE

306 Walworth Road

26 MONTPELIER CINEMA

18 Empress Street

27 ELECTRIC THEATRE

341 Walworth Road

28 ANIMATED PICTURE COMPANY

357 Walworth Road



PURPLE PICTURE PALACE/ THE GILDED LILY

Arnside Street, Camberwell Gate

Operating as the Westmoreland Picture Playhouse in around 1912 with 1,093 seats. RCA Sound equipment was installed in 1930, but it closed in 1939 and was demolished after war damage.



SUPER/TROC-ETTE

115 Tower Bridge Road

Opened 1929 as the Super, with a capacity of 2,282, it then became the Troc-ette by 1946. Closed in 1956 and demolished - the site is now a block of flats called Trocette Mansions.

31 GRAND

202/203 Grange Road



STAR

189 Abbey Street

33 STORK

120 Jamaica Road



COLLEEN/RIALTO

146 St James Road

35 PALACE

250 Southwark Park Road



OLD KENT PICTURE PALACE

42/44 Old Kent Road



GLOBE ELECTRIC THEATRE

59/61 Old Kent Road

Opened in 1910 showing 'Pictures from around the Globe'. In 1926 organist Steff Langston played the very first Christie organ. Always independently operated it was renamed the Globe Cinema in around 1946 closing in 1960 when the site was redeveloped.

38 HALL'S PICTURE PALACE

100 Old Kent Road

39 CINEMA PALACE

152 Old Kent Road

40 MASCOT ELECTRIC THEATRE

288 Old Kent Road

41 NELSON'S ELECTRIC THEATRE

388 Old Kent Road



PALASINO ELECTRIC THEATRE/ASTORIA

593/613 Old Kent Road

Opened for business in 1930 as a single screen Super Cinema with a programme including Laurel & Hardy - and a stage show with orchestra. The Theatre had a fully equipped stage and fly tower, 10 dressing rooms, a cafe for patrons, a Compton 3 Manual 12 Rank Theatre organ, and 4 Simplex Projectors. Front of house staff were 4 doormen, 10 usherettes, 2 cashiers and 3 ice cream ladies. Behind the scenes, apart from projection room staff, were a House Engineer, his assistant and a Fireman - required by law. The Old Kent Road Astoria Lounge offered catering from 11am until 10pm.

