

11th December 2017

To whom it may concern

As the children of the late Sir Charles Chaplin, we - and our own children - have been distressed to learn of the threat to the Cinema Museum, which is housed in the former Lambeth Workhouse in Renfrew Road, London. The workhouse is a building that played a great part in our father's early life. He and his mother and step-brother, abandoned by their father, lived nearby, in a variety of poor lodgings, and were frequently driven to seek refuge in the workhouse. Our father's first encounter with Renfrew Road was when he was four (and when the building had been there only 22 years): his maternal grandmother was taken there, to be transferred thereafter to a lunatic asylum. The boys were frequently given shelter when their mother was unable to look after them.

His last visit to Renfrew Road workhouse was in May 1903 when, now 14, he somehow managed to take his mother - our grandmother - there, on foot, suffering as she was from extreme mental disorder. This time she was transferred to Cane Hill asylum, and was to spend practically the rest of her life under psychiatric care.

It is not a celebratory piece of family history by any means, but we now recognise that this painful experience did much to mould our father's unique creative gift.

It is for this reason that we have been so heartened to see this building transformed into such a vital social and cultural centre for the locality and for London, celebrating the art and societal function of cinema and - particularly heartening to us - creating the nearest thing that Britain has to a Chaplin Museum.

An incidental reason for maintaining the present status of the Renfrew Road building would be to show young people and future generations a survival of the ambivalent social services of the Victorian era and early 20th century.

We sincerely hope that you will do everything you can to save the Cinema Museum

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Chaplin
Michael Chaplin
Victoria Chaplin
Annette Chaplin
Jane Chaplin