

Brighton Hippodrome CIC



HISTORY

HERITAGE

DRAFT

BRIGHTON HIPPODROME

History and heritage

Brighton Hippodrome CIC | January 2020



Contents

- 3 Introduction
 - Executive summary
 - Key dates
 - Ownership/operator
 - 4 **Evolution of the site**
 - 6 **Understanding the asset**
 - 7 52 Middle Street (Hippodrome House)
 - 10 Real Ice Skating Rink 1896-1900
 - 15 The Hippodrome circus-theatre 1901-1902
 - 19 Hippodrome Variety Theatre 1902-1964
 - Modifications 1915-1916
 - 25 Further modifications 1955
 - Brighton Corporation interest
 - Hiatus 1964-1966
 - 26 Evolution of the Middle Street canopy
 - 27 Television studio 1966
 - Mecca Bingo social club 1967-2006
 - 28 Features in Hippodrome House
 - 29 20-21 Ship Street (the service yard)
 - Unoccupied 2007-date
 - 30 **Assessment of significance**
 - Assessing significance
 - Summary statement of significance
 - Architectural/artistic interest
 - Architects
 - Building materials and technology
 - The auditorium and stage house
 - Hippodrome House
 - Overall architectural significance
 - 31 Archaeological interest
 - Historic interest
 - 32 Urban context
 - Significant views
 - The yard
 - 35 Significance drawings
 - 39 **Planning policy context**
 - Historic environment policies
 - National policy: Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
 - National policy: National Planning Policy Framework
 - Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide
 - Regional Policy
 - Local planning core policy
 - 40 Saved development plan policies (2005)
 - Local policy: OTCA Character statement and management plan
 - Recent planning history
 - 26 Features in Hippodrome House
 - 41 **Heritage impact assessment and justification**
 - Introduction
 - Problems of the existing building
 - Inadequate spaces
 - The setting
 - The proposals: exterior
 - The Middle Street frontage
 - The north and east façades of Hippodrome House
 - Ship Street
 - The historical roof
 - 43 The proposals: interior
 - Front-of-house
 - The auditorium
 - New facilities
 - Back-of-house
 - The proposals: Hippodrome House
 - Public realm
 - Hippodrome Lane
 - Conclusion
- 44 **The current configuration**
- 49 Appendix 1: Historic England Listing
- 50 Appendix 2: The Hippodrome architects
- 51 Appendix 3: A warning from history: What has been lost in Brighton
- 53 Appendix 4: Performance History
 - 54 Selected shows
 - 55 They played at the Hippodrome
- 56 Appendix 5: Hippodrome timeline
- 59 Notes
- 60 Image sources
 - Sources

References in the text in [square brackets] are to the corresponding image numbers. Larger and/or higher-resolution copies of all images are available.

Introduction

Purpose of this report

This report has been prepared in support of the proposition that the Hippodrome can and should be fully revitalised as a large-scale (lyric) commercial theatre, in recognition of its illustrious history and unique place in the fabric of Brighton. A project based on this idea has been developed since 2013 by Brighton Hippodrome CIC and is to be submitted for pre-application assessment by Historic England (HE) and Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC).

This is the most accurate and complete presentation of the Hippodrome's 123-year history, correcting or eliminating numerous errors and misunderstandings that have accreted in printed and online accounts.

Methodology

The CIC has worked with the Theatres Trust and Foster Wilson Architects to develop the project and has been helped considerably by access to their expertise and advice.

Surveys and assessment of the building commissioned by the CIC have informed the report's preparation.

The historical information in this report is drawn from desk research by David Fisher. For sources and citations, see [Appendix 5](#).

Constraints

Brighton Hippodrome CIC does not own the Hippodrome. Although access to the theatre was possible while the CIC was preparing for negotiations to acquire the freehold, no site visit has been possible since June 2016. Surveys conducted for the CIC date from early 2016.

It has therefore not been possible to confirm the condition of the interior of the building.

Executive summary

Brighton Hippodrome has suffered from neglect and continuing deterioration since it closed as a bingo hall in 2006. Ownership has changed four times since that date. No owner has come up with a workable scheme for restoration and re-use. One change for transfer of the asset to a property portfolio, one failed for issues concerning licensing and one for lack of funds to carry out the planning consent that was granted. The current ownership dates November 2017.

The Hippodrome is Grade II* listed and has been number one on the Theatres Trust register of Theatres at Risk since 2013. Because of neglect by successive owners and lessees, the building is in urgent need of weatherproofing, especially to protect the parts that have been identified as of the highest significance.

The proposed restoration to the Hippodrome's former condition as a lyric theatre would protect and preserve the historic building for its original purpose as a cultural and community asset and would involve the least compromise of the heritage fabric of any scheme yet proposed.

KEY DATES

- c1784** Earliest probable reference to Hippodrome House.
- 1897 October 16** Real Ice Skating Rink opens.
- 1900 April 21** Ice skating rink closes.
- 1901 August 28** Hippodrome Theatre and Circus opens.
- 1902 August 23** Hippodrome Theatre and Circus closes.
- 1902 December 22** Hippodrome Theatre of Varieties opens.
- 1964 November 22** Hippodrome closes.
- 1966 autumn** brief use as television studio.
- 1967 November** Mecca bingo.
- 2006 August 8** Mecca bingo closes

OWNERSHIP/Operator

Hippodrome House only

1784-? Samuel Paine, Cornelius Paine.

1822 no occupant listed in Baxter's *New Brighton Directory*.

before 1845 George Wigney.

c1850-1896 Charles Catt.

1896 Brighton Real Ice Skating Palace Ltd/ Brighton Ice Rink Syndicate Ltd.

1902-1910 Thomas Barrasford/Barrasford & Smith.

1910-1928 Variety Theatres Controlling Company.

May 1928 General Theatre Corporation (GTC), subsidiary of Gaumont-British Picture Corporation.

1932 GTC merged with Moss Empires but not known under the latter name until 1949.

1964 Association TeleVision (ATV) acquires Stoll Theatres Corporation and Moss Empires.

1966 Associated Communications Corporation (ACC) acquires ATV.; *tenant: World Colour Services.*

January 1967 Freehold registered to Moss Empires.

June 1967 *Lessee: Mecca Bingo (Mecca acquired by Rank Organisation in 1990).*

October 2003 London Merchant Securities (LMS) acquires freehold for £1.6m; LMS becomes Derwent London by 2006.

February 2007 *Lessee: Academy Music Group.*

September 2007 Cheval Properties acquires freehold. Included in a property portfolio called Kuig Property Investments (No 6) marketed by Allied Irish Banks.

April 2015 Academy Music Group acquires the freehold for £2.4m.

November 2017 Hippodrome Investments Ltd, a company registered in Guernsey, acquires the freehold for £2.075m. This company is owned in turn by Hansard Trust Company, registered in Guernsey, which has two shareholders: Millennium Trust Company, registered in Nevis, and Julie Margaret Welsh, a resident of St Vincent and the Grenadines. The project is led by Mr Aized Sheikh.

EVOLUTION OF THE SITE

2: OS map of the Old Town in 1879. Hippodrome House, then 44 (now 52) Middle Street is marked. In the area immediately to the south are Middle Street Cottages and the courtyards on which the skating rink was built.
 3: Such courtyards and cottages were found on both sides of the street, as in Hayllar's Cottages on the west side, demolished in 1935.



4: Pre-skating rink street layout (from Lewis Karlake) overlaid on the current configuration of the Hippodrome site and surrounding area



- 5: The 1898 OS map, showing the newly-built skating rink
- 6: The contemporary OS map of the Old Town with the current Hippodrome site outlined



UNDERSTANDING THE ASSET

In this section we summarise the history of the Hippodrome in its urban context, its origins and the modifications that have been made over time to adapt it to changing uses.

Historic context

Brighton Hippodrome is on the east side of Middle Street in the Regency Ward of Brighton and Hove and the Old Town Conservation Area (OTCA). As its name implies, Middle Street is in the centre of the oldest part of Brighton, one of five streets that run north-south with narrow east-west connecting alleyways ('twittens') between. Until towards the end of the 18th century the town's development had not progressed beyond this area, which was surrounded by agricultural downland and market gardens [7].

7: Yeakell & Gardner's map of the Old Town in 1779

8: Entertainment posters at Pool Valley.

9: The Hippodrome advertised on the way into Brighton at the new Patcham by-pass.

10: The first sight as the train completes the run from London to Brighton in four minutes.



The site of the Hippodrome was on the edge of an open area called The Hempshares, used as a rope walk in late-medieval times. The earliest archival records for Middle Street date from c1714 and relate to the site of the Synagogue (now numbered 67). It can be assumed that properties were built on both sides of the street at an early date; there were 67 houses in 1776, 80 by 1795 and 74 in 1822. Many were rebuilt in the early 19th century or later, consolidating a continuously built-up frontage.

The only buildings in the street certain to have survived from before 1800 are the knapped-flint-and-brick two-storey house at number 60/60A, converted in 2018 for retail, and number 44 (now 52), the latter being known now as Hippodrome House. The synagogue at 66 Middle Street, designed by Thomas Lainson, opened in 1875 and is the other Grade II* listed building in the street.

The only significant new development that has occurred in the street since the Second World War is the rebuilding in 1974 of Middle Street Primary School, replacing the oldest school on the town, and the creation of a 'reproduction' shopping street, Dukes Lane, in 1979, its service lane contiguous with the northern boundary of the Hippodrome site. The theatre came under the same ownership as Dukes Lane in 2003, when the freehold was acquired by London Merchant Securities.

Brighton's entertainment business

The Hippodrome's construction came towards the end of a theatre-building period and shortly before cinemas added to Brighton's powerful entertainment offer for residents and visitors. The growing town's first theatre opened in North Street in 1774, moved to Duke Street in 1790 and was replaced by the Theatre Royal in the newly created New Road in 1807.

The Oxford Music Hall opened in New Road in 1863, rebuilt after a disastrous fire as the Empire Theatre of Varieties in 1892. Frank Matcham designed the Grand/Eden Theatre in North Road in 1887 and the Alhambra Opera House and Music Hall on King's Road in 1888. The West Pier had a theatre from 1893 and the Palace Pier had one soon after it opened in 1901.

Three of the earliest moving picture houses opened in West Street in 1911 and one round the corner near the top of North Street the same year, when the Grand Concert Hall in West Street was also converted into a cinema. The latter was destroyed by fire in 1919 and was rebuilt as Sherry's Dance Hall. The flagship Regent Cinema on the corner opposite the Clock Tower opened in 1921 (with an upstairs dance hall from 1923).¹



Most of these attractions would be passed by anyone arriving at the railway station and walking straight down towards the sea. They were part of the seaside experience and a refuge from the uncertain British weather. The Hippodrome was an exception, being in what was effectively a back street. Nonetheless, publicity [8-10] and word-of-mouth made it one of the most sought-out venues in the town.

52 Middle Street (Hippodrome House)

This comprises two houses, numbered 44 and 44A in street directories of the 1840s-1850s but dating from no later than the 1780s. The street was renumbered in 1882 and 44 became 52.²

The narrow section to the north (on the left of image 11, *right*) is a later extension to give access to flats on the upper floors.

Number 44/52 is the larger house: L-shaped three-storey plus basement with four classical Georgian panel windows on the first floor and a door and three windows on the ground floor of the Middle Street façade. Number 44A/52A is narrower and less tall but still with four Georgian-style first-floor windows and an asymmetrical arrangement of windows and doorways below.

One of the principle landowners in the Old Town in the 18th century was Samuel Paine, whose son Cornelius Paine (1755-1826) opened a school in Middle Street in 1784 in



12: The earliest known photograph relating to the Hippodrome: the view along Boyce's Street in 1870, with the portico of 52 (then 44) in the distance.

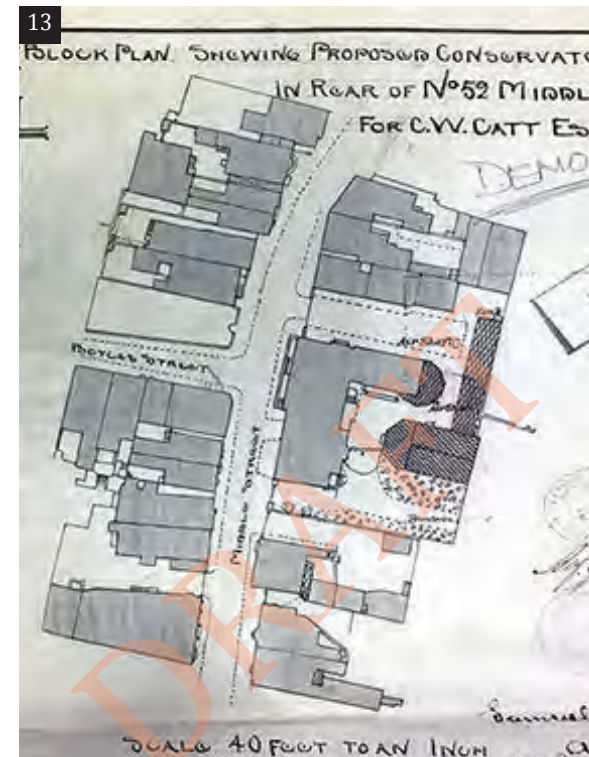
one of his father's properties. It is believed that the contemporary description—a 'new and well-built brick and stone house' with '7 bedrooms, a large schoolroom, 2 parlours, a shop, kitchen, scullery, 2 cellars, a coal vault, ¼ of a draw well and a walled-in yard'—could only correspond to 44 Middle Street.

By the mid 1840s 44 Middle Street was occupied by brewer George Wigney (1789-1847), an eminent Brighton citizen, promoter of public works and brother of Isaac Newton Wigney, the Radical MP, one of two elected for Brighton after the Great Reform Act of 1832. After George Wigney's death his Ship Street Brewery business was taken over in 1850 by Vallance & Catt³ and Charles Catt (1815-1900) took up residence at 44 Middle Street with his wife, four children and eight servants.⁴

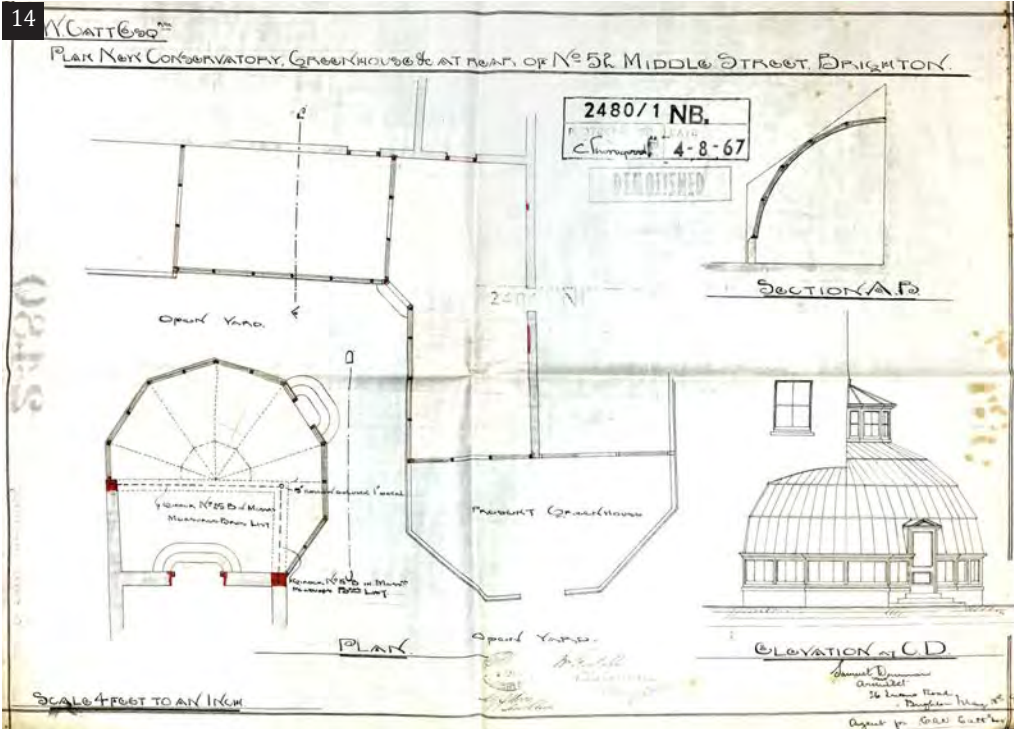
The OS map of 1879 [2] shows the two houses completely surrounded by yards, with glazed buildings on the other side of the yard at the rear of the house with a fountain in between and a second fountain towards the south-east corner of the site. Two air shafts are also marked. A new portico was added in 1884⁵.

In 1887 local architect Samuel Denman designed a polygonal glazed conservatory^[14] for the rear of the building⁶, to complement an existing garden house on the east side of the yard. It survives but is boarded over and in poor condition [51, 84, 85].

When the skating rink was built, 52 Middle Street became the headquarters of the Brighton Ice Skating Club.



13: Samuel Denman's block plan showing the conservatories in the yard to the east of Hippodrome House.



14: Plans of the conservatories behind 52 Middle Street by Samuel Denman (1886).
 15: Ground floor of Hippodrome House.
 16: Entrance to the Palm Court from the theatre.

Thomas Barrasford, who acquired the Hippodrome site in October 1902, gave the building the name Hippodrome House and lived there until his death in February 1910.⁷ By 1910 the ground floor was converted into a lounge or tea room, accessible from the theatre. The double doors with inset leaded glass panels remain. At that time there was a kiosk next to the staircase to the upper floors. The refreshment area opened as the Palm Court on 23 June 1919. The name 'Palm Court' is still painted on a glass pane at the entrance from the theatre. The basement under 52 comprises a kitchen, a wine cellar, food and other stores [22], some brick vaulted, and an antique kitchen range [21]. There is a single vaulted store running south under 52A. The first and second floors were converted into two separate flats from 1928. They are accessed through a narrow two-storey extension on the north side of the building, date unknown, but possibly added when the ground floor opened as a Palm Court for the Hippodrome c1910. The first floor flat comprises an entrance lobby and day room, leading to a hall off which are a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. The staircase between the first and

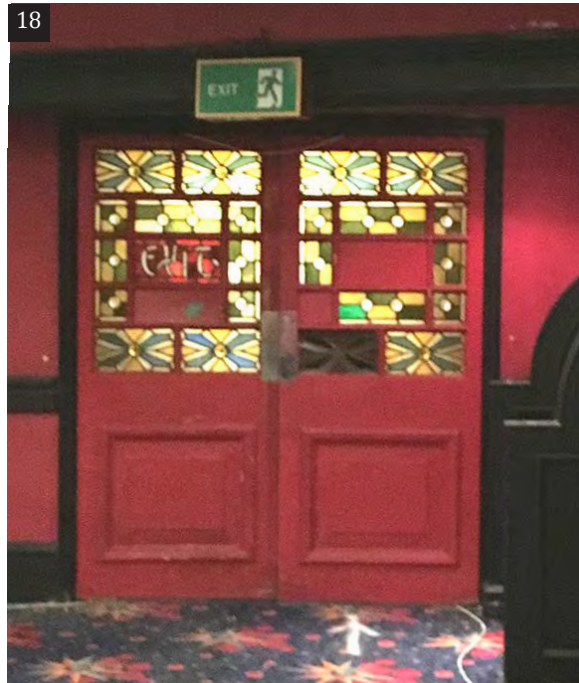


second floors appears to be part of the original Georgian construction [86]. The second floor is laid out as a two-bedroom flat. The second-floor dormer windows, notable in the view along Boyce's Street, were added only in 1992, when alterations were made on the ground, first and second floors.⁸ On the first floor of 52A are simple sash windows. The first-floor Georgian sash windows on the west façade were covered with exterior metal security sheeting in 2014/15. The four smaller windows on the north side are boarded on the inside. The three doors and three windows on the ground-floor frontage of 52A are bricked up.

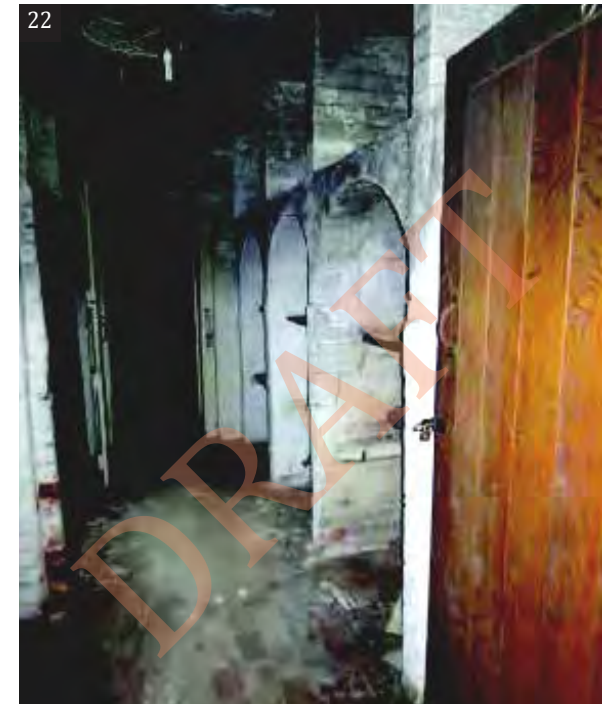




17: The tea room c1910.
18: The tea room doors were still in place in 2016.



19: The kiosk on the ground floor of Hippodrome House c1910.
20: A flint wall in a toilet.
21: A kitchen range remains in the cellar.
22: Storage area in the basement of Hippodrome House,



Real Ice Skating Rink 1896-1900

The land for the new ice skating rink⁹, which became designated as 53-58 Middle Street, was sold in 1896 by Charles Catt to Brighton Ice Rink Syndicate Ltd, managed by Humphrey Ellis Brammall (1870-1931), son of a Liverpool theatre proprietor, Ellis Brammall Jr (1847-1934), who appears to have been the legal owner. The land included Middle Street Cottages, a terrace of five houses in a cul-de-sac.

Plans for a rink by Lewis Karslake of the architectural firm of Mortimer & Karslake were submitted to Brighton Borough Council on 3 September 1896¹⁰ and 1 October 1896¹¹, followed on 3 December by plans for the machinery sheds¹² to the north of 52 Middle Street.

The symmetrical Middle Street elevation was almost exactly as currently seen and as described in the listing, with an entrance at the southern end and an exit at the northern end. Between these behind the façade were cloakrooms, lavatories, a dressing room and bathroom and a manager's room.

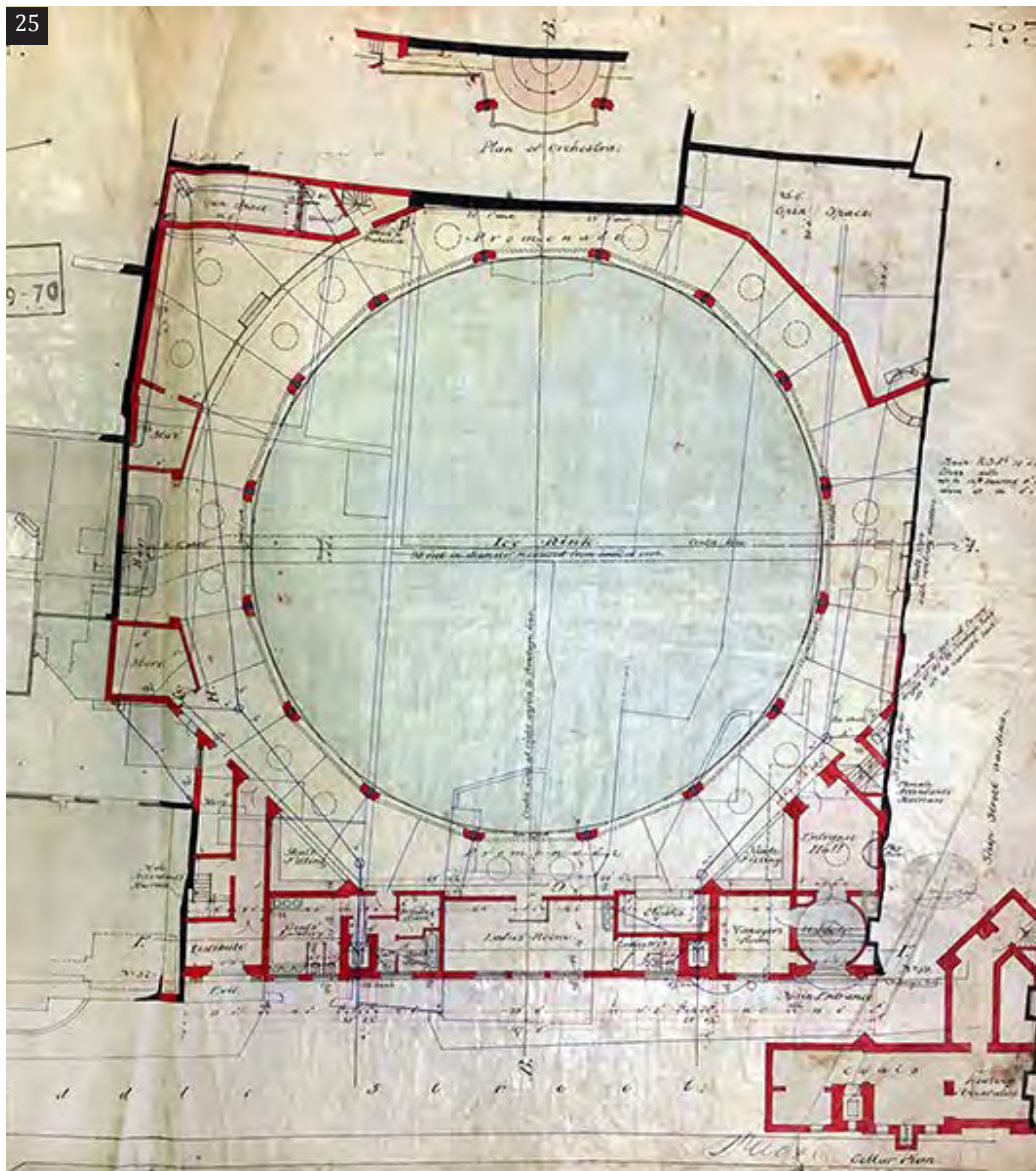
The top section of the slender elements of the towers were probably removed between the wars; the juliet balconies survived until the mid 1960s.

23: Block plan of the skating rink by Lewis Karslake (1896).

24: Block plan of the site, showing the location of machinery sheds and 52 Middle Street with its distinctive polygonal conservatory..

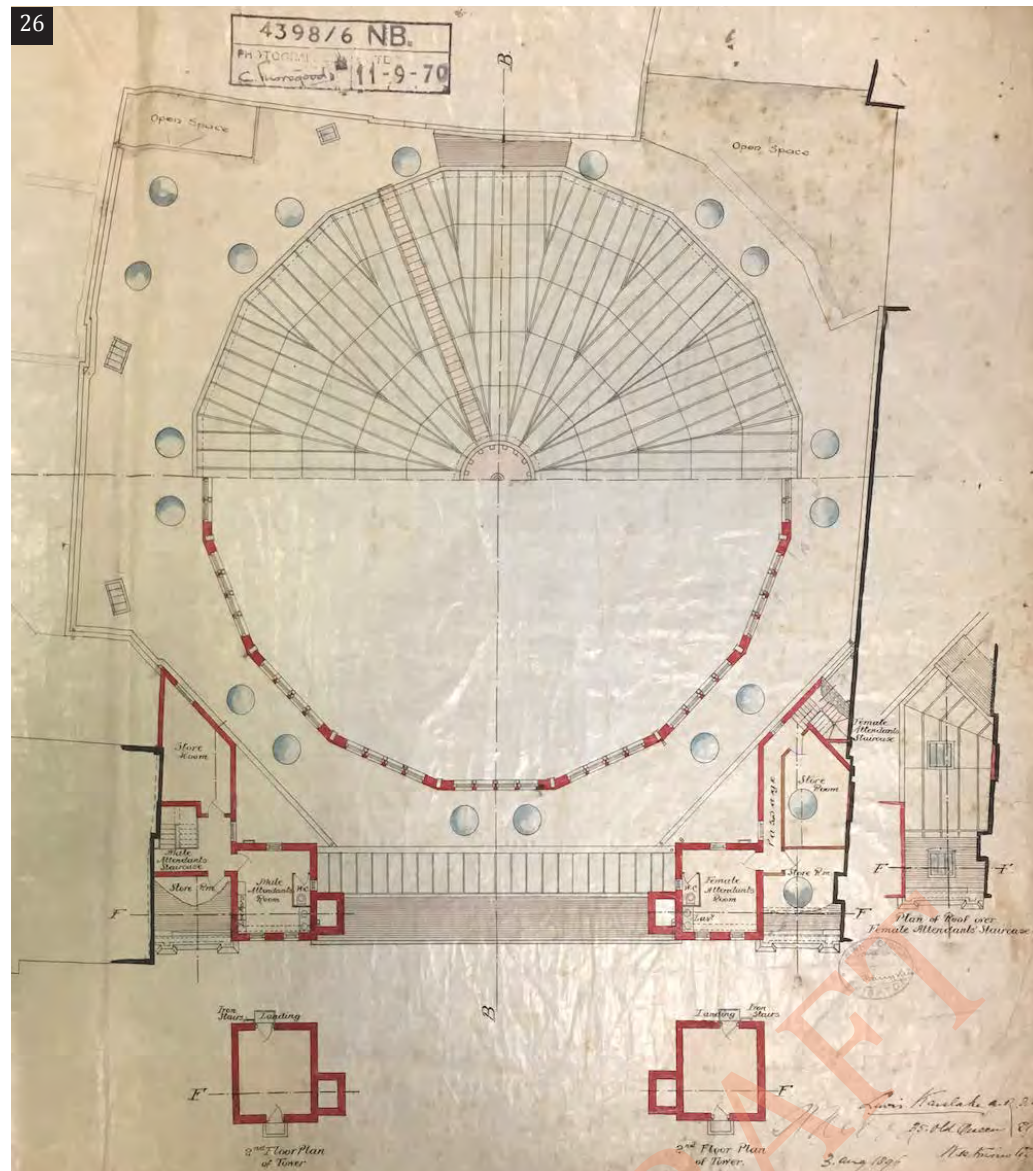


25



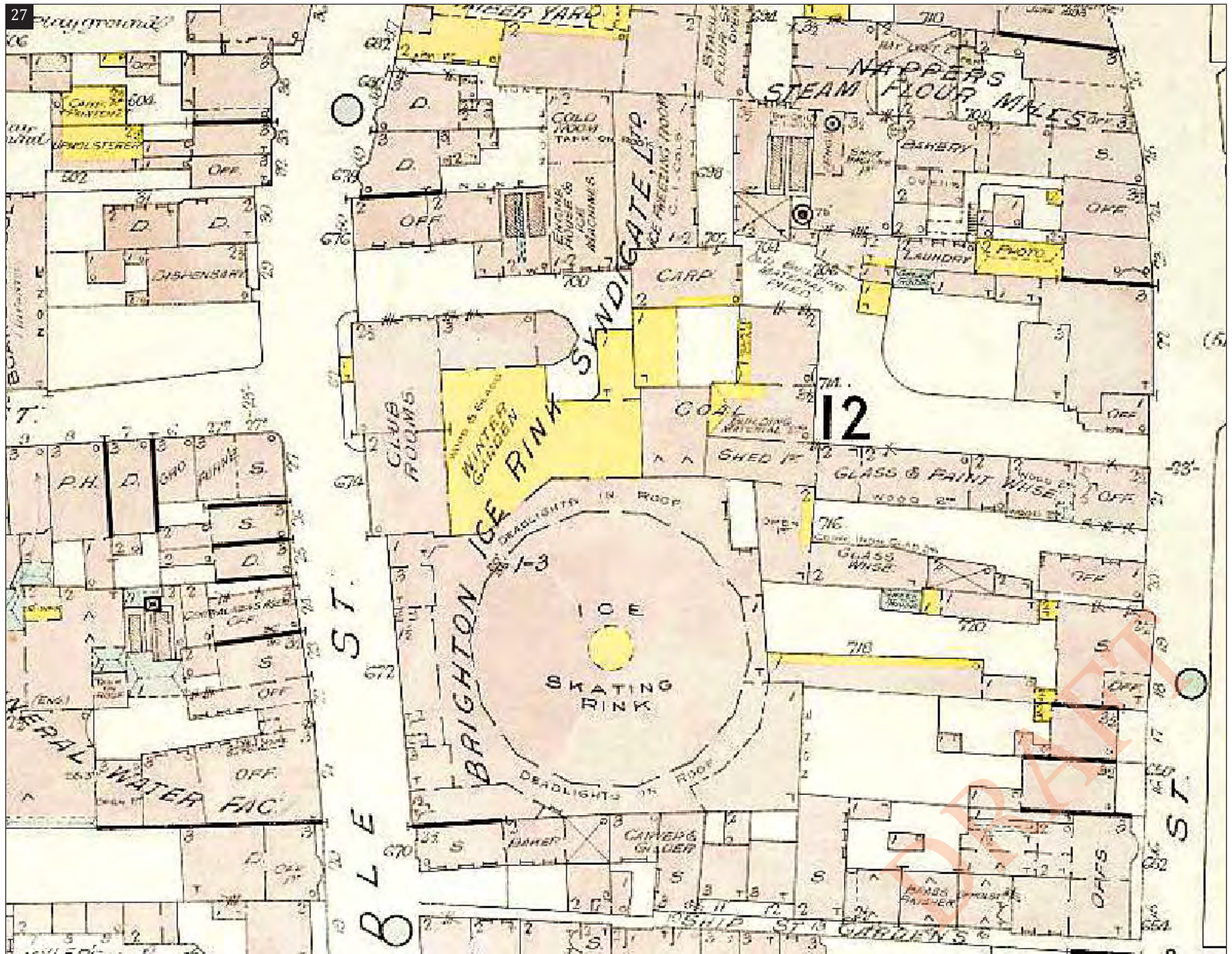
25: Karslake's ground floor plan of the skating rink, showing the positions of the 16 pillars that support the domed roof, with a promenade around the skating area, the tea room, the entrance and exit, offices, ladies room and toilets.

26

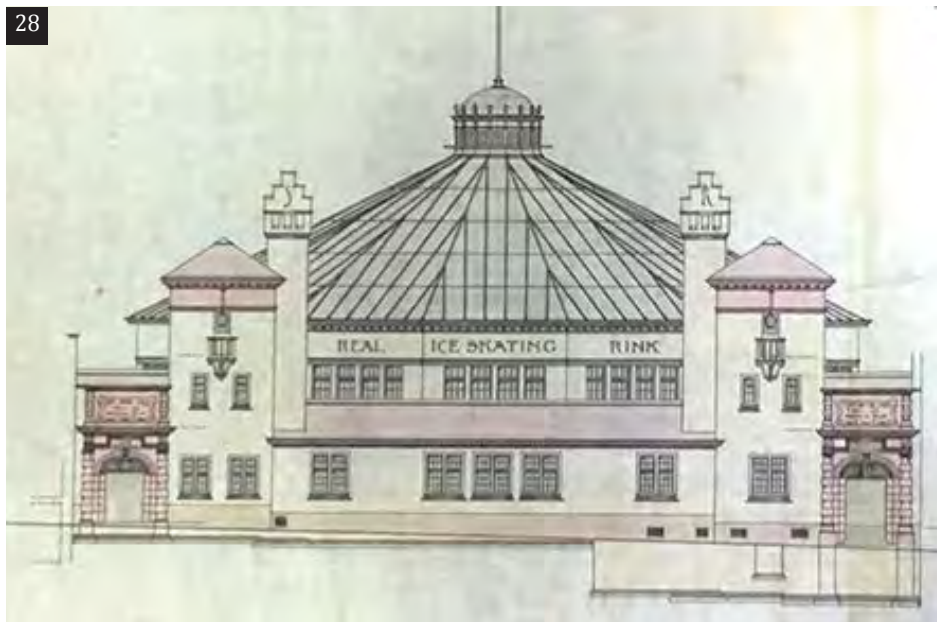


26: The first floor plan, showing the structure of the dome and what appear to be glazing panels in the roof between the towers.

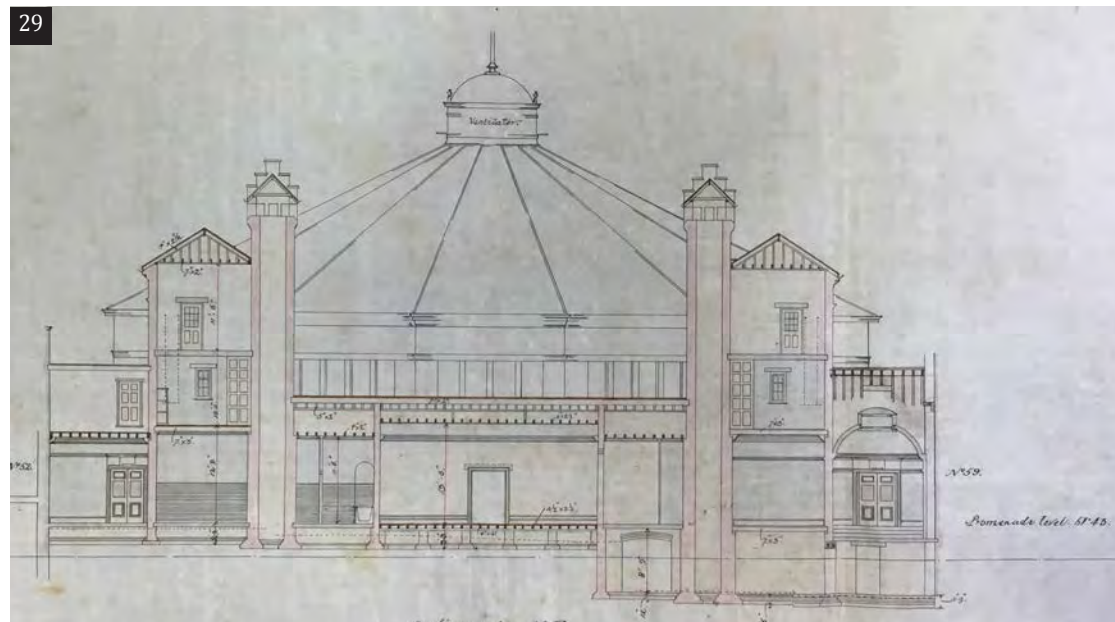
27: This insurance map by Charles E Goad Ltd from 1898 shows the extent of the skating rink site



28



29



In the interior Karslake created a tented glazed roof formed of a ring of 16 steel rakers resting on 16 stanchions and attached to a top centre ring. The skating arena, 90 ft in diameter, occupied the space between the pillars and was surrounded by a promenade with a tea room in the north-east corner and a platform above the eastern side of the rink.

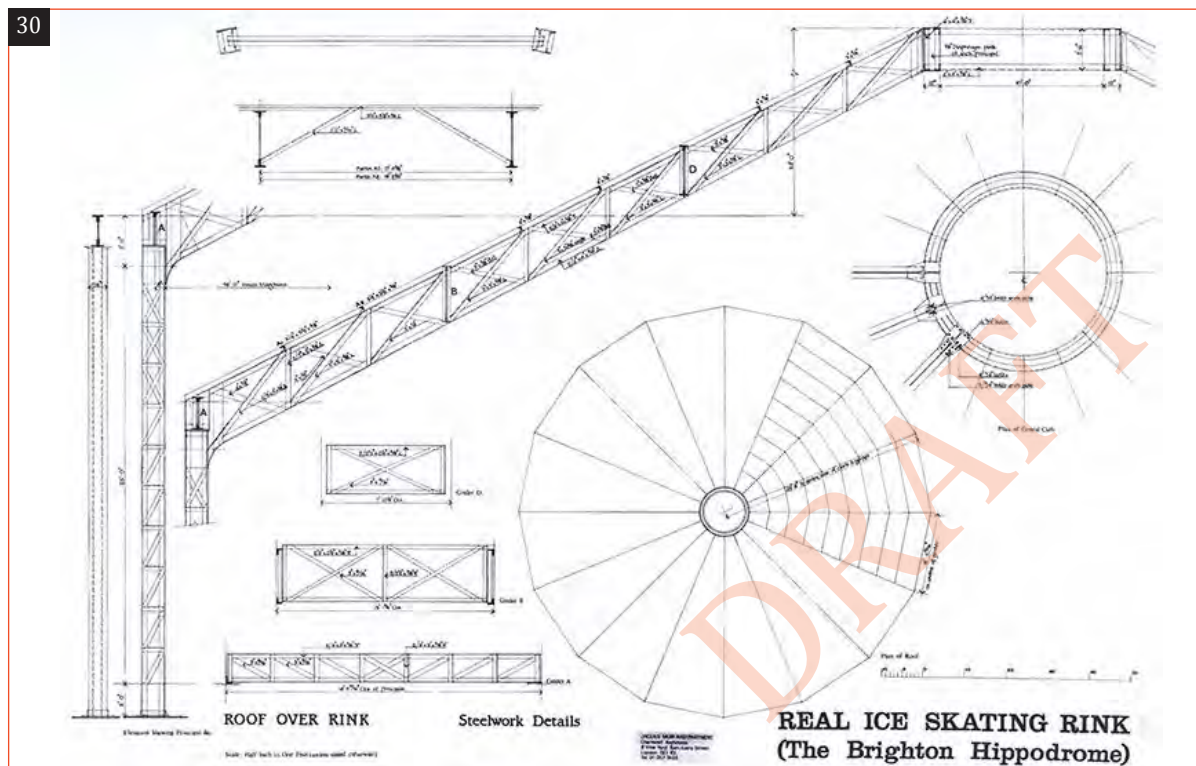
Over 150 gas light burners were installed 'after all arrangements had been made to light the rink by electricity; but on seeing the new burner and studying the question they decided to put the contract of lighting in the hands of the Denayrouze [Light] Syndicate'.¹³

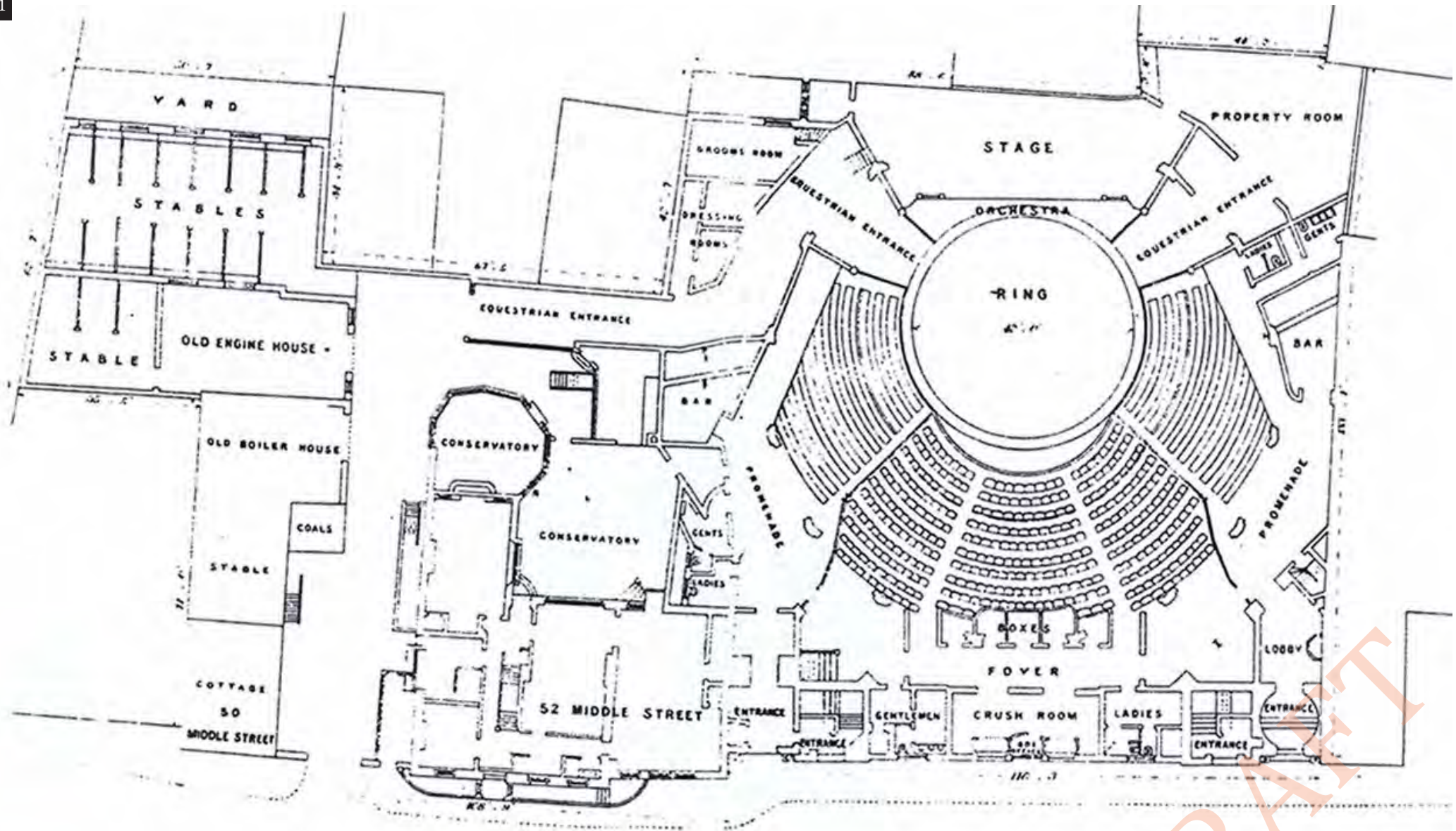
From Karslake's 1896 plans:
28: The west elevation.
 Apart from changes to the ground-floor fenestration to create new doors and removal of the first-floor windows, this is largely unchanged.
29: The north-south section.
30: Copy by Jaques Muir Partners of the structure of the dome.

The Real Ice Skating Rink opened on 16 October 1897 and initially enjoyed some fashionable success.¹⁴ But the business was clearly not financially stable. In June 1899 a notice was published that the Brighton Real Ice Skating Palace Ltd was to be struck off the Companies Register, which happened on 17 November 1899.¹⁵

The skating rink closed on 21 April 1900 'for the summer'¹⁶ but was never to re-open. The contents of the club rooms in 52 Middle Street were auctioned on 5-6 June 1900.¹⁷ The skating rink itself was offered for sale at auction on 25 June 1900 but failed to find a buyer.¹⁸

30





31: Matcham's circus-theatre ground-floor layout shows the extent of the site, including 52 Middle Street, now fully integrated with the auditorium by means of a conservatory, and the cottage at 50 Middle Street, the use of which is not reported.

The front-of-house area is much the same as in Karslake's plan, apart from the creation of a new central entrance and crush room. The seating does not follow the curve of the circus ring as an orchestra pit was in the gap.

On the north side of the site stables were added with an ramped equestrian entrance from the yard into the auditorium.



The Hippodrome circus-theatre 1901-1902

Stuck with an empty building, the Brammalls decided to convert it into a circus and commissioned Frank Matcham, the leading theatre architect of his generation, to carry out the design. Plans for circus conversion were submitted to Brighton Borough Council in January 1901.¹⁹

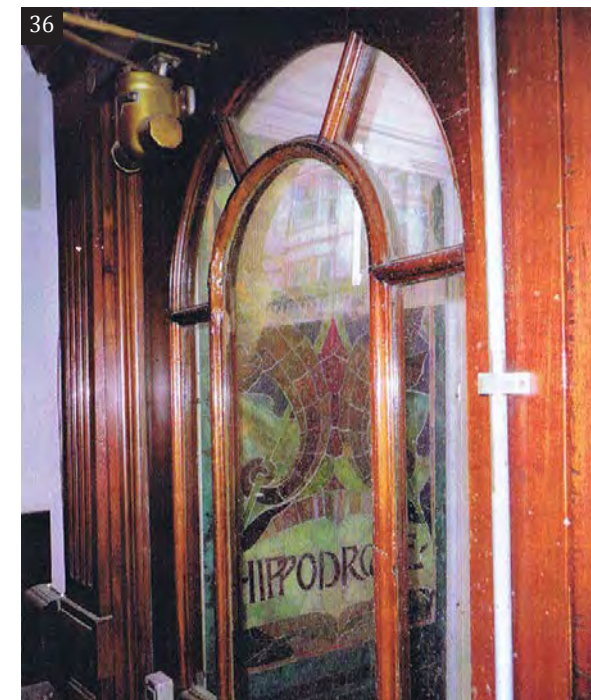
Matcham retained most of the layout of Karslake's building. He adapted the façade and front-of-house spaces to create new entrances, replacing the left and right windows in the group of three in the centre with new stepped entrances and inserting doors in place of the ground-floor windows in the towers. The word HIPPODROME was added in the centre of the façade at first-floor level.

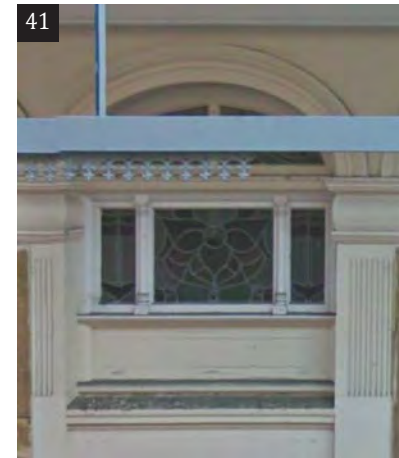
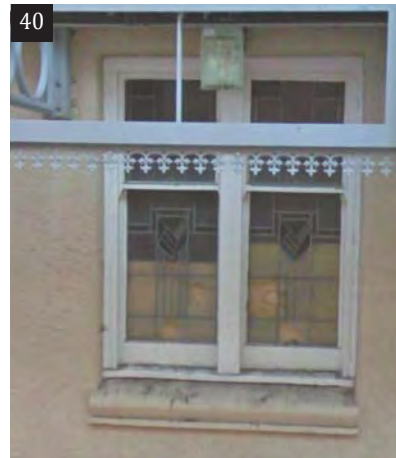
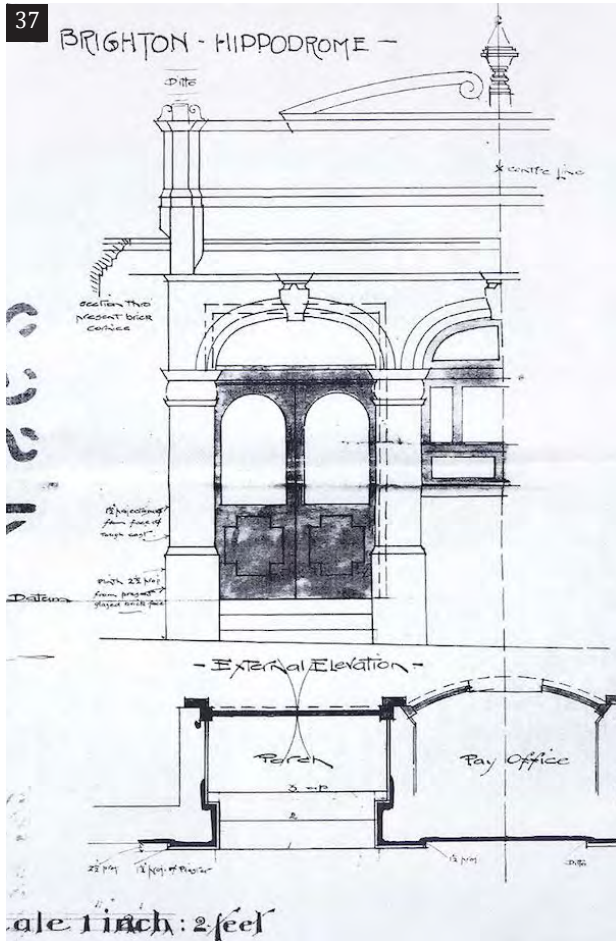
The entrances lead into the narrow lobby [34], which in turn has doors into a wider but equally shallow foyer [35], off which the rear boxes opened.

In the auditorium Matcham installed a circus ring [42, 43] with a 42 ft diameter surrounded by seating in a horseshoe arrangement. At the eastern side of the ring, opposite the entrance, he added a stage with a decorated proscenium arch and an orchestra pit in front. This involved removing two of the roof-bearing pillars.

On either side of the stage were equestrian entrances, approached from outside by an equestrian ramp [32,33].

32, 33: The ramped equestrian entrance.
 34: The ceiling decoration in the lobby.
 35: Doors in the foyer lead into the main auditorium and the rear boxes.
 36: A door from the foyer to the lobby. The seahorse mosaic can be seen in the background.





37: Matcham's design for a doorway and pay office; the upper part of these doors can be seen in [34].

38: The doors and windows at the northern end of the theatre façade.*

39: The doors at the southern end of the façade.*

40: A window near the northern doors.*

41: The central window in the theatre façade.*

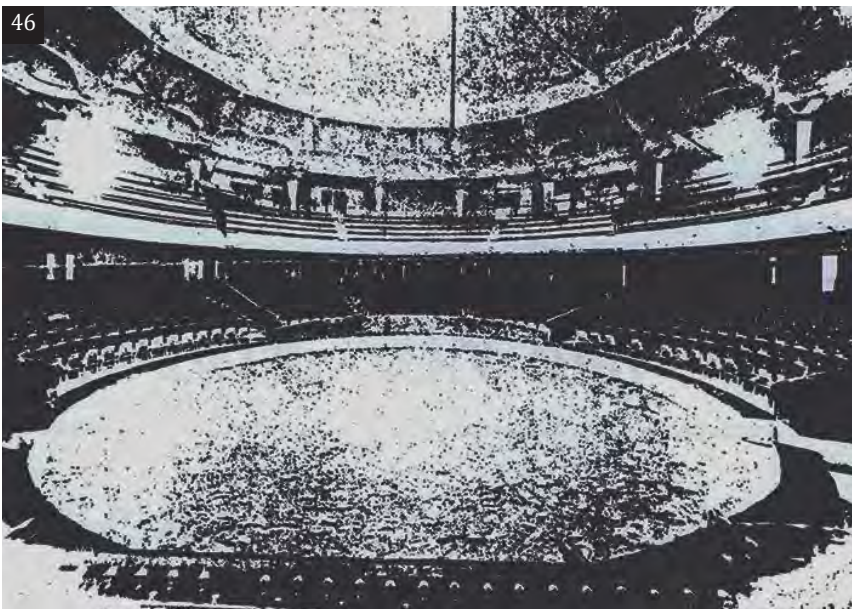
42: The entablature above the southern door.

43: The walls enclosing the inner part of Hippodrome House, seen from the south-east.

44: Looking east across the second-floor flat roof.

*All of these are currently obscured by security panels.





45: The view of the circus ring and stage from the circle in Matcham's conversion. The curtains on either side of the proscenium cover the equestrian entrances. The décor was white throughout.

46: The corresponding view from the stage.

The ceiling was enclosed with fibrous plasterwork. A circle was added at first-floor level, edged with plasterwork.

The whole decor was 'purest white'.²⁰ The work on the conversion was evidently incomplete by the time the circus-theatre opened and it may be wondered whether the paintwork was not finished either.

The entertainment trade paper *The Era* provided a foretaste of the work being done.

'The new Brighton Hippodrome now being erected on the sight [sic] of the Ice Rink, Middle-street, Brighton, is making such rapid progress that it is anticipated it will be ready for opening this season. The original building was used as a rink; it is circular in form and therefore adaptable for a circus entertainment. . . . The building is provided with entrances to the arena on each side, and the orchestra is placed opposite the stage, next the ring, and on a level with the latter, and commands a good direct view of both.

The ground floor is provided with raised stepped seating continuing all round up to the entries of the ring, and the entire portion is divided for the highest priced patrons. Private boxes are ranged along the back with open lounges at the two ends, commanding a perfect view of the ring and stage. The side seats have a splendid view, and at the rear are wide, handsome promenades. Over the ground floor is a fine large balcony built on the cantilever principle, and this is set far enough back and with an easy rake so that the seats command a good and uninterrupted view. A wide promenade is continued around the whole of the balcony.

The principal entrances are from Middle-street. Here beautifully decorated vestibules and lounges are formed, giving access to all parts of the building. New fireproof staircases are provided, together with corridors, &c, giving easy and immediate exits. There are large and handsome saloons and retiring-rooms and cloak-rooms. Many novelties of arrangement and construction have been carried out, and Brighton will soon be in possession of one of the most magnificent places of entertainment in the kingdom.²¹

The circus-theatre opened on 28 August 1901 after two delays amounting to more than a week, ascribed to delays in the electrical installation.²²

The local press, led by the *Brighton Gazette* enthused.

'By eight o'clock the popular parts of the building

were filled, and the audience were admiring a scene of almost Oriental splendour. Although the Hippodrome has not yet undergone the finishing touches that will transform it into a thing of perfect beauty, . . . a sea of faces looked down upon the brilliantly lit ring, at the back of which the great stage with its picturesque purple curtain held out promise of more attractions to come when the entertainment in the ring should be over. The white encrusta work of the large dome and balcony showed finely under the electric light, and the stalls below in their red plush upholstery afforded a pretty contrast. . . . And the Hippodrome is as comfortable as it is brilliant and colossal, with is saying a good deal.²³

The opening was noted across the country, as in this review of the new house in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (29 August 1901).

'Its ornamentation is lavish and florid, but by no means overdone. It is further saved from any reproach of vulgarity by the fact that all is in the purest white. This gives the interior an air that comes close to distinction. The entertainment last night comprised performances in the ring of a kind found in a good class circus, and, on a stage, miscellaneous items of a character familiar to the music-halls. Brighton has not hitherto had an entertainment of precisely this character; Whether it is going to supply a "long-felt want" remains to be seen.'²⁴

The Pall Mall Gazette was right to be cautious. The business was soon in trouble. The musical director left within a month and the venue had to be mortgaged after two months²⁵.

At his examination in the Brighton Bankruptcy Court, Ellis Brammell said his speculation to convert the Hippodrome from ice rink to circus involved expenditure of £35,000, including £15,000 for the alterations—about four times what he had calculated. The report in *The Era* noted that, 'He had kept no books to show how the money had gone.'²⁶

The Hippodrome closed on 23 August 1902. It was offered at the London Property Mart on behalf of the mortgagees on 7 October 1902 [49] but withdrawn at £2,200.²⁷

It was subsequently bought, perhaps as late as early November, reportedly for £23,500, by Thomas Barrasford (1859-1910), a pioneer of twice-nightly variety, who had a rapidly growing 'tour' of music halls in the north of England and Scotland.

47



47: The roofline of Hippodrome House. The dormer windows were added in 1993.

48: The light well behind Hippodrome House (2016).

49: The yard to the east of Hippodrome House with the polygonal conservatory and corrugated iron roof (with roof lights) of the so-called elephant house (2016).

50: Inside the elephant house (2015).

51: The exterior of the polygonal conservatory (2007).

49



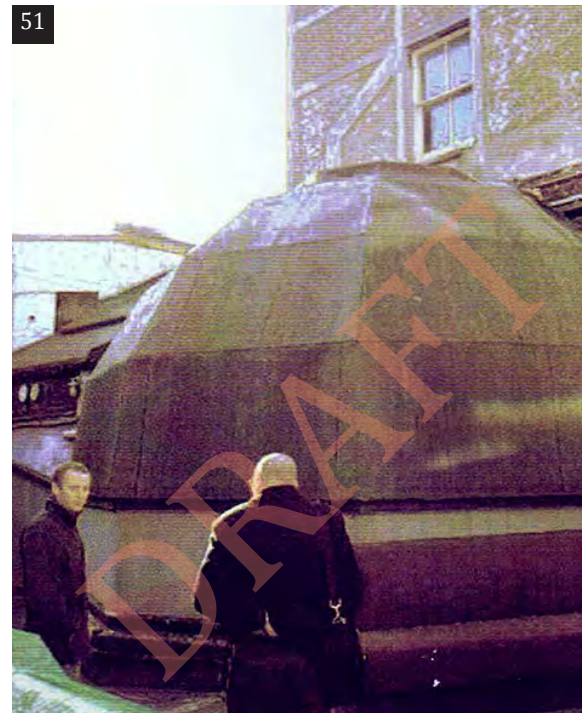
50



48



51



Hippodrome Variety Theatre 1902-1964

It has long been assumed that Matcham carried out the conversion of the circus into a variety theatre. It was, in fact, by another eminent theatre architect, Bertie Crewe. On 22 October 1902 Barrasford brought Crewe, with whom he had worked previously, to inspect the building for the work needed to change its use to variety.

Crewe took out the circus ring and moved the orchestra pit to its traditional position in front of and below an extended apron in front of the stage. The ground floor was re-seated with fauteuils and tip-up seats to face the stage. Single-tier boxes were inserted on either side of the stage to replace the equestrian entrances to the auditorium. The so-called 'elephant house' and equestrian entrance ramp were retained, the latter being probably the only one left in the country. A planning application was submitted on 18 December 1902.²⁸

The Hippodrome Theatre of Varieties opened on 22 December 1902 and began to present some famous acts among the regular music-hall fare. As well as the home-grown acts, performers came from America, Australia and continental Europe. (See Appendix 4: Performance history.)

The carpets, curtains and draperies were refurbished by A R Dean & Sons of Birmingham in 1907: upwards of 2,000

yards of Wilton carpets, tableaux curtains, draperies, etc.²⁹

By mid 1909, Barrasford Ltd was collaborating with the London Theatres of Varieties Ltd and had a tour of 35 variety theatres throughout the country.³⁰

Barrasford died in Hippodrome House on 1 February 1910. His funeral five days later was attended by many luminaries of the international theatre world. The photograph of the removal of the coffin from Hippodrome House was issued as a postcard.

The Hippodrome was sold later that year to the Variety Theatre Controlling Company Ltd (VTCC), a new company formed specifically to acquire the Barrasford halls by Walter de Frece (1870-1935) and Alfred Butt (1878-1962).³¹

'Some interesting facts', a self-promoting article, appeared in the theatre programme for 7 November 1910 and may have been a regular feature at this time. The Barrascope was the name given to the film projection equipment. A selection of short films, accompanied by the pit orchestra was a regular feature of the variety programme.

Some interesting facts

The present seating arrangement provides accommodation for over 3,000 people. This does not represent the holding capacity of the house, as the greatest number of people to witness one performance has been over 4,500.

In view of the alterations made by the present management, the Middle Street hall is generally recognised as one of the finest houses of its kind in the country. A few figures given in support of this statement may prove interesting. The depth of the stage to the footlights is 30 feet, and to the tableau curtain 20 feet. Its width from proscenium to proscenium is 39 feet, and there are eight dressing rooms for the use of artistes.

The total number of lamps in the theatre number 1,800, and no less than 12 miles of wire is used. The limelight gallery contains five arcs, each of 500 candle power, and the searchlight from the Barrascope is 2,000 candle power. There are two supplies of 230 volts for the incandescent lamps, and one of 115 volts for the arcs and the Barrascope. Steam radiators are fed by a high pressure boiler, and the sliding roof is the only one of its kind on the south coast. The proprietors have agents throughout the world for the purpose of discovering new talent.

52: Details of the sale at auction of the Brighton Hippodrome in October 1902.

52

BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEES.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale with Plan OF THE HIGHLY IMPORTANT

FREEHOLD PROPERTY,

KNOWN AS

The Brighton Hippodrome

MIDDLE STREET,

BRIGHTON,

WHICH WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION, IN ONE LOT, BY MESSRS.

WILKINSON, SON and WELCH,

AT

THE MART, TOKENHOUSE YARD,

LONDON, E.C., on

TUESDAY, OCT. 7, 1902,

At TWO o'clock.

May be Viewed by Orders to be obtained of the Auctioneers, and Particulars and Conditions of Sale had of Messrs. J. R. NYE and TRSACHER, the Solicitors for the Vendor, 85, Ship Street, Brighton; of Messrs. NYE, MORETON and CLOWES, Solicitors, 11, Bouverie Lane, Temple, London, E.C.; and of Messrs. WILKINSON, SON & WELCH, Auctioneers, 170, North Street, Brighton, and 20a, Western Road, Hove.

The Premises have recently been reconstructed from the designs of Mr. Frank Matcham, the Architect of the London Hippodrome. The Main Building is capable of holding about 2,000 persons and it is undoubtedly

One of the Most Handsome Palaces of Amusement IN THE KINGDOM.

It includes the Circular Auditorium, 89 feet in diameter, with circle round the same, Five Bars and Refreshment Rooms, Spacious Stage, Property and Dressing Rooms, Lounges and Magnificent Promenades on each floor, Box Offices, Crush Room and Lobby Foyer, 42 feet 6 inches by 9 feet, Five Private Boxes, Manager's Room and Office, Ladies' Retiring Rooms, W.C.'s, and Lavatories.

There are Six Entrances.

The Grand Circle, divided into three sections. The Balcony and Amphitheatre, which is approached by two stone staircases, is of great size and is fitted with continuous seats suitably upholstered. The Ring is 42 feet in diameter, is surrounded by the usual enclosure which is upholstered in scarlet velvet, and is admirably seen from all parts of the building. There are Two Equestrian Entrances. The Proscenium is about 30 feet wide, in front of which is the Orchestra. The Stage is 60 feet by 21 feet and beneath it is a very extensive area. Seven Dressing Rooms, besides Rooms for Grooms, &c.

The whole Building is simply, and at the same time, most effectively decorated in ivory white, and the polished Mahogany and other elaborate fittings, are of the most elegant and substantial character.

The Building is thoroughly well Ventilated by means of a Sliding Roof, and in winter it is heated by Steam, there being a large number of well placed radiators throughout, the boiler houses and furnaces are approached from the outside.

The Lighting is by Electricity throughout, and there are several Hydrants.

AT A CONVENIENT DISTANCE ACROSS THE YARD ARE

The Stables, divided into 14 Stalls.

Adjoining is another somewhat similar Building, and a Room suitable for Machinery.

THERE IS ALSO THE

Commodious Double-Fronted Residence,

No. 52, MIDDLE STREET,

Containing on the Second Floor, Five Bedrooms, Box Room, Fitted Bath Room, W.C.

On the First Floor—Seven Bedrooms; Dressing Room, Bath Room, fitted with a handsome bath arranged for shower, sitz, douche, wave, etc.; Housemaid's Pantry, Lavatories, W.C.'s.

On the Ground Floor—Vestibule, Entrance Hall, Lavatory, W.C. with door leading to the Hippodrome, Handsome Drawing Room overlooking a Spacious Conservatory 30 feet square. Dining Room with Conservatory, 21 feet by 17 feet.

In the Basement are most complete Domestic Offices, comprising large Kitchen with dinner lift, Scullery, China Closet, Tradesmen's Entrance, Coal Cellar, Housekeeper's Room and Plate Room.

THIS HOUSE IS ADMIRABLY ADAPTED FOR

BUSINESS OFFICES, RESIDENTIAL FLATS, OR CLUB HOUSE.

NOTE—THERE IS ALSO

A SMALL COTTAGE

No. 50, MIDDLE STREET,

Containing Four Rooms, Attic, Scullery, Yard and W.C. in rear; and adjoining is A STABLE containing Three Stalls, Harness Room, and Loft over; also Large Open Yard.

The Premises are licensed for the Performance of Stage Plays, and the Property affords an unrivalled opportunity of securing a very Extensive Site suitable, besides its present use, for a Theatre or other place of Entertainment; Church, Chapel, or Institution requiring an extensive area.

Possession will be given on Completion of Purchase.

Modifications 1915-1916

More substantial changes were made in 1915: plans by Joseph Emblin Walker (1841-1932) were submitted to the council on 13 and 29 July³². Walker qualified as an architect in the 1860s; he also worked as an engineer and spent a period in the 1880s as clerk of works with theatre architect C J Phipps (who had rebuilt the Theatre Royal, Brighton in 1866). His later practice involved renovation of several theatres.

New double-deck boxes replaced the previous single-height boxes and in October 1916 the auditorium was re-seated with three aisles rather than two and the stage-house was re-organised. All the work was completed without closing the theatre for a single performance. As part of the renovations, land at the rear of 18-19 Ship Street was acquired in December 1915 to extend the stage-house.

The Building News (8 November 1916) published an extensive detailed account of the work done by J Emblin Walker, reproduced overleaf in full, which also usefully described some of the previous structure.

THE BRIGHTON HIPPODROME.

The new hippodrome at Brighton is nearing completion. It was originally a real-ice skating rink, afterwards a circus—hence its title 'The Hippodrome'. The late Mr Thomas Barrasford transformed it into the present variety house, by erecting a stage across one end of the ring.

The peculiar construction of the roof, which is a concentric ring with sixteen steel rakers sloping from a top centre and held in place by an outer ring, standing upon steel stanchions bedded into the enclosure walls, made it impossible to erect a proper stage with a space high enough to carry a grid for the scenery to fly from, as the steel rakers

ran over the top of the stage just above the proscenium opening 25 ft above the level of the stage.

For some years past the performances had to be carried on by rolling up the scenery, and other out-of-date methods.

The present owners, the Variety Theatre Controlling Company, have for some time past contemplated rebuilding this stage because of the rapid evolution of Revues, which carry such extensive scenery that the stage could not accommodate it.

The chief difficulties were the steel rakers and tie rings above mentioned which supported the whole of the roof of 100 ft span, which it was thought could not be removed with safety to the building.

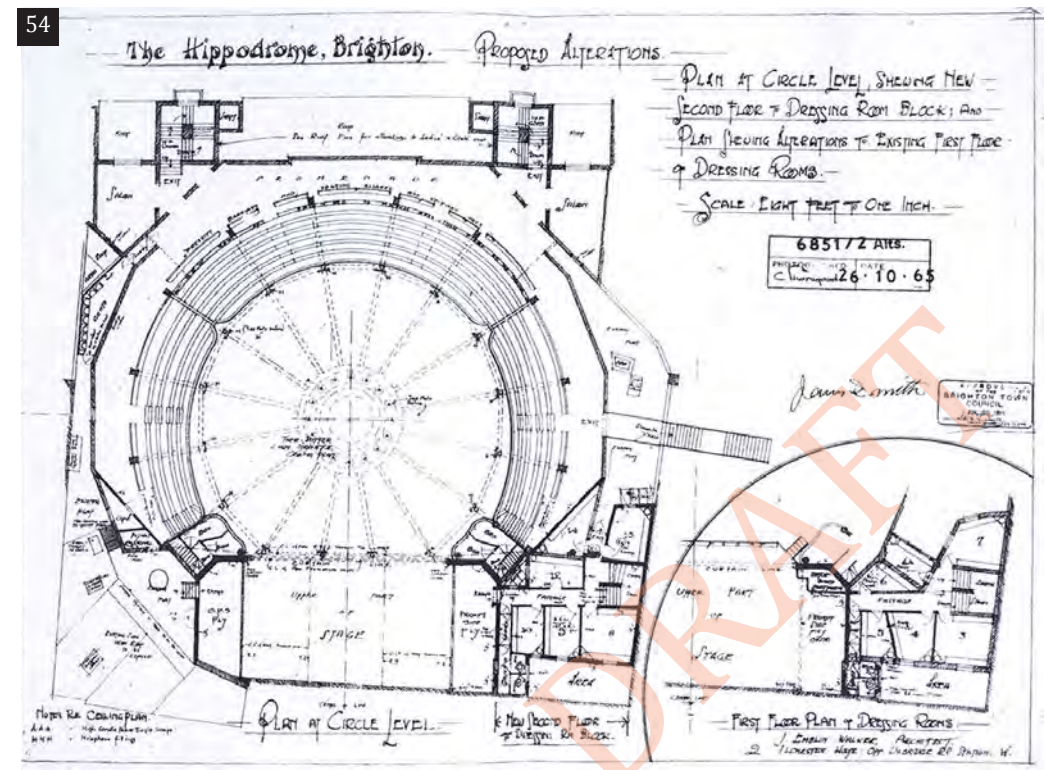
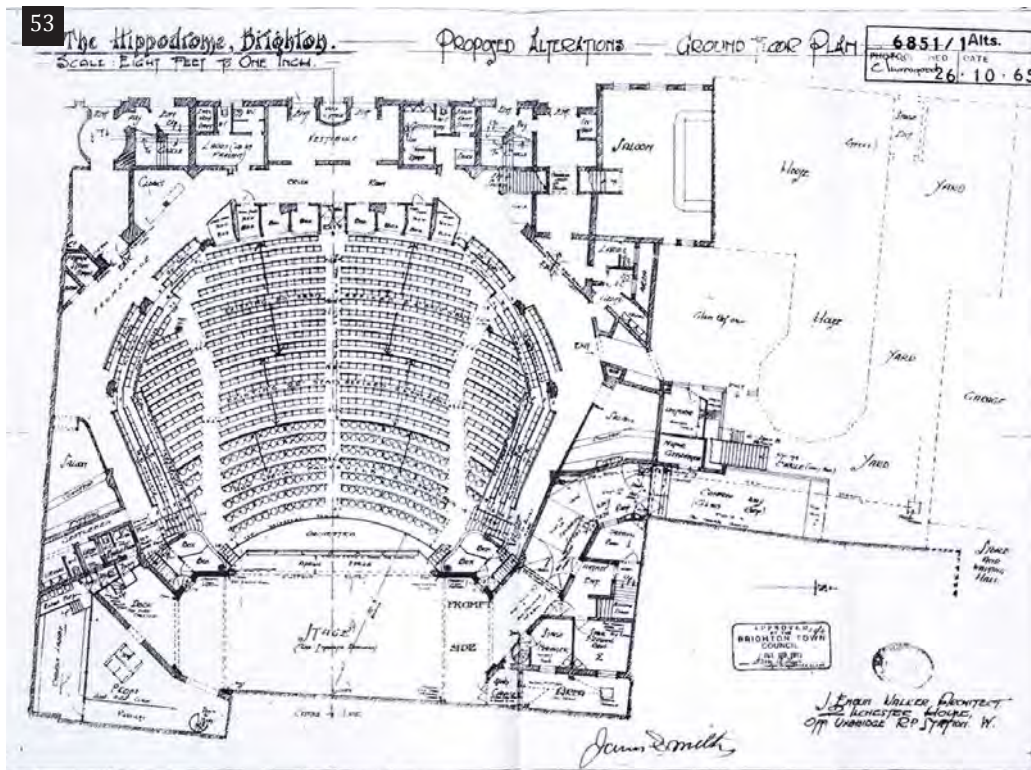
Eventually a scheme was propounded by Mr J Emblin-Walker, a London architect.

who has had great experience in theatre alterations and building, and whose schemes are constantly before the LCC in connection with well-known London theatres. This scheme has not only been successfully carried out, but has been executed without closing the theatre for one single moment, the two performances each night being carried on without the slightest interruption.

What in reality has been accomplished has been the construction of an entirely new stage building right round and over the old one, and the removal of the mass of steel work supports to the large roof and the girders carrying them, together with the old proscenium and enclosure walls, thus giving an added depth of 20 ft and an extended width of 10 ft each side, with a

height of 50 ft from the new stage to the new grid.

In the first place a new proscenium wall had to be built right over the heads of the members of the orchestra, with a mere slung scaffold from the roof rakers. Large brick piers had to be built of a thickness of 5 ft at the base, all in cement, right up the sides of the proscenium opening, which is 39 ft wide, through the existing stage boxes, up to 3 ft above the proscenium opening. These piers are 2 ft thick, and on these were bedded large stone templates to receive a large steel springer of some 21 tons, and from these springers a 5-ring brick arch was turned on a wood centring of a span of 48 ft, with a rise of 16 ft in the centre. This arch was reinforced with steel tie-rods with large steel plates over the



crown of the arch, which picked up the steel channels which act as ties to the springers and so converted the arch into a combined brick and steel truss. This method was adopted because it was impossible to hoist up a large girder in between the performances and for want of space.

The new 14-in proscenium wall was then built upon this arch to a height of 70 ft from the base right through the existing sloping dome roof. This demanded no little skill in keeping the rain from deluging the orchestra, and there were some severe storms during the work, of the force for which Brighton is noted. After this wall was finished the tympanum was bricked in solid, picking up the rakers, which had later to be cut away.

While this was in progress the new back

and side walls were growing apace. The back wall is some 20 ft behind the old wall, and is carried up to the same height as the proscenium wall. The side wall had to be built up through old dressing-room floors, ceilings, and roof, and some parts carried upon girders on stanchion supports. Large portions of the existing walls had to be removed and various girder cut, and other obstacles overcome, and due provision made for the electric wiring, the main switchboard, and for fire and water mains and heating pipes.

This being accomplished, the next item was the construction of the grid and roof. To carry this, four large plate girders, one over 50 ft. in length had to be fixed right over the old corrugated iron roof of the existing stage, the girders being

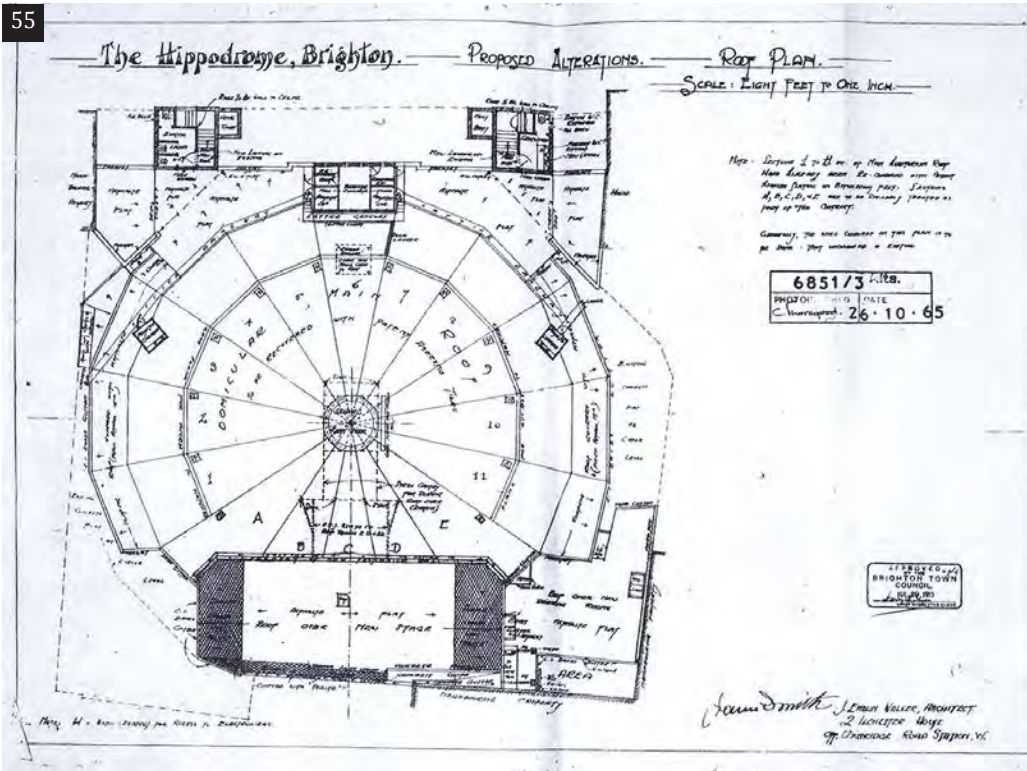
approximately 2 tons, 2¼ tons, 4½ tons, and 7¼ tons respectively. The grid timbering is 4 by 9 and 3 by 9 throughout, with a 2 by 3 slat floor all over, and is capable of carrying some 86 tons of scenic effects. The wooden flats are covered with a thin section of vulcanite roofing covered with ½in. of BB asphalte, the combination of these two specialities being ideal for the particular work involved.

The asphalte employed is a speciality of Messrs Vulcanite Ltd, containing a very large percentage of bitumen, and of a flexible nature, and at the same time a hard wearing asphalte surface is obtained, and as there is a thin section of vulcanite roofing or the boarding, and the asphalte is in intimate contact with the vulcanite roofing, an absolutely watertight roof

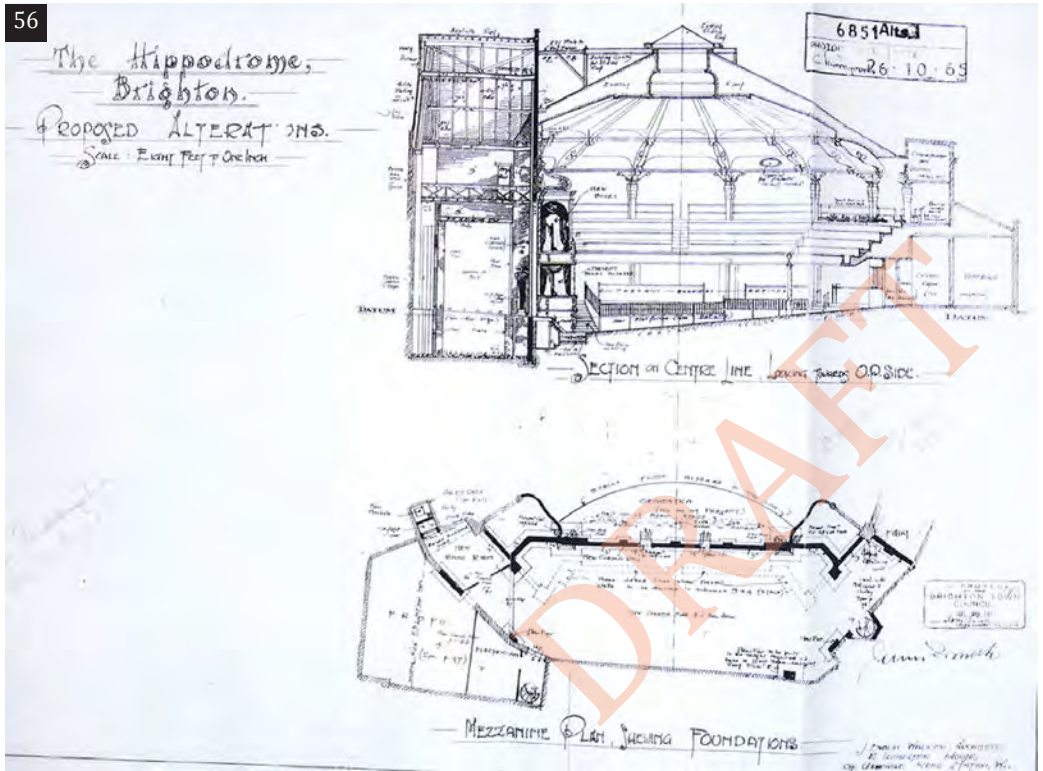
covering is secured. The sloping sides are Poilite slates, laid on 1-in boarding on felt.

This being done, the next item was the removal of the old roof and grid and the temporary transference of the scenery to the new grid. Then followed the removal of the old proscenium wall and the mass of steelwork over the old stage, including the steel rakers, tie rings, and proscenium girders. This was accomplished by burning them off close to the new proscenium wall by the oxy-acetylene process. Before this could be done, an elaborate system of tying up the rakers had to be embarked upon between the roof and the fibrous plastic ceiling to take the thrust of the steel rakers in lieu of the steel ring, which also had to be removed to get a clear passage for the scenery to fly. *continued*

55



56



The plans on the preceding pages are by J Emblin Walker (1915).

From left to right:

53: Ground floor plan

54: Circle plan

55: Roof plan

56: Section and stage plan

THE BUILDING NEWS: No. 3227.

8 November 1916

continued

After this the flies had to be tackled. As these old flies had all the lines of the scenery of a large London revue, together with the stock scenery and electric battens, it was quite evident that the new flies would have to be erected and finished, with all the cleats and lines transferred to them ready for use, between the performances. This was successfully accomplished.

Then followed the removal of all the old enclosure walls with all their attendant dust and rubbish and cartage; this was done with a minimum of discomfort.

The next trouble was the removal of the old stage and the laying down an entirely new stage with traps, bridges, cuts and all supports; after which came the removal of the apron and orchestra and the extension of the auditorium floor, which will enable three rows of additional fauteuils to be put in. All this was accomplished between the Saturday and Monday performances.

During the progress of the work the old stage boxes were scrapped and rebuilt at a lower level, and two new boxes were erected on each side, on top, with large Moorish domes in fibrous plaster. An entirely new plaster panel front, with heavy enrichments, covers the new proscenium wall, and two large shells were worked and modelled in situ at each corner.

A new block of dressing-rooms, sixteen in number, has been built with washbasins, with hot and cold water supply to each, and all the rooms heated with hot-water radiators. Ample lavatory accommodation has been provided on each floor. A large room for the chorus ladies has also been built, with due lavatory accommodation.

A new stage entrance has been put in. all in Pudlo cement concrete. The large mezzanine floor has been excavated to a much lower level, the whole surface being in cement concrete, intermixed with Pudlo. A large sump has been sunk and fitted with pumps to provide for any aquatic shows. A room has been provided for the band, and electricians' stores and workshops installed. A large store for surplus properties has been provided in this mezzanine with traps in the property room for access.

Spiral staircases are provided at each side of the stage to the mezzanine. A dock for scenery has also been provided at one side of the stage.

The auditorium has been transformed beyond recognition, the floor being reconstructed upon what may be termed a saucer shape, thus allowing the seats at the side to obtain an uninterrupted view of the stage. New seating, carpets, pelmets, and tabs are being installed. The whole of the auditorium has been re-decorated throughout with Matone, a beautiful flat; paint with a velvet-like surface. The colour scheme is a deep cream and gold, with a dun background, the relief being in pastel blue, which has a charming appearance. The ceiling is a masterpiece of fibrous plaster work of 80 ft diameter, the enrichments being exceptionally heavy and brilliant, etched up by the application of Matone stencils, having panels of oil paintings of a soft hazy horizon views, giving a most restful feeling to the eye. The decorative scheme is Italian in character, while Moorish domes and caskets surmount the boxes by way of contrast.

The theatre is heated throughout by a new system of hot water radiators, all being controlled from a beautifully fitted boiler-

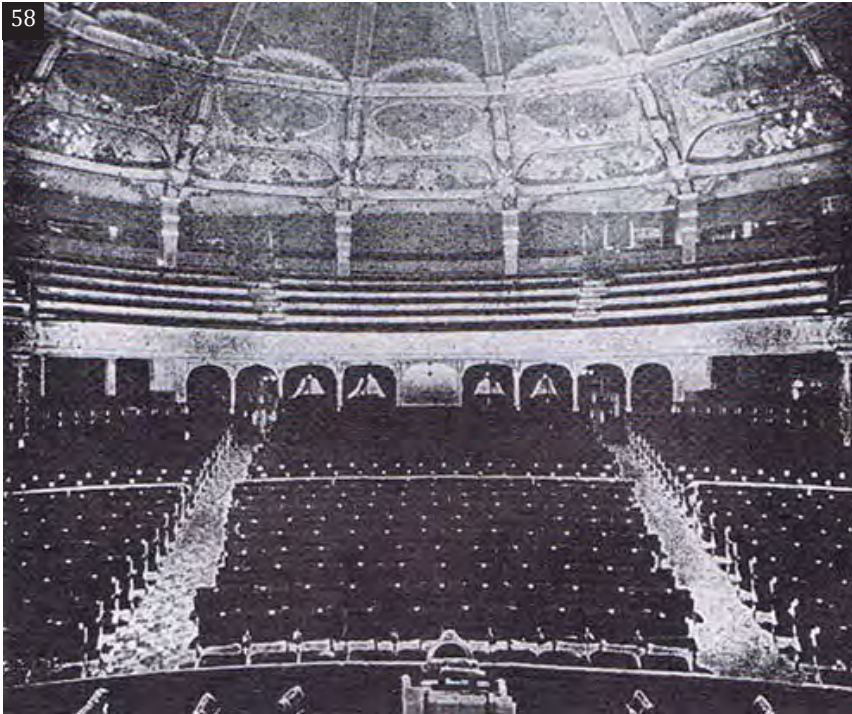
house, the gravity system being accelerated by electric pumps, which, together with the sliding roof, makes the control of the house perfect in all atmospheres.

The whole of the work has been carried out under the supervision of Mr Charles Hyde, who has had great experience in theatrical alterations, and adds greatly to his reputation. When finished the theatre will be equipped with a fireproof curtain of the latest pattern. The stalls floor will be entirely re-seated and upholstered throughout. The theatre has also been entirely rewired in steel tubes, and a new switchboard and electrical apparatus have been installed on up-to-date principles.

A bioscope box has been erected on the roof at the back of the circle, four projector cabins have been provided for stage lighting effects, and the whole of the dome roof recovered. Four new boxes have been added at the back of the stalls floor. The gangways have been replanned for easy exit; additional fire hydrants, etc., have been installed. Altogether the scheme has worked out most perfectly, and is probably the prelude to many more theatre alterations being carried out without closing. The architect is Mr J Emblin-Walker, of 2 Ilchester House, Uxbridge Road Station, Shepherd's Bush W, who is to be congratulated upon the complete success of his design. The builder is Mr John Sinnott, Plough Road, Battersea. The electrical work is by Messrs Thomas Digby and Co, London. The Matone decoration was supplied by Messrs Lewis Berger and Sons Limited of Homerton. The upholstering and new seating and carpets are by Messrs Beck and Windibank Ltd. The roofing by Messrs Vulcanite Ltd, 118 Cannon Street, EC, and the "Poilite" slates by Bell's United Asbestos Co. Ltd, Southwark Street, London SE.



57: The auditorium from the rear of the circle (1902)



58: The auditorium from the stage (1902)



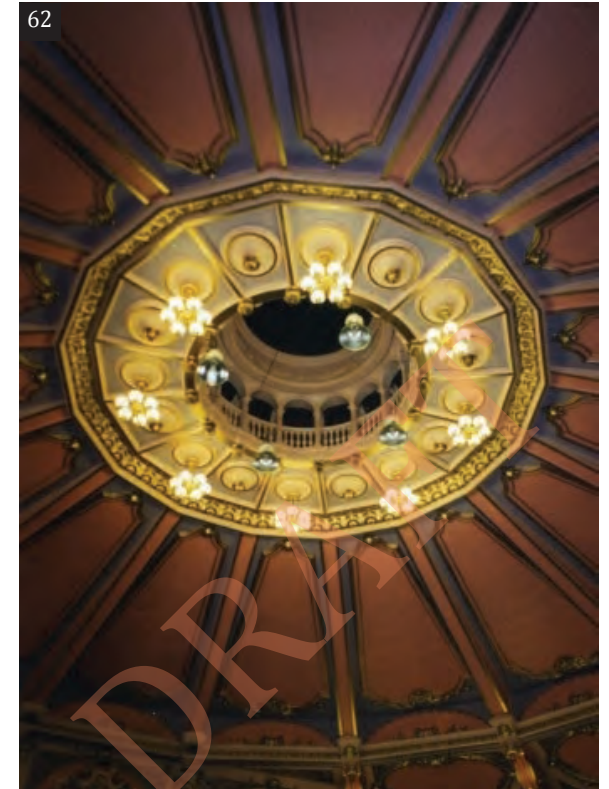
59: Detail of the balcony front (1987)



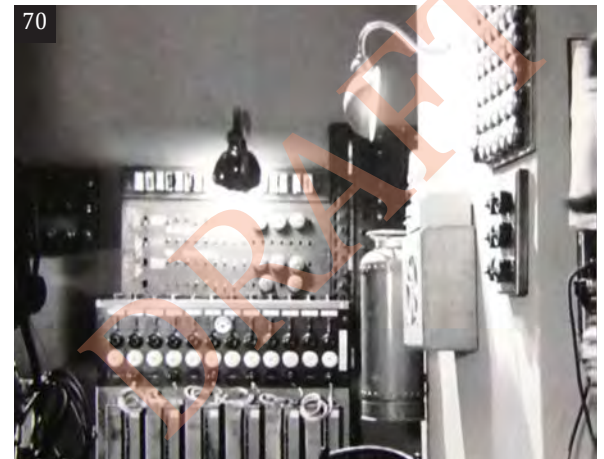
60: Detail of the balcony front (1987)



61: Boxes at stage left (1988)



62: Detail of the ceiling with galleried lantern (1996)



In 1964 the Hippodrome served as a location for a feature film, *Be My Guest*. This unique footage provides valuable visual evidence of the Hippodrome as a variety theatre, unusually including the backstage areas, seen here (65, 67, 70). The spiral staircase just visible in the background (67) joined the ground floor to the basement; the sign (65) points the way to the chorus dressing rooms. The view from the stage (63) shows the lighting rigs attached to the balcony fronts and the windows to the projection room above the circle. The rear boxes (68) and the orchestra pit (69).



71: Bernard Delfont in the Hippodrome auditorium in 1965.
72, 73: E M Lawson's 1955 plans (55) and elevations (56) to improve the backstage facilities.

The land where the stables stood was sold to the Dreadnought Garage and Motor Engineering Works on 24 February 1924, thus containing the Hippodrome site within its current boundaries.

A drainage plan was recorded in 1931.³³ In the following year a projection room was added, requiring alterations to the circle seating and the entrance canopy.

Between 1934 and 1938 Martin's Club (Brighton) was listed in directories at the Hippodrome's address. Described as a 'gentlemen's club'—almost certainly a euphemism for a gay establishment—it probably met upstairs in Hippodrome House.

The large bar at the side of the stalls was reconstructed in Tudor style in June 1935. General alterations, including relaying the stage were carried out by T J Braybon & Son in 1936.³⁴ Alterations were made to the foyer and saloon in 1949-1950.

Further modifications 1955

E M Lawson was the architect in 1955 when the stage-house was altered to extend the area at stage right and to add new dressing rooms.³⁵

Brighton Corporation interest

The Hippodrome was spared when Moss Empires announced plans in 1960 to close theatres but after the end of that year's pantomime the theatre was ominously closed for five weeks early in the new year.

In July 1964 Alderman Lewis Cohen was told by estate agent Edward Erdman that Moss Empires was thinking of putting the Hippodrome on the market. Brighton Corporation's planning committee, minded to acquire the theatre, asked the borough surveyor to consider possible ways forward.³⁶ The department's report contained three proposals, none of which retained the theatre:

- commercial and residential development (forming a pedestrian link between Ship Street and West Street),
- a multi-storey car park (which would have created problems with preserving daylight), or
- merging the Hippodrome site with the Dreadnought Garage site for a more comprehensive development, involving a petrol station, garage and car showroom as well as a multi-storey car park.

Although a municipal theatre was considered, this was rejected; if a commercial theatre operator couldn't make it

pay, town clerk W O Dodd argued, neither could the council. In the event, Moss Empires did not sell.

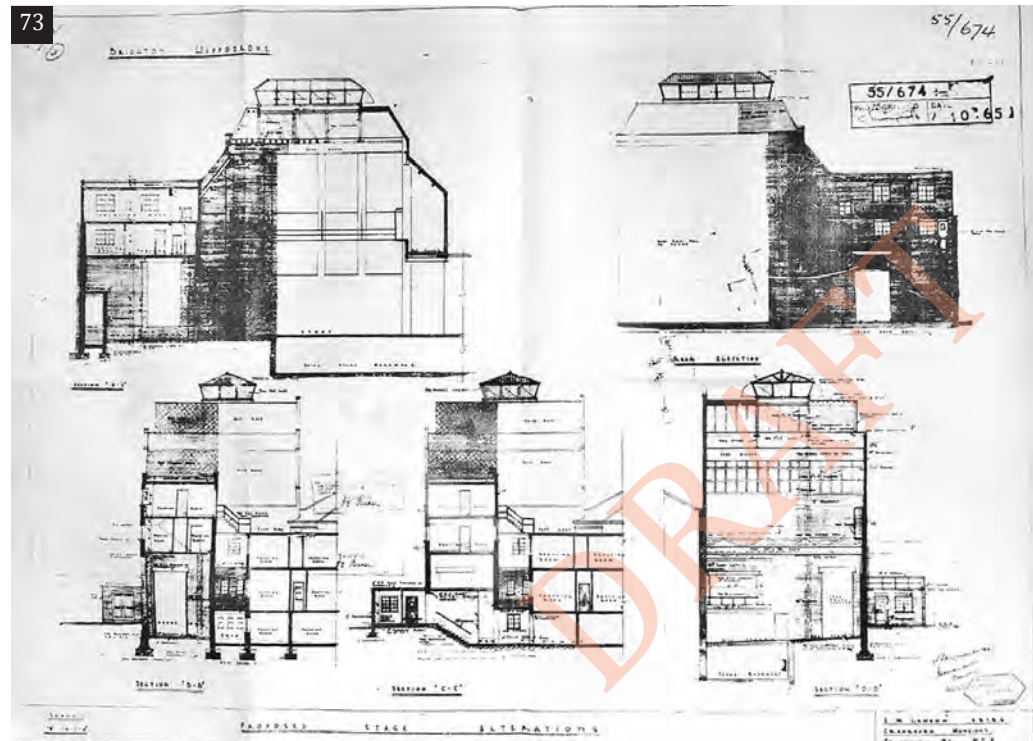
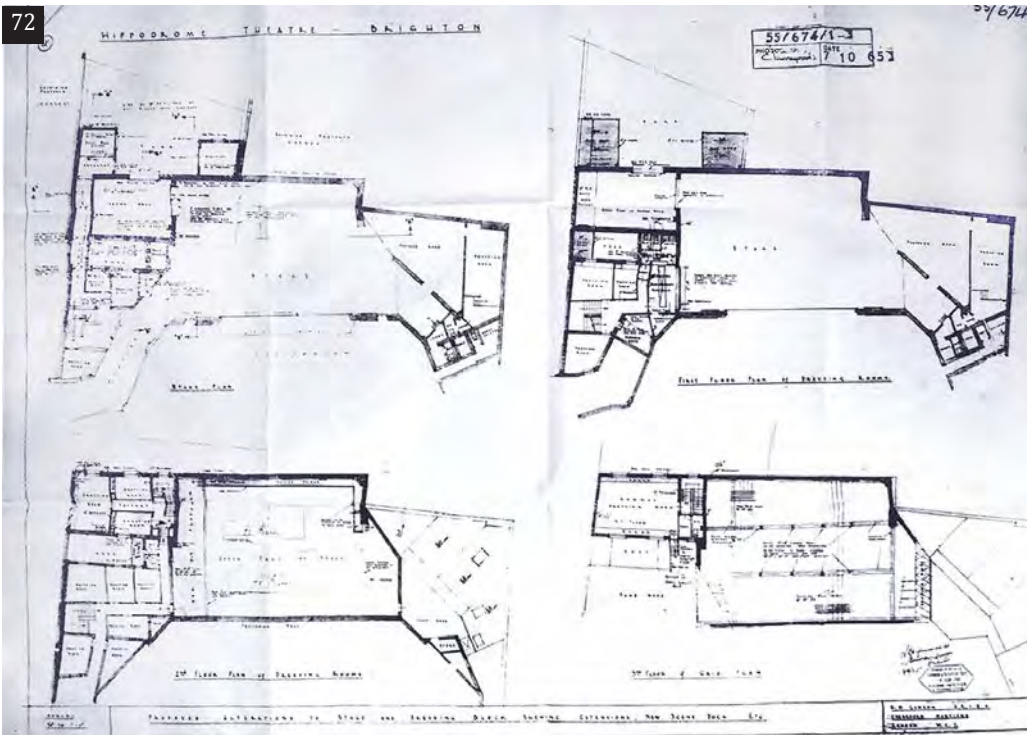
The theatre was dark for 9½ weeks in 1963 and, apart from occasional shows and some Sunday evening pop concerts, for 33 weeks in 1964. In the autumn of 1964 the Hippodrome was used extensively as a location for a feature film, *Be My Guest*, providing unique evidence [60-67] of the building in its variety days and including an on-stage live performance filmed on 1 November 1964. The last show was on 22 November 1964.

In 1965 Moss Empires was sold to Lew Grade's Associated Television Corporation (ATV), which became part of Associated Communications Corporation (ACC) in 1966.

Hiatus 1964-1966

In October 1965 Bernard Delfont paid a visit to the empty theatre [66, left] to assess its suitability as a luxury night-spot on the model of the Talk of the Town at the London Hippodrome.

The night-spot idea was finally abandoned³⁷ by June 1967, when application was made for change of use to an entertainment venue.



Evolution of the Middle Street canopy

Photographic evidence shows the evolution of the canopy. The original version from 1901, presumed to be by Frank Matcham, was of glazed ironwork and extended along the whole frontage of the circus/theatre, with a large rectangular raised section topped with three pitched roofs over the central entrance and two pitched sections at either end.

A planning application for a new canopy was dated 11 October 1938³⁸. The name HIPPODROME had been added on the front edge in a 1949 image, By 1960 the canopy consisted of only a sloped section supported on curved brackets above the central entrance, with the name on the front and side panels, illuminated from within.

In the mid 1970s a version above the entrance, even more reduced in height, carried the Mecca Leisure name.

By the turn of the century Mecca had reinstated a canopy similar to the original except with a pitched section in the centre, on which was the name MECCA and BINGO in red coloured glass inset on the front edge. It covered only the section from tower to tower.

It is this version that survives, with the glass panels removed. (The glazed BINGO panels are preserved inside the building.)

Evolution of the Middle Street canopy



Before 1920



1949



1964



c1975



2001



now

Television studio 1966

On 29 August 1966 Brighton Corporation approved change of use to a television studio, for which a flat floor was laid in the auditorium [80]. The tenant was a short-lived venture called World Colour Services. Little use was made of the facilities³⁹ and Moss Empires had to repossess.

Mecca Bingo social club 1967-2006

Moss Empires leased the Hippodrome to Mecca as a social club (bingo hall), which opened late in autumn 1967.

The flat floor that had been installed for television was fitted out for bingo play, the circle remaining a seating area for spectators, although there are now some bingo tables to the rear of the space. Initially the stage area was used for the caller with the drapes half lowered, then with an electronic scoreboard over the upper half.

Mecca Social Club proposed remodelling of the stage and extension to the kitchen in 1971 and submitted a revised plan by Eric Neve & Associates was for planning approval in April 1972.⁴⁰

In April 1972 *The Stage* reported that Mecca's manager, Peter Shiels, planned to introduce old-time music hall in late-night shows 'on the lines of the Northern Clubs' from May.⁴¹

80: Laying the flat floor in 1966.

81: The stage area with the curtain half lowered and

82: then replaced by an electronic scoreboard (with a full house for a 'full house')

83: finally the insertion of a mezzanine floor in 1994.



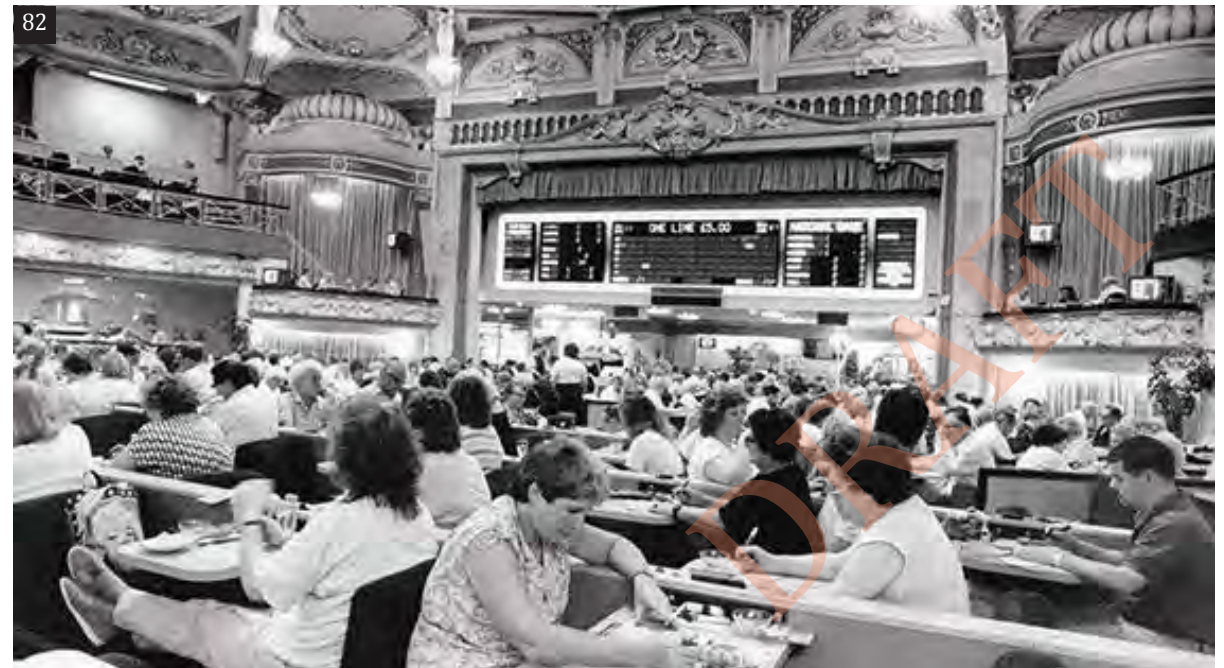
Consent was given for a new buffet and false ceiling at the rear of the stage installed in 1981. The Rank Organisation acquired Mecca in 1990 and rebranded its own Top Rank bingo business as Mecca.

English Heritage listed the Hippodrome as Grade II* on 20 December 1985.

A mezzanine floor over the stage was installed as part of the alterations by Metcalfe Roundhill Design in 1993-1994,



approved on 20 September 1994⁴², which also included re-arrangement of the seating, bar and refreshment facilities and extension of the canopy across the frontage. Plaster-work to match that around the circle was added to the mezzanine. Further minor alterations were made in 2001.⁴³



Features in Hippodrome House



- 82, 83: The conservatory (2007).
 84: Stairs between first and second floors (2007).
 85: The 'Venetian bridge'. At this time (1980s) it framed the approach to the bar beyond; a wall across the room now shuts off this view.
 88: Decoration over a doorway (2007).
 89: The Venetian Bridge is now isolated by a wall.
 90: A fireplace in an upstairs room.
 91: Upper floor windows (2007).

Unoccupied 2007-date. . .

Now owned by London Merchant Securities (LMS), which had bought the freehold in October 2003, the bingo hall closed on 8 August 2006.

LMS changed its name to Derwent London (Urbanfirst). It had also acquired the adjacent Dukes Lane shopping street and valued the two sites at £13.1m in January 2007. In September 2007 Derwent sold both sites—‘a multi-let central shopping centre and entertainment venue totalling 5,950m² and producing £0.9 million per annum’—to Cheval Properties for £20m, with Allied Irish Banks (AIB) as the mortgagee.

The properties were transferred to a company called Kuig Property Investments (No 6) Ltd, registered in Jersey, one of the portfolios grouped under the name The Fifth Belfry Property (UK) plc, itself in turn one of a number of packages of UK real estate set up in Ireland by AIB for marketing to its investment clients. By mid 2012, with ‘the Group’s loan balance considerably exceeding the value of its assets’, it was decided ‘to effect an orderly wind-up of its operations by way of . . . the disposal of the properties.’⁴⁴

Academy Music Group (AMG), whose principal shareholder is the music promoter LiveNation, had taken out a 30-year lease in February 2007 with the intention of opening a music venue, for which a planning application was submitted on 11 June⁴⁵ and withdrawn on 6 September 2007. A later planning officer’s note in relation to the subsequent application explained that ‘It is understood that

whilst the principles of the development were considered broadly acceptable, the proposal would have been at risk of contravening the council’s licensing policy and was therefore withdrawn.’⁴⁶

The proposal was finally abandoned by AMG in 2012, at which time LiveNation presented a plan for conversion to a cinema and restaurant. Discussions and presentations continued throughout 2013 and a public exhibition of the plans was held on 18-19 October 2013. This triggered the Our Brighton Hippodrome campaign in favour of retaining the Hippodrome as a theatre.

The planning application for an eight-screen multiplex cinema with four restaurants was submitted on 11 February 2014 and approved on 16 July but the Secretary of State was asked to call in the application. The request was refused on 19 September. Planning consent was finally granted on 28 November 2014 and the site, together with the adjacent Dukes Lane shopping street, was immediately put on the market.

AMG bought the freehold of the Hippodrome on 24 April 2015 for £2.4m—Dukes Lane was sold separately—and offered a six-month moratorium on a sale to the Theatres Trust, Brighton Hippodrome CIC and other stakeholders. A six-month exclusivity period was secured by a consortium in January 2017, just as Brighton Hippodrome CIC and its development partner were starting to negotiate acquisition.

This was immediately followed by another exclusivity agreement that ended with the purchase of the freehold by

a Guernsey-based company, Hippodrome Investments Ltd⁴⁷ for £2.075m on 7 November 2017.⁴⁸

In January 2019 the agent for the owners, Aized Sheikh’s HIPP Investments Limited, announced an intention to build an 80-room boutique hotel and spa with 27 serviced apartments on the site, retaining only the auditorium from the theatre. A public consultation was promised for February 2019, in immediate anticipation of a planning application, but at the time of writing has not been held.

20-21 Ship Street (the service yard)

The yard is listed as a separate parcel (SX87955) in the Land Registry.

Early in the 19th century a building here was associated with Wigney’s brewery on the north side of a mews-style yard at right-angles to the street. By the late 1840s Wigney’s had also become a coal merchant and shared the site with another coal merchant.

Wigney vacated (see page 7) and other trades moved in, including Botting, a builder and glass merchant, joined in the 1920s by the Dreadnought Garage and Engineering Works, which had also taken over the former site of the ice rink machinery buildings.

The yard has been associated with the Hippodrome only from December 1954, when Moss Empires bought the freehold. The buildings were demolished around 1956 and the site used as a car park for the television studio and later for bingo patrons.

The pathway on the south side of the yard was removed from the title and re-numbered [ESX16942] in a transfer between Moss Empires and Davenport Developments but with reserved rights. This provides access to the flats at the rear of 18-19 Ship Street.

An application for planning and listed building consent to build a three-storey office block on the yard was submitted in 1989 but withdrawn.

A planning application for a temporary car park on the yard, erroneously identified as 52-58 Middle Street, was made by the current owner on 11 May 2018 and granted on 22 November 2018.⁴⁹

92: The car park in September 1956.

93: The entrances to the yard and the rear of Dukes Lane in Ship Street in November 2015.



ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Assessing significance

Significance is defined as ‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’⁵⁰

Statutory designation

The Hippodrome, then identified as Mecca Bingo, was given Grade II* listing status by English Heritage on 20 December 1985 (see Appendix 1 for the full listing). The text is incomplete as there is no mention of the Hippodrome House part of the site and the references to enlargement in 1939 are factually incorrect, as this report shows (see pages 7-9).

This places the Hippodrome in the top 5.5 per cent of all

listed buildings in England. There are 24 Grade I and 70 Grade II* buildings in Brighton and Hove.

It is the only secular building in the city—and the only one in private ownership—listed by Historic England in the at-risk priority category A. The West Pier is also in this category but almost certainly beyond recovery.⁵¹

The Hippodrome has been on the Theatres Trust register of Theatres at Risk since the list’s inception in 2007 and number one on the list since 2013. It is the only theatre given the highest score in all the criteria: for community value (clear community demand and viability), star rating (quality) and risk factor.

Summary statement of significance

The Hippodrome is a rare, architecturally most significant and complete example of a circus-theatre—one of only three remaining—described by the Theatres Trust as ‘the finest surviving example of its type in the country’,⁵² the

others being the Blackpool Tower Circus and the Great Yarmouth Hippodrome.

As with any theatre, although the architecture may be of the highest quality, it is the activity that went on inside the building on which its reputation and remembrance rest. A significant part of the Hippodrome’s heritage is the intangible but nonetheless real legacy of all the performers who appeared on the stage here. As actor Simon Callow has said, not entirely fancifully, of Matcham theatres: ‘All kinds of astonishing energies and joys and tragedies have been unfolded in these purlieus. That is part of what makes a theatre extraordinary. It gets into the walls of the theatre.’⁵³

Throughout its time as one of the most important dates on the variety theatre ‘tour’, the Hippodrome’s fame grew nationally. Although not as old among Brighton’s venues as either the Dome concert hall (1867, remodelled 1935) or the Theatre Royal (1807, reconfigured 1866), it was the primary home of popular live entertainment in Brighton throughout the first half of the 20th century.



ARCHITECTURAL/ARTISTIC INTEREST

The Hippodrome has gone through three main transformations since its time as an ice-skating rink: conversion to a circus-theatre for a year, then into a variety theatre for 62 years, and finally into a flat-floor space, briefly as a television studio and then for 39 years as a bingo hall.

The tented dome and façade survive from the ice-skating rink design within a space approximately as originally defined. Not then as integrated as it soon became, 52 Middle Street was used by the management of the rink.

See Appendix 2 for details of all the architects.

Architects

When the Brammalls decided to build a skating rink they employed a competent but not particularly renowned architect, Lewis Karslake. It was when the rink failed and they turned to an architect, Frank Matcham, to carry out the transformation into a circus-theatre that architectural significance was virtually guaranteed.

Thomas Barrasford's choice of another eminent theatre architect, Bertie Crewe, for the variety theatre augmented the status of the building. Subsequent architects have respected the work of their predecessors. Thus Matcham's auditorium has survived almost completely intact.

Building materials and technology

As the listing records, the building is mainly brick or stone, mostly rendered on the west and north faces. The fly-tower and stage-house are red brick. Much of the interior is decorated with fibrous plasterwork. The original foyer is wood-panelled with bas-relief ceiling panels and tiled panels.

The plasterwork on the ground floor in Hippodrome House is less elaborate and in a different style. The polygonal conservatory is of simple battened wood, which may have been dry-lined at one time and/or partially glazed. Upstairs rooms are late 18th century domestic in character.

The principal engineering aspect of the Hippodrome, which creates the impressive volume of the auditorium, is the dome, supported on a ring of pillars with a 27m diameter [30].

The auditorium and stage house

Architecturally, the auditorium is regarded as one of the finest of Frank Matcham's too few surviving works and remarkably has remained almost entirely intact. The original 1902 raked floor by Bertie Crewe is still present under the multi-layer flat floor.

The stage-house has been altered over the years to suit developing practical requirements, most recently in 1955, but remains essentially the same as it was over a century

ago. It is an integral part of the theatre, without which the building is incomplete.

The wings space at stage left is compromised by not being squared off at the rear. It would benefit considerably if an area of approximately 2.5m square could be added from the rear garden of 16 Ship Street.

Hippodrome House

Hippodrome House is important not only as one of the oldest surviving properties in the Old Town, with some surviving early features, but for its associations with leading Brighton citizens of the 19th century.

It has been modified several times, particularly on the ground floor—to create the Palm Court, to add the Venetian Bridge and bars, and to install toilet facilities for the circus-theatre and the bingo hall. Nonetheless, it still includes some features of historical interest.

Overall architectural significance

The Hippodrome's rarity as a surviving circus-theatre justifies its importance as a building. That so much of it is still intact from its form of more than a century ago reinforces this evaluation.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

A desk-based assessment was made in March 2014 by Dr Michael Shapland of Archaeology South-East in connection with the planning application by Alaska Development Consultants for conversion of the Hippodrome into a multi-screen cinema. We believe that this remains valid.

The report noted that the archaeological potential of the site is low for the prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon period but high for the medieval (AD 1066-1540) and post-medieval (AD 1540 to date) periods.

'There are no known previous archaeological investigations within the Site' (para 4.4.3).

References are made to trial pits previously dug on the site for geotechnical purposes, some of which indicated the presence of archaeology.

The relevant conclusion can be summarised by quoting paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.5:

8.1 The main identifiable impacts on the archaeological potential of the Site are the existing buildings, particularly in those areas which have already been basemented. ... It is to be expected that the existing buildings will have impacted on any archaeological remains, dependant [sic] on various factors including foundation depth and the depth of any archaeological deposits. However, there is a chance that pockets of

archaeological stratigraphy might survive within building footprints, particularly where basements do not presently exist (such as beneath the present Hippodrome auditorium: on this, however, see below).

8.2 Many of the existing 18th and 19th century buildings fronting Middle Street and Ship Street have basements, indicating that those which previously existed to the north of Hippodrome House and on the site of 20-21 Ship Street are also likely to have had basements, which would have truncated or removed the archaeology in these areas. Nevertheless, pockets of medieval or earlier stratigraphy may remain. ...

8.5 More recently, a borehole was sunk to the east of the Hippodrome in 2010, and five trial pits were excavated within the area of the (un-basemented) Hippodrome auditorium. The trial pits briefly, ... indicate the survival of archaeological deposits within the Hippodrome, except where basementing or raked seating has truncated them.¹⁵⁴

HISTORIC INTEREST

The fabric of the building is sufficiently significant to merit a Grade II* listing, granted when it was in use as a bingo hall and not for the purpose for which it was originally created. Bingo halls *per se* rarely attract architectural comment, so there can be no question that it is the quality of the architecture and design that were being recognised.

Nonetheless, the Hippodrome's most significant historical associations are with the performers and musicians who appeared on stage. See Appendix 4: Performance history.

COMMUNITY INTEREST

For the community, comments about the Hippodrome refer to both the building's remembered splendour and the performers and shows that were seen there. Although there is a strong element of nostalgia in such reminiscences, they reveal a fondness for the Hippodrome that is rarely expressed for any other building in the city and a sense that its restoration would benefit the community as a whole.

Whenever the Hippodrome is mentioned in a post on Facebook, there is invariably a flurry of responses from people who fondly remember acts they saw there. A post about the Hippodrome on the Brighton-Past Facebook page in October 2019 attracted 223 comments, 310 'likes' and 19 'shares'. One in November was followed by 217 comments. Many express a hope that the theatre will be restored; some believe no one cares enough, so it will never be revived.



URBAN CONTEXT

The long frontage of the Hippodrome on the east side of Middle Street dominates the streetscape, even more so at present because of the extent of graffiti and tagging. The Old Town Conservation Area as a whole is designated 'at risk' by Historic England.

It may be the worst and certainly the largest example of decay in the area, but it does not draw attention completely away from other examples of neglect and dereliction in the neighbourhood: the boarded-up properties from the corner on Ship Street stretching along Ship Street Gardens, the graffiti around Middle Street School and the single-storey garage building next to 40 Middle Street, the derelict former Grand Concert Hall (Sherry's, etc) and South Street.

Footfall in the street is unsurprisingly low. Pedestrians from the seafront choose West Street or Ship Street rather than Middle Street. Pedestrians from Duke Street who do turn into Middle Street are usually heading for Duke's Lane and those using [Dukes Lane in the opposite direction from Ship Street turn north](#).

Significant views

The Hippodrome site lies between two narrow streets and views of it are therefore constrained. The front elevation on Middle Street is generally seen obliquely, even from the other side of the road. It has been allowed to become an unmitigated eyesore, defaced by accumulations of stray-

96: Looking south down Middle Street from outside Hippodrome House in 1961. The queue waits to get tickets to see Frankie Vaughan in the summer season variety show. The row of shops opposite clearly benefits from the footfall of the theatre.

97: In stark contrast is the deserted appearance of the street today.



painting and stuck-on graffiti. Doors and windows are boarded up. The view of Hippodrome House along Boyce's Street [11,12] is the only one from any distance. The dome above the auditorium is not visible from any angle at pedestrian level, although it can be seen from the i360.

The north elevation is visible above the perimeter wall, presenting a mismatched arrangement of windows, boarded on the inside and one covered on the exterior by a sign announcing the occupancy of Flat no 51. The yard visible through the gates is unsightly and neglected.

From Ship Street the rear elevation of the theatre is dominated by the (necessarily) unrelieved redbrick mass of the fly-tower and the fenestrated stage house. The yard itself is currently in use as a commercial car park.

The Old Town Conservation Area (OTCA) Character Statement (2017) describes the 'break in the active frontage [of Ship Street] with views to the unsightly parking area, the rear of the Hippodrome's fly tower and the intrusive side elevation of Nos.18-19. Cumulatively, this results in a negative impact on the area's character and appearance.' (para 6.10)

The fly-tower is also a prominent aspect of the view from the rear of the Georgian houses at 16 and 17 Ship Street.

The southern wall of the Hippodrome is contiguous with the properties on the north side of Ship Street Gardens and therefore not visible.

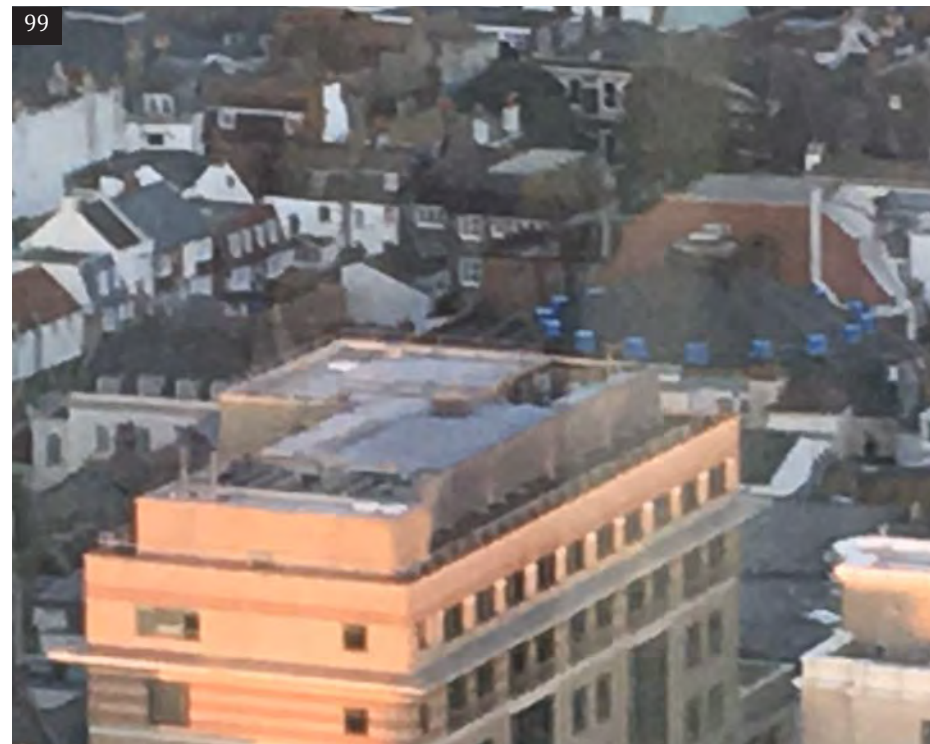
The yard

The OTCA Character Statement (2017) describes the 'break in the active frontage [of Ship Street] with views to the unsightly parking area, the rear of the Hippodrome's fly tower and the intrusive side elevation of Nos.18-19. Cumulatively, this results in a negative impact on the area's character and appearance.' (para 6.10)

The OTCA Management Plan identifies the yard as one of the 'service areas that create a disjoint in the character and appearance of the street scene. These areas would benefit from enhancement through environmental improvements and in some cases redevelopment. . . . In the case of the Hippodrome car park, any development must not prejudice the appropriate future reuse and servicing of the Hippodrome itself' (para 7.66)



98: The view along Boyce's Street in 1955.
99: The corresponding view in 2015; dormer windows have been added to the roof line.
100: The view from the i360; the Hippodrome can be identified by the blue coverings on the top of the pillars supporting the dome with the top of the fly-tower behind and a prominent flue.
101: The yard on the north side of Hippodrome House.



The OTCA Management Plan notes that both this land and that between 22 Ship Street and 47 Middle Street (parking and service area for Dukes Lane) are under-utilised sites:

‘Combining the two sites could realise the optimal development potential for both and regenerate this part of the conservation area. Together they could accommodate a meaningful mixed use development, whilst safeguarding the future ongoing servicing requirements of a functioning Hippodrome.

The potential benefits include:

- Improving the significance and importance of Old Town as a historic centre
- Improving the cultural and entertainment offer in the city
- Provision of active frontages to Middle Street and Ship Street to add vitality
- Providing suitable access and servicing for both sites and their buildings
- Creation of a new pedestrian ‘lane’ between Middle Street and Ship Street to improve east-west permeability and legibility
- Improved public realm in Middle Street and Boyce’s Street.’ (para 8.9)



102: The two gates on either side of the boundary wall in Ship Street: ‘a break in the active frontage of Ship Street’.



103: The unrelieved red-brick mass of the fly-tower dominates the yard and the view from Ship Street.

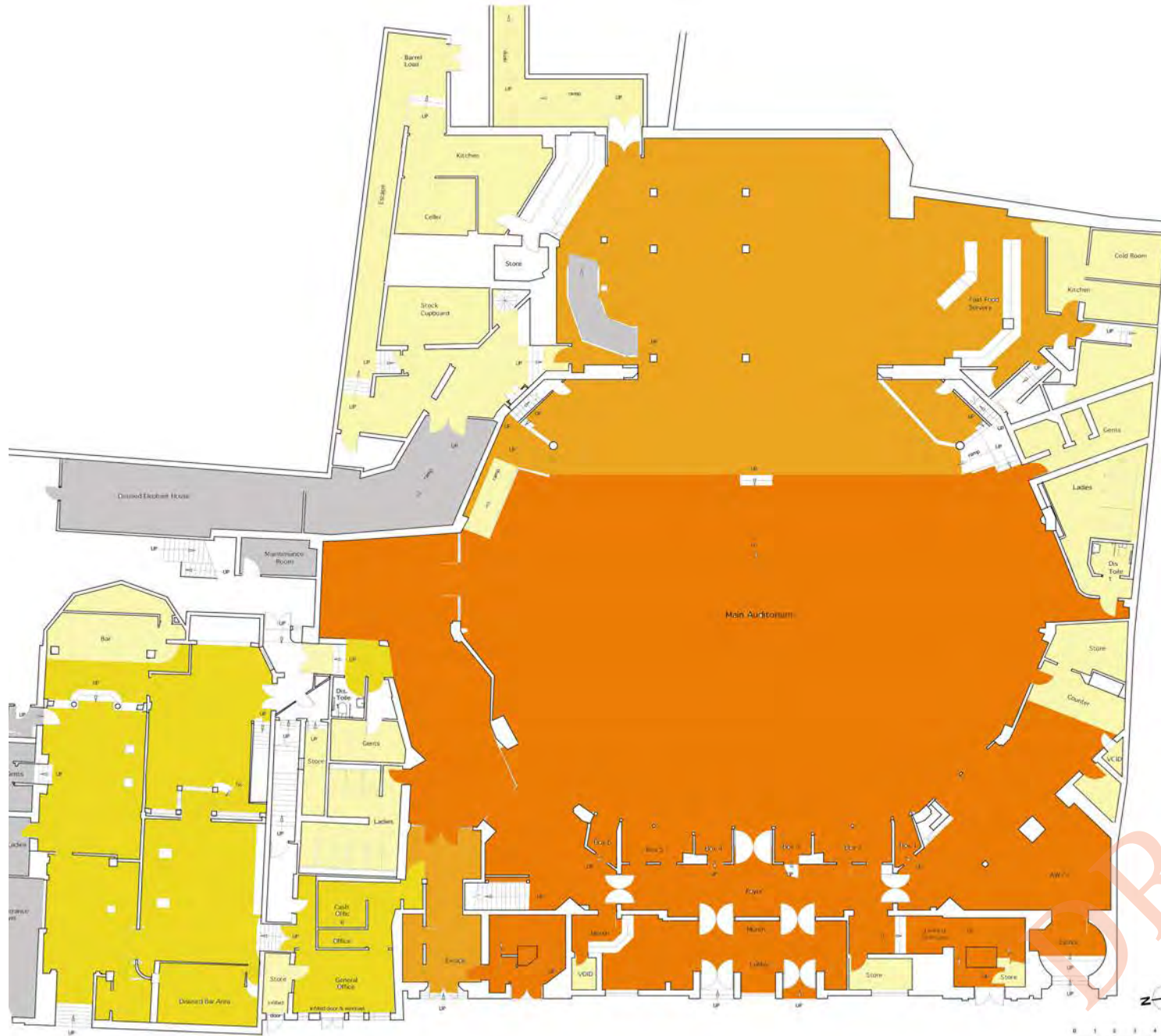
104: The two yards on either side of the boundary wall.

105: The parking area at the rear of Dukes Lane



- Highly significant
- Significant
- Some significance
- Neutral
- Negative

Significance: ground floor

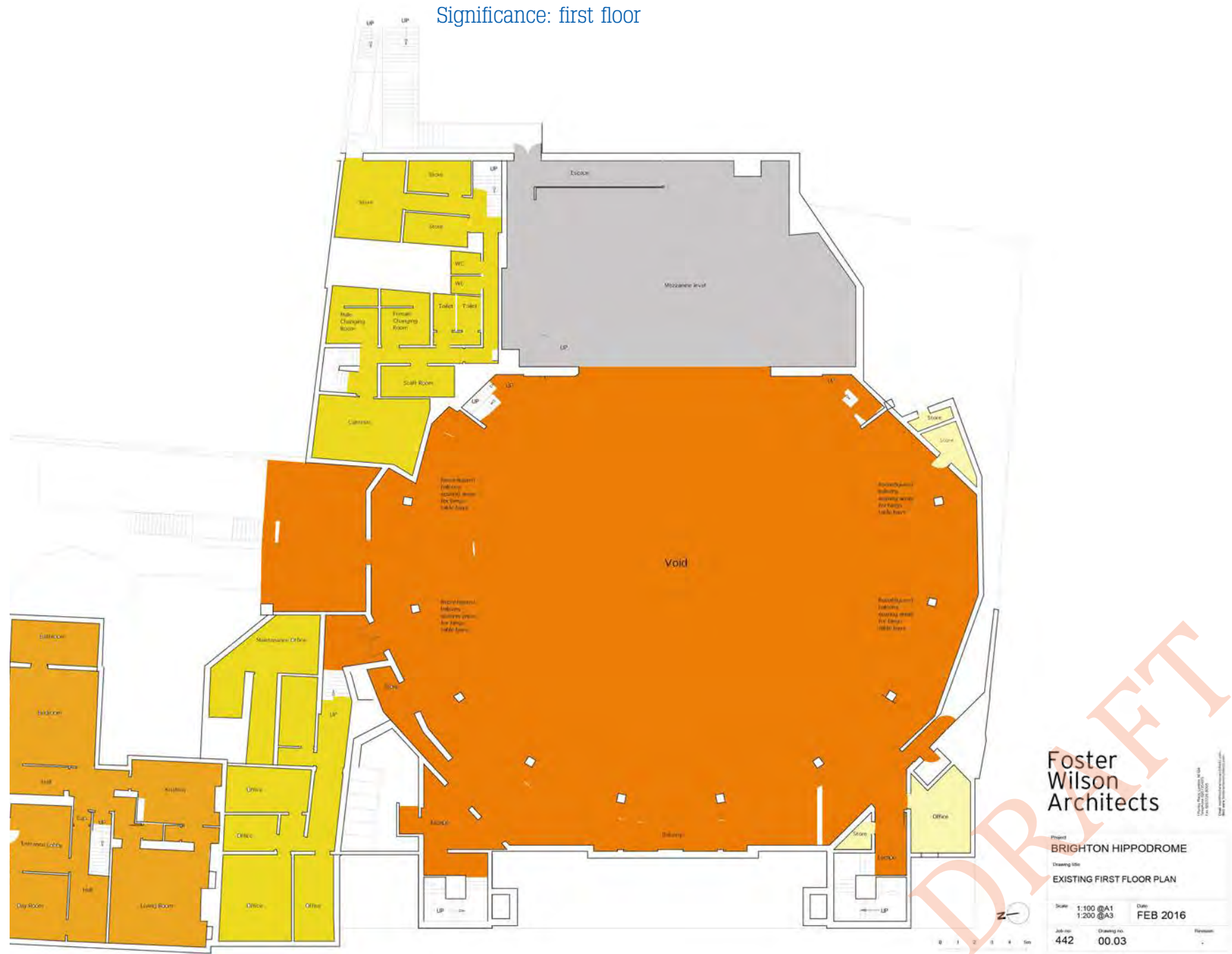


Foster
Wilson
Architects

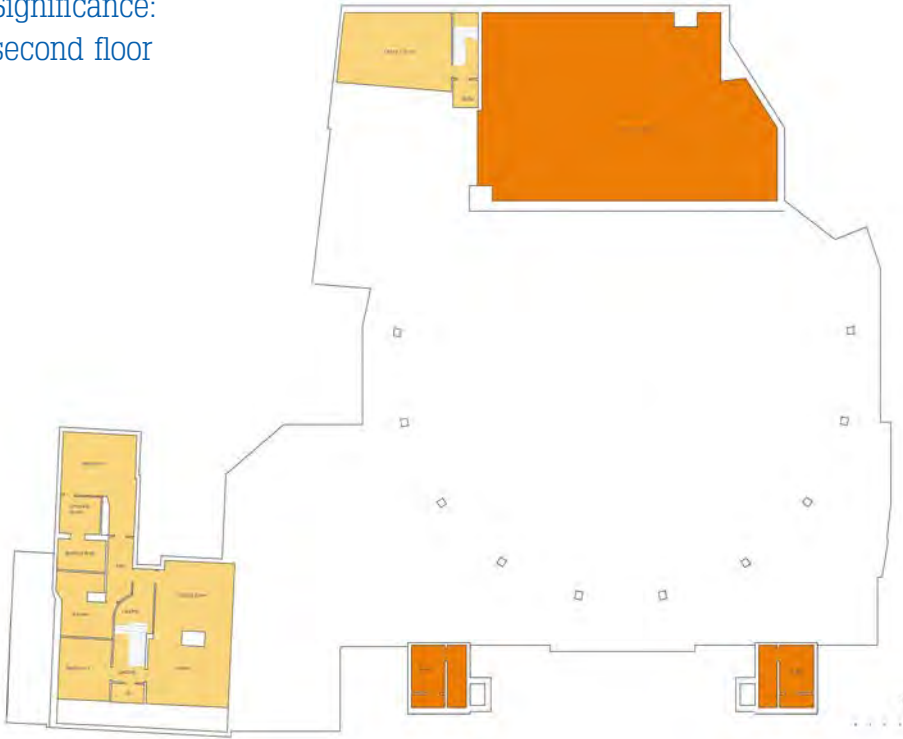
Project		BRIGHTON HIPPODROME	
Drawing title		EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN	
Scale	1:100 @A1	Date	FEB 2016
	1:200 @A3		
Job no	442	Drawing no	00.02

100% Copyright © 2016
 Foster Wilson Architects
 All Rights Reserved

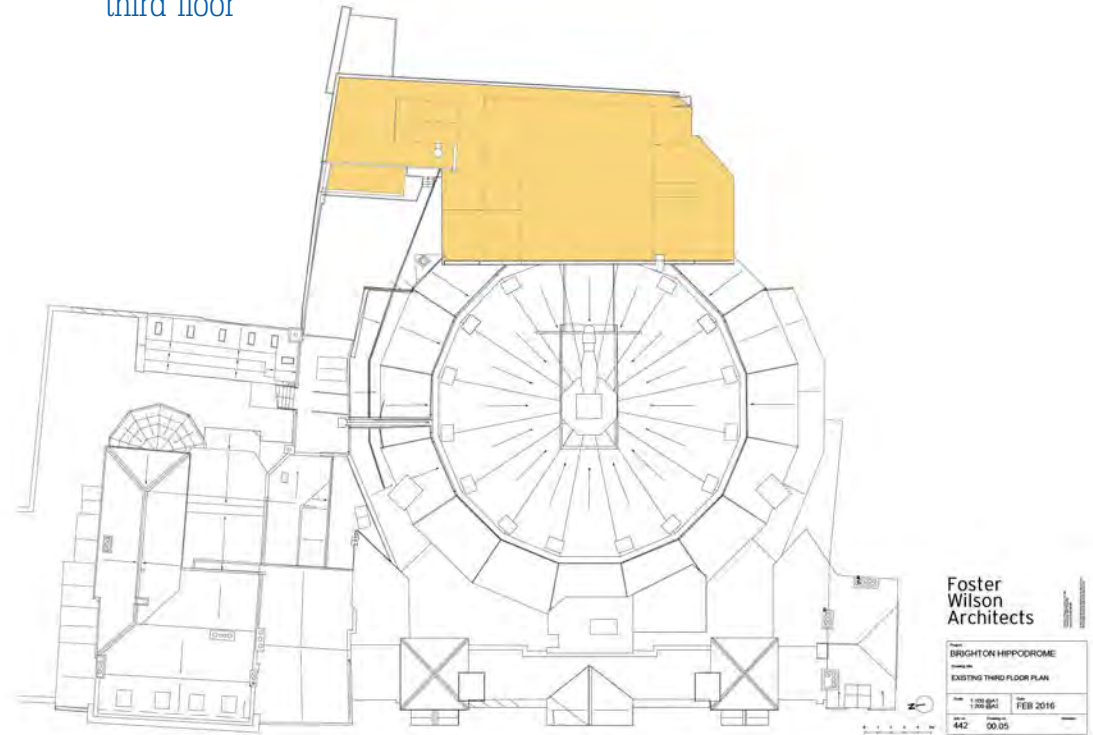
Significance: first floor



Significance:
second floor



Significance:
third floor



PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Historic environment policies

The Hippodrome is Grade II* listed and is therefore subject to statutory control as defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

National policy: Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- Section 16(2) requires consideration of listed building consent to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.
- Section 16(3) requires listed building consent to be 'for the benefit of the building and of all persons for the time being interested in it'.
- Section 72 requires that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

National policy: National Planning Policy Framework

Because the Hippodrome is Grade II* listed and in a conservation area, it follows that proposals for its future should satisfy the terms of section 16 of the NPPF. In particular they should be in accordance with paragraph 185:

- Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 128 states that 'Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. . . . Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.' This condition has been and will continue to be fulfilled by Brighton Hippodrome CIC.

Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide

- Paragraphs 5 and 6 refer to the general importance of maintaining the historic environment.
- Paragraph 78 advises local authorities to consider the likely longevity of any claims of public benefits for a proposed scheme. Where irreversible harm to a historical asset's significance may result, ill-conceived, speculative or short-term projects will not compare favourably.
- Paragraph 79 identifies potential heritage benefits likely to weigh in favour of a proposed scheme:
 1. If it sustains or enhances a heritage asset's significance and makes a positive contribution to its setting.
 2. If it reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset.
 3. If it secures the heritage asset's optimum viable use to support its long-term conservation.
 4. If it makes a positive contribution to economic vitality.
 5. If it is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.
 6. If it better reveals the heritage asset's significance and thereby enhances the public's enjoyment of it and the sense of place.
- Paragraph 88 recommends that a heritage asset's development should be for its optimum viable use.
- Paragraph 89 proposes that any use should be viable for the future conservation of the asset as well as the benefit of the owner, and that viable use will fund future maintenance. When a range of alternative uses are viably possible, the optimal use is the one causing least harm to the asset's significance.
- Paragraph 179 argues for retention of as much of the historic fabric as possible.

Regional policy

Policy WMP3 of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan (adopted 19 February 2013) seeks to maximise waste prevention, re-use and production of energy from waste, with a target of recycling 70 per cent of commercial waste by 2025/26. It also identifies expectations for minimising and managing waste during construction and demolition.

The city falls within the remit of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), whose strategic support policies will have an influence.

Local planning core policy

The relevant sections of Brighton & Hove City Council's City Plan Part One (March 2016).

CP5 Culture

It is part of the core cultural policy of Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) to protect the Hippodrome, to attract visitors, support regeneration and sustainable communities and work towards the city's ambition to be a 'city of culture'.⁵⁵

4.54 Brighton & Hove is the creative powerhouse of the region and has the potential to become a national cultural leader [Brighton & Hove City Council Cultural Strategy, 2009]. It is important that the city's existing cultural infrastructure (arts, performance and creation space) is protected and enhanced and that new proposals complement and contribute to the city's unique tourism offer. Examples include the Old Market in Hove and the Hippodrome in Brighton. To maintain the potential for a wide variety of arts and cultural uses existing venues . . . will be protected for their existing use or potential for such use. Proposals for change of use would need supporting documentation to demonstrate availability of adequate provision, equally as accessible by the community, elsewhere in the city and that the existing use was no longer viable or could no longer be sustained on a long-term basis (through marketing information, a business case, and information on the availability of funding).

4.55 . . . Demand remains for arts and creative industries workspace that is affordable in comparison with market rents, as well as flexible. Opportunities will be sought through site allocations in the City Plan Part 2, through Developer Contributions, SPDs or development briefs in preparation for regeneration

schemes and major mixed use developments across the city.⁵⁶

CP15 Heritage

4.170 A requirement to conserve the identified special character of conservation areas, and the settings of other heritage assets, will be reflected 217 The Strategy for the Conservation of Brighton & Hove's Historic Built Environment (2003) in Planning Briefs and area-based Supplementary Planning Documents where appropriate and will inform the Urban Design Framework proposed under Policy CP12. New development in conservation areas, and within the setting of heritage assets, should take the opportunity to enhance the significance of those areas or settings wherever possible.

4.172 Keeping heritage assets in use is inherently sustainable as it avoids the consumption of building materials and energy and the generation of waste from the construction of replacement buildings.

4.174 CP5 Culture and Tourism recognises the relationship of the wealth and importance of the city's historic environment with tourism and cultural industries in the city. This policy also has important links to CP13 Public Streets and Spaces.

Saved development plan policies (2005)

The heritage-related policies in the Brighton & Hove Local Plan (2005) will be superseded by the City Plan Part 2, due to be implemented wasrly in 2021. The current policies that may be relevant are:

HE1 Listed buildings.

HE3 Development affecting the setting of a listed building.

HE4 Reinstatement of original features on listed buildings.

HE6 Development within or affecting the setting of conservation areas.

HE8 Demolition in conservation areas.

HE9 Advertisement and signs within conservation areas and on, or in the vicinity of a listed building.

The relevant policies in the City Plan Part 2 are:

DM26 Conservation areas.

DM27 Listed buildings.

DM29 The setting of heritage assets.

DM31 Archaeological interest.

Local policy: OTCA character statement and management plan

The Old Town Conservation Area (OTCA) Character Statement (February 2017) identifies the issues.

'The Hippodrome occupies a large parcel of land with a long frontage on Middle Street and a service yard entrance on Ship Street and its condition is having a negative effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Loss of significant historic fabric or economic potential would be a threat to the conservation area's special interest and to the surviving evidence of Brighton's development as a seaside resort in the late 19th and early 20th century.'⁵⁷

The report notes, however, that a 'major opportunity at present is the repair and reuse of the Brighton Hippodrome, which has the potential to revitalise the centre of the conservation area.'⁵⁸

This point was taken up in the subsequent Management Plan for the OTCA.

'The council will expect any acceptable scheme for the site to fully restore the Hippodrome for a use that retains the auditorium as a single open volume capable of maintaining a performance function, together with the conservation of the other front and back of house spaces (including the foyer and Hippodrome House) that contribute greatly to its significance and which enable its appropriate reuse. The adjoining land offers the opportunity for new development that would partially fill the gaps on Middle Street and Ship Street and enhance those street scenes through development, for a mix of uses, of sympathetic scale and massing. Such development must not, however, prejudice the appropriate reuse and future servicing of the Hippodrome itself. The centre of the site adjacent to the fly tower may potentially accommodate greater height than the street frontages but must be mindful of longer views. The view eastwards from Boyce's Street is of particular importance as Hippodrome House terminates this view in an attractive manner. The building frontage to Middle Street should be carefully restored in accordance with the available historic drawings.'⁵⁹

The default option is therefore restoration of the complete theatre.

Recent planning history

A planning application was submitted by Academy Music Group (AMG), the lessee, on 11 June 2007, that sought alterations to facilitate the change of use of the Hippodrome to a live music venue⁶⁰ but was withdrawn before being determined⁶¹. A planning officer noted: 'It is understood that whilst the principles of the development were considered broadly acceptable, the proposal would have been at risk of contravening the council's licensing policy and was therefore withdrawn.'⁶² AMG actively continued to develop plans but in 2012 finally abandoned the music venue proposal following advice from BHCC licensing that a late-night licence was unlikely to be granted because of the cumulative impact zone in the area covering the Hippodrome.

On 20 December 2013 a planning application for conversion of the theatre into an eight-screen cinema with restaurants⁶³ was submitted by Indigo Planning on behalf of Jersey-registered Kuig Property Investments (No 6) Ltd (see page 29) but rejected by BHCC as incomplete. It was re-submitted and registered on 11 February 2014.

The application was approved by the BHCC planning committee on 16 July 2014 but BHCC and others (including Our Brighton Hippodrome) requested that the Secretary of State to call in the application. This request was refused on 19 September 2014; planning and listed building consent were granted on 28 November 2014, valid for a period of three years. The site was immediately put on the market and in April 2015 was bought by AMG, which was still the leaseholder.

Retrospective approval was sought for installation of security measures including steel door coverings, anti-climb fences and security fences on 6 March 2015 and approved on 5 June 2015.⁶⁴

An application for provision of a temporary car park for 15 car and eight motorcycle spaces with access via Ship Street for a period of three years was submitted on 11 May 2018 by LCE Architects on behalf of HIPP Investments Ltd and approved on 22 November 2018.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

Nb: This section is sketchy as depends for completion on ongoing architectural re-designs and decisions about options. It includes possibilities not yet determined.

Introduction

This section considers the likely impact of proposals for restoration of the Hippodrome as a lyric theatre in relation to the policies set out in Section 4. The plan is to restore the whole of the original 1901 theatre building. Alterations will be made only where necessary to improve access, accommodation and circulation for audiences and to make back-stage facilities suitable for 21st century conditions and practices. New spaces will be created that will add to the practical functioning of the building as both a performance venue and community asset.

All architectural elements of high significance will be carefully retained and restored. All exposed architectural elements and features of significance will be preserved as far as possible and, if possible, enhanced and better revealed. New services will be inserted in a manner that preserves the historic fabric and changes will be sympathetic to the architectural qualities of the building.

The most important addition will be the 'enabling' development above the service yard and in the upper part of Hippodrome House, which will be independent of but integrated with the theatre.

Problems of the existing building

After more than 13 years out of use, the major issues which must be addressed urgently include the damage that has been allowed to affect the historic fabric. Water ingress has had a continuing and cumulative effect, exacerbated by the lack of heating. Pigeons and rats infest the building.

The flat floor in the auditorium renders the stage area incongruously lower and therefore unusable in the current configuration. The height to the grid in the fly-tower is inadequate by contemporary standards.

Vehicular access to the service yard is difficult and could be ameliorated by removal of part of the wall between the yard and the roadway behind Dukes Lane.

Inadequate spaces

- The foyer is attractive but cramped.
- Assembly and circulating space is inadequate for the proposed seating capacity.
- There is insufficient room for a bar.
- There is not enough merchandising space.
- There is no rehearsal space.
- There is no adequate space for set assembly and scene storage.
- There is no wheelchair access.
- There are not enough toilets.
- There are no lifts for the public or services.
- Facilities for disability are inadequate or absent.
- There is no space for the proposed community, emerging talent and education programmes.
- The back-of-house arrangements are poorly organised for efficient use.
- There are no catering facilities.
- The ground floor of Hippodrome House is cramped and impedes circulation.
- The basement of Hippodrome House is shabby and impractical.
- There is no discernible office space.
- There is no box office.

The setting

The setting of the Hippodrome is uninviting but is not amenable to radical change. Indeed, it is more likely that restoration of the theatre would stimulate improvement in the surrounding area.

- The gated roadway between the Hippodrome and Dukes Lane [88, 97] has an unwelcoming effect.
- The narrowness of Middle Street [94] renders visibility of the façade limited to north-south oblique angles; features that work within the longitudinal views could add to appreciation of the frontage.
- Access would be improved by making Middle Street into shared space, if not pedestrianised.
- Signage from adjacent streets will be desirable.

The proposals: exterior

The Middle Street frontage

This is currently despoiled by security panels and an abundance of graffiti, all of which will be removed. Reinstatement to Frank Matcham's modified version of Lewis Karlake's original, with exit doors and stained glass windows, is the obvious aim. Restoration of the canopy and new signage projecting from the building will improve visibility at the oblique angles in the street.

Glazed enclosure of the area between the towers at first level will create new space for a circle bar and improve visibility and coherence. [This could be cantilevered to the current extent of the canopy, which it would replace, and the underside used for signage.]

The north and east façades of Hippodrome House

At present an unattractive assembly of windows and light wells. Removal of the narrow section on the north side providing access to the flats [104] will be removed and the building extended to enclose the yard [102]. This will improve the southward view and the active frontage of Middle Street.

The east façade [43, 44] will be integrated with the new development that will incorporate the section of yard. The conservatory and so-called 'elephant house' in this yard [43] will be removed. Although of some historical significance, their demolition is necessary to make room for the Studio and improved circulation space from the foyer into the main auditorium..

Ship Street

The solid mass of the fly-tower [98] will be concealed by the development above the yard, stepping up from the three-storey street frontage, with access for large delivery trucks enclosed as far as possible for security and to contain noise of unloading and loading.

The historic roof

The roof of the auditorium will be enclosed by an outer skin for acoustic encapsulation that will protect the dome, additionally providing anchorage points within the auditorium for lighting grids and other suspended production facilities. The sliding ventilator, although now uncommon, will therefore be removed.

The flat roof at second-floor level behind 52A Middle Street [45] will be built over.

The proposals: interior

Front-of-house

The foyer space between the street and the auditorium [34, 35] is narrow and unsuitable as an entrance, although it will provide an important means of egress. Additional use in keeping with its heritage significance will be found. The flanking towers will provide exits down from the circle.

A new entrance to the theatre will be created on the ground floor of Hippodrome House, with the box office and a café-bar to be open throughout the day, even when there are no performances. This will stimulate footfall, allow visitors to see the work being carried out while restoration is under way and generate a 'buzz'.

The auditorium

Restoration of the walls, ceiling and proscenium will be to Matcham's original with the modifications by Crewe and Emblin Walker.

The flat floor will be removed and returned to Crewe's original raked floor [52, 53, 58, 64], with the potential to deploy a demountable flat floor.

The mezzanine floor and spiral staircase above the stage will be removed, as will the flat floor over the original stage. However, the latter is raked—not favoured today—and will be replaced by a flat stage.

The remaining bingo tables in the circle will be removed and that section returned to seating. Facilities for projection and an audio-visual desk will be required in this space but the existing projection room and gabled extension will be replaced by a crush bar, accessed from the balcony promenade, that will extend to the frontage, retaining the theatre's name in stucco behind the bar.

New facilities

A Studio space will be created at the rear of the public area.

New toilet facilities will be provided on either side of the auditorium.

Back-of house

The dressing rooms, green room, costume (wardrobe and wigs) department and technical areas will be reconfigured over two floors.

A new loading bay and goods lift to a scene dock will be created level with the stage.

The proposals: Hippodrome House

The building will be enlarged to incorporate the yard [102] surrounding it.

Opening up the ground floor to make an inviting entrance and assembly space will require removal of some internal walls and the Venetian Bridge [83]. This is of uncertain date and once framed the entrance to a bar; it now frames a wall and serves no purpose.

The upper floors will be incorporated into the enabling development.

Public realm

Hippodrome Lane

As identified in the Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan⁵⁸, the roadway to the south of Dukes Lane and the Hippodrome service yard 'would benefit from enhancement through environmental improvements and in some cases redevelopment'. The proposition is to create a pedestrian walkway flanking the extended Hippodrome building and providing for a stage door, entrances to the enabling development and emergency exits from both the theatre and hotel.

Conclusion

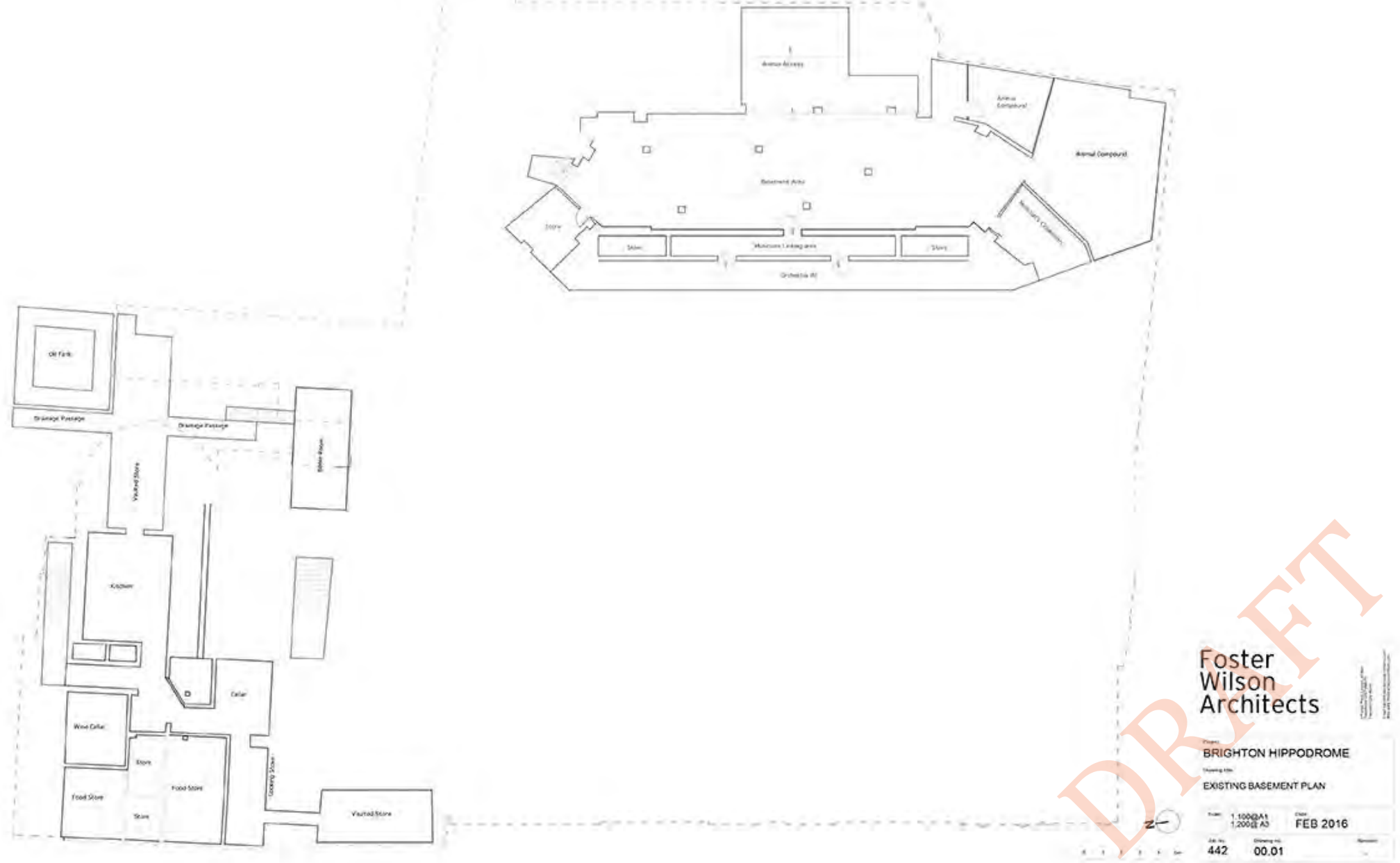
This is the only proposal to have come forward since the closure of the bingo hall in 2006 that would reinstate and revitalise the complete theatre. Almost all of the heritage asset will be retained and changes made only to make the building suitable for current practice.

The enabling development will enhance the streetscape and, like the theatre, improve the footfall and social activity in the neighbourhood.

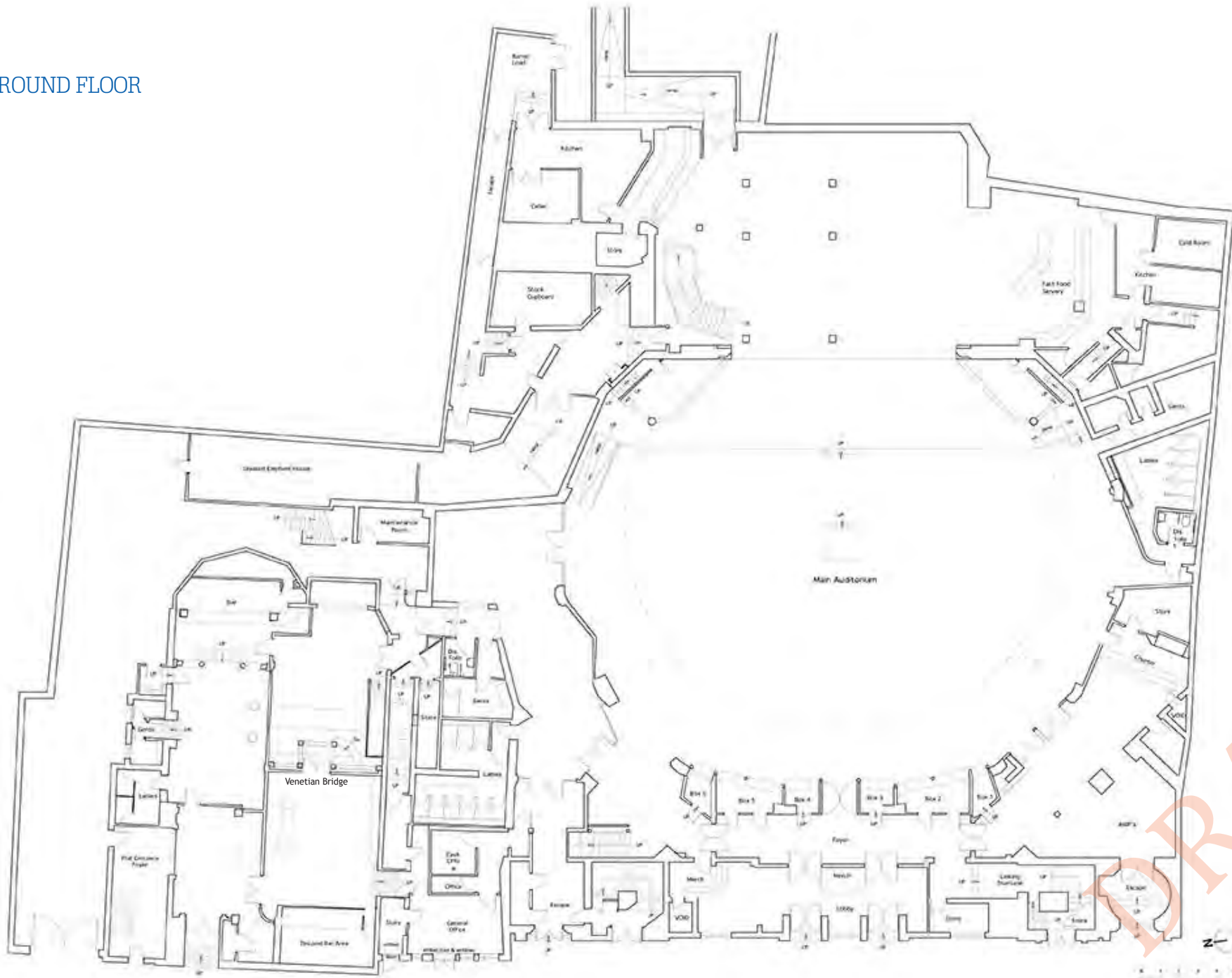


THE CURRENT CONFIGURATION

BASEMENT



GROUND FLOOR

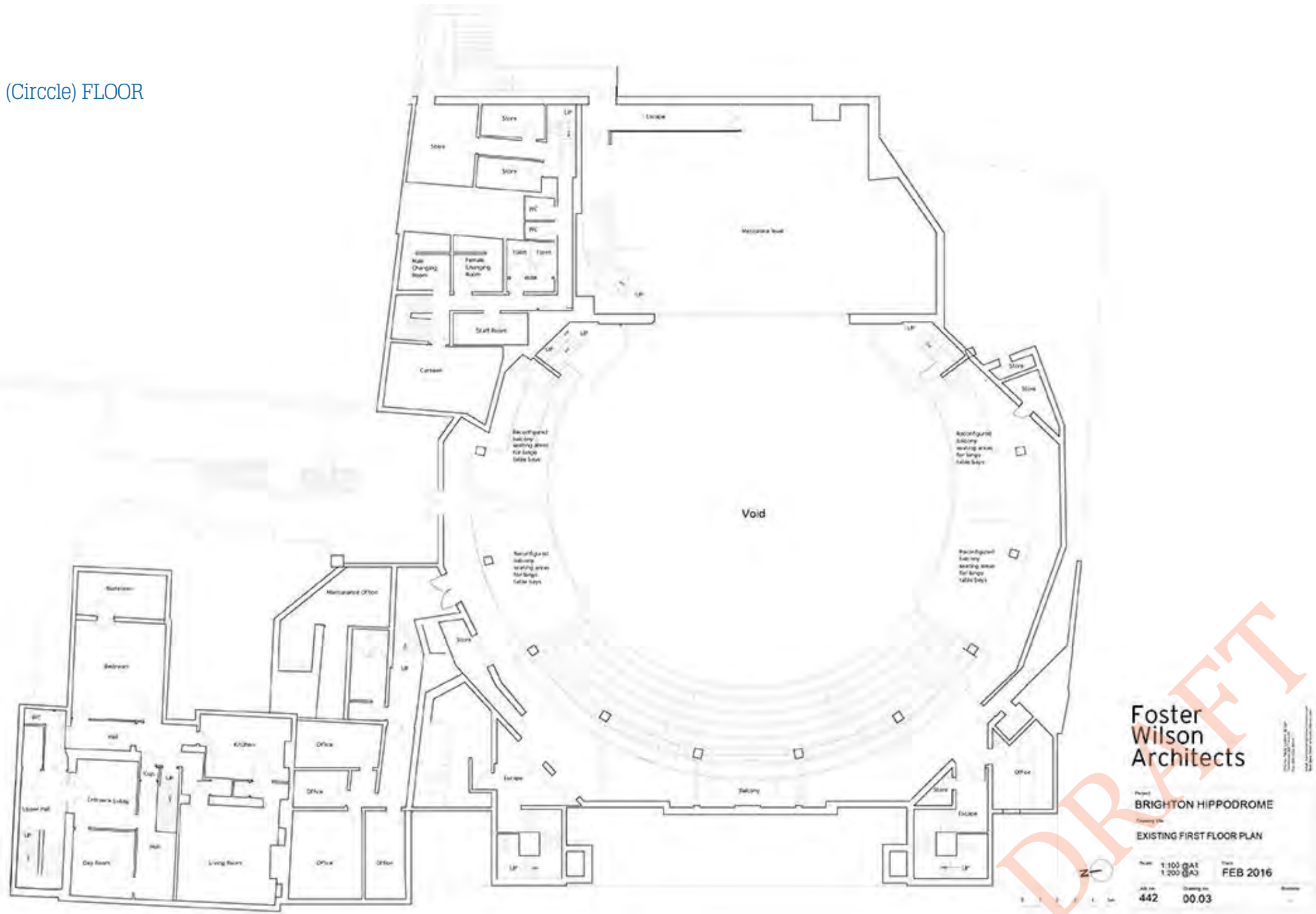


Foster
Wilson
Architects

BRIGHTON HIPPODROME
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 1:100 (EA1)
1:200 (EA3)
Date: FEB 2016
Sheet: 442
Drawing no: 00.02

FIRST (Circle) FLOOR



**Foster
Wilson
Architects**

Project
BRIGHTON HIPPODROME
Drawing No.
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Scale
1:100 (A1)
1:200 (A2)

Date
FEB 2016

Job No.
442

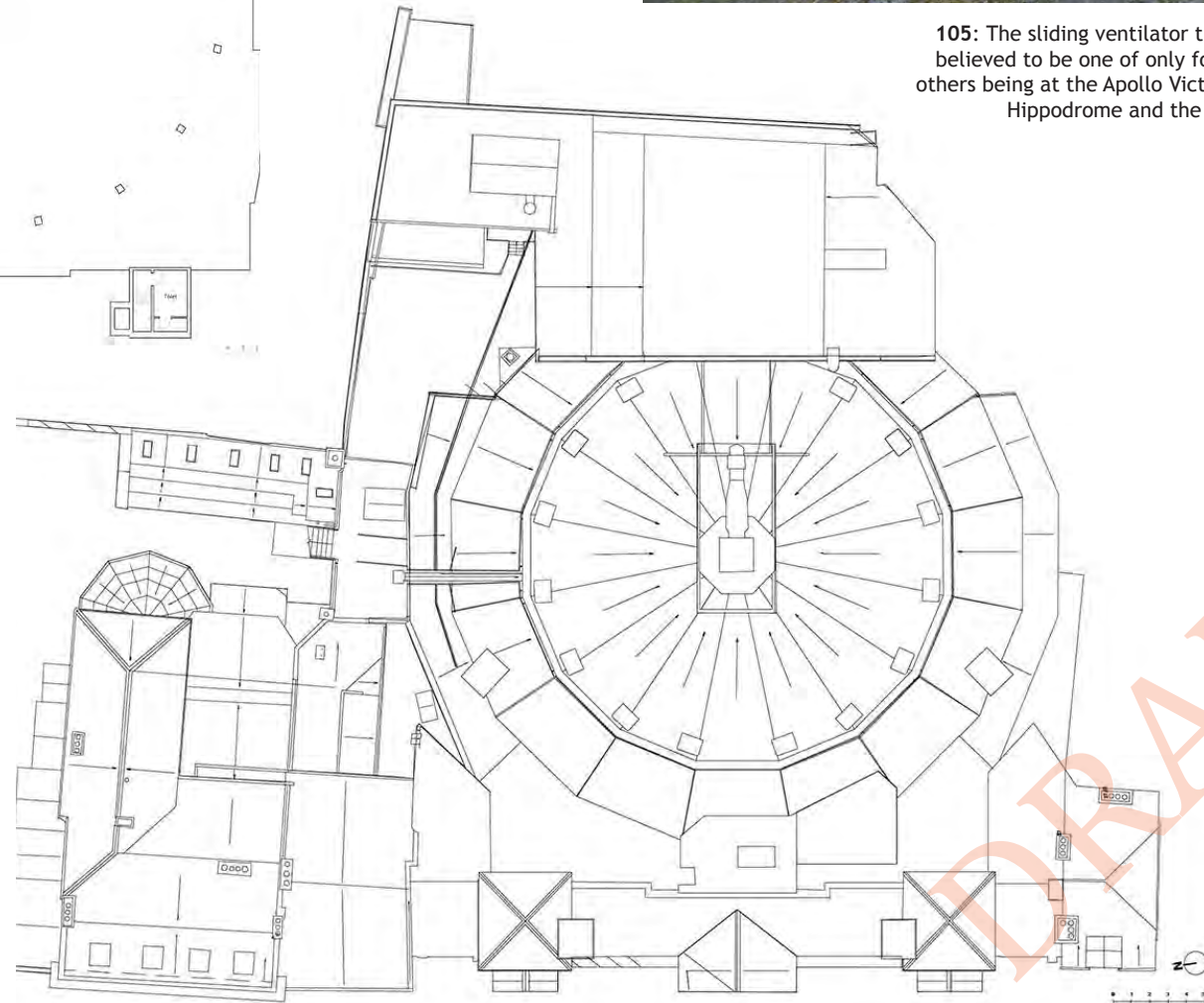
Drawing No.
00.03



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR

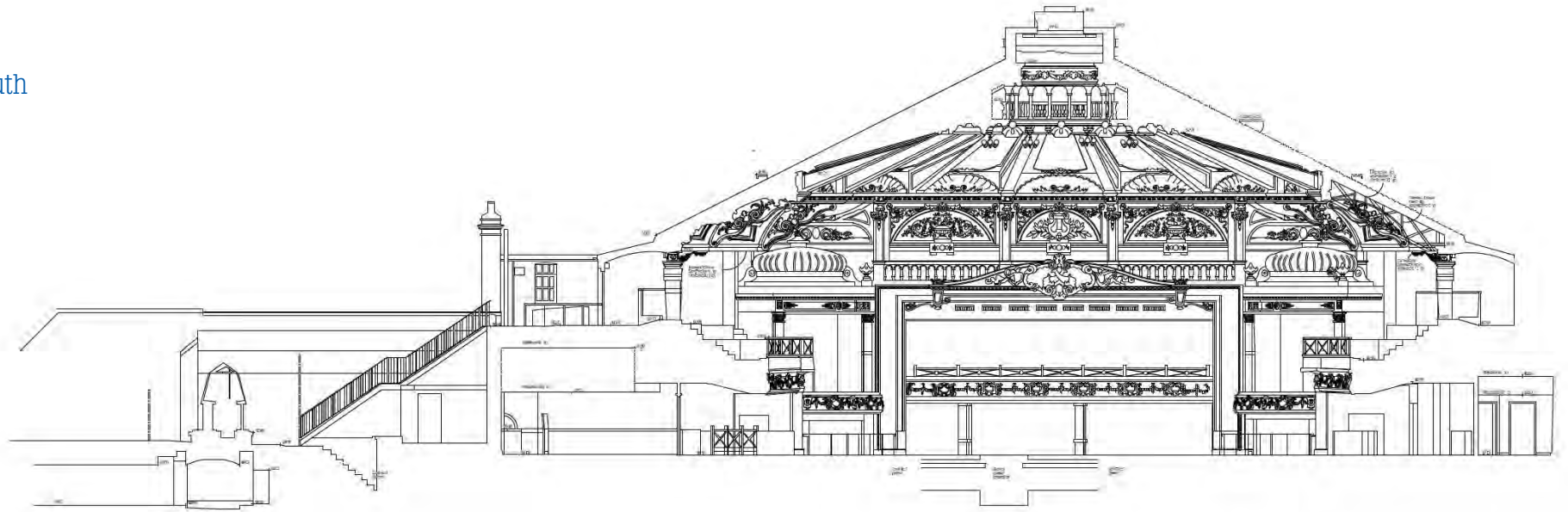


105: The sliding ventilator track on top of the dome is believed to be one of only four left in the country, the others being at the Apollo Victoria in London, the Bristol Hippodrome and the Pavilion Theatre, Glasgow

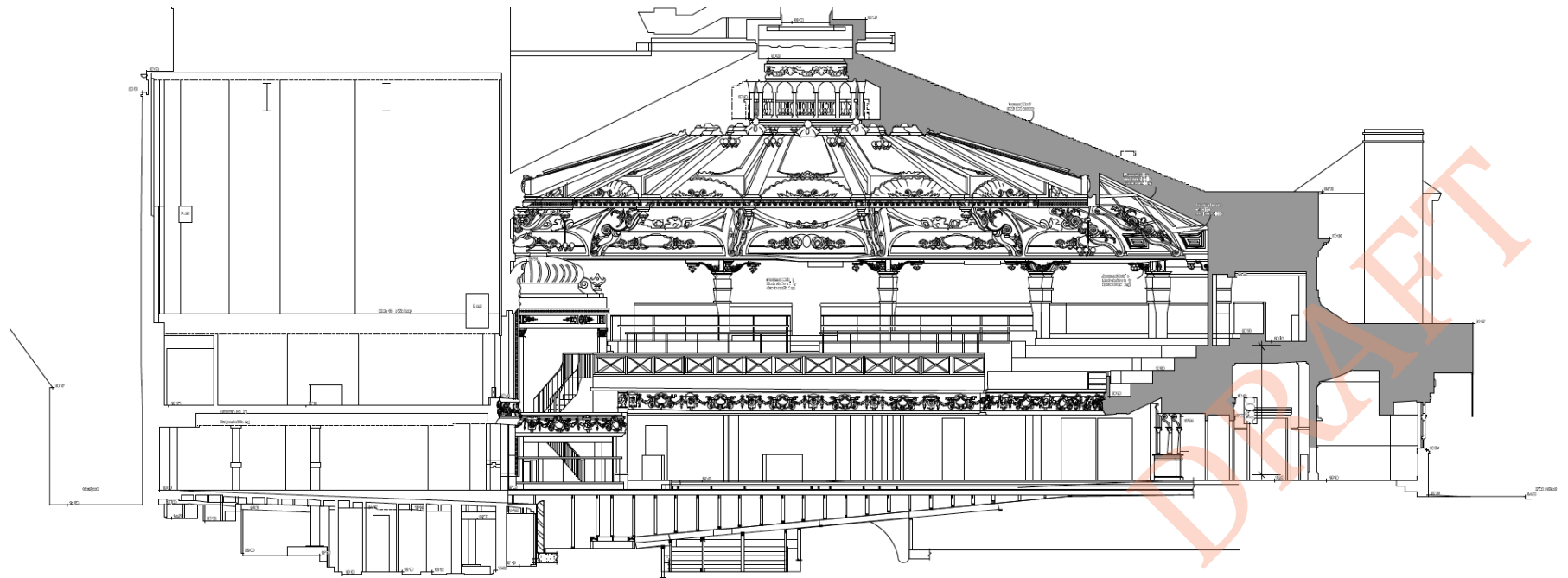
Foster
Wilson
Architects

Project		BRIGHTON HIPPODROME	
Drawing title		EXISTING THIRD FLOOR PLAN	
Scale	1:150 (A1)	Date	FEB. 2016
	1:200 (A3)		
Area	442	Perimeter	00.05

SECTION North-south



SECTION East-west



HISTORIC ENGLAND LISTING

Originally an ice rink by Kerslake dating from 1896. Converted to Hippodrome in 1901 and again to variety theatre in 1902, both to designs of Frank Matcham. Vacant and in very bad condition. Some repairs have taken place but the condition is deteriorating and the ornate plasterwork to the auditorium is particularly at risk. Consent granted in November 2013 for conversion to a multi-screen cinema was not implemented. A new private owner has recently acquired the building and Historic England is in early pre-application discussions about potential uses.

Site details

Designated site name: Mecca Bingo
 Heritage category: Listed Building grade II*
 List entry number: 1381793
 Date first listed: 20 December 1985
 Date of most recent amendment: 26 August 1999
 Statutory address: Mecca Bingo, 52-58 Middle Street
 Local planning authority: City of Brighton and Hove (UA)
 Parliamentary constituency: Brighton, Pavilion
 National Grid Reference: TQ 30912 04112

Assessment Information

Assessment Type: Building or structure
 Condition: Very bad
 Occupancy/use: Vacant/not in use
 Priority: A - Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed
 Previous Priority: A
 Ownership: Commercial company
 Designation: Listed building grade II*, CA

Brighton ice rink, now bingo hall. Opened in 1897. Enlarged and converted into a circus and theatre called The Hippodrome in 1901, architect Frank Matcham; further enlarged by the addition of 2 houses to the north in 1939. Probably brick, stone, and/or terracotta all now painted, and the greater part of the building now rendered; roof obscured by parapet. Apart from the 1939 enlargement, the building is symmetrical and laid out on a long front along Middle Street; there are 3 elements.

EXTERIOR: the central part under a lean-to roof consists essentially of 3 elliptical arches at the centre with fluted pilasters, pulvinated frieze and moulded archivolt; the 2 outer arches give onto flat-arched entrances; the central arch encloses a window with sidelights and fanlight, all with decorative leaded glass; in the sides of the 2 porches are decorative panels of opalescent glass lettered 'HIPPODROME'. On either side of this porch, one flat-arched window with central mullion; cornice of egg-and-dart moulding; the building rises at the back above the lean-to roof with a central panel lettered 'HIPPODROME' set forward; dentil and modillion cornice; blocking course, raised at the centre and now much altered. Flanking the centre are 3-storey tower-like elements with a flat-arched entrance at the bottom, the entrance framed by pilasters, cornice and pediment and having panelled door of original design; 2 flat-arched windows above and one door above that; on the inner side is what looks like a large chimneystack, now finished off with new brickwork to the parapet. The outer elements are a pair of single-storey entrances; the entrance itself 4-centred, the mouldings dying into a chamfer at the side; panelled doors of original design to the left-hand entrance and original 3-sided decorative lamps above; entrances framed by blocked Ionic engaged columns with pulvinated frieze and modillion cornice; the columns continue as engaged blocked antae above the cornice flanking a broad cartouche, the outline of which is marked by putti and scrolls; egg-and-dart moulding to cornice; the upper floor set well back.

INTERIOR: vestibule ceiling decorated with panels of arabesques. The auditorium is horseshoe-shaped in plan and the floor has been raised to accommodate a bingo hall; this runs through proscenium arch over former stage. The ornate decorations in modelled plaster make frequent use of Rococo forms. Proscenium arch with architrave having egg-and-dart moulding; shallow curved pediment over filled with a shell cartouche with Brighton's dolphins intertwined and flanked by female emblematic figures; blank balustrades either side of the pediment and 3 lunettes above filled with musical emblems in the centre and vases and arabesques to either side; 2 tiers of boxes formerly to either side, the upper boxes now only complete, flanked by pilasters with entablature and ribbed onion dome flanked by consoles and urns; the fronts of the boxes and of the gallery are decorated with cartouches, garlands and pendants. The ceiling is divided into radiating segments, each segment being subdivided into 3 panels decorated with shell and other Rococo motifs, the ribs between treated as a double console bracket between the outer and middle panels; central rose with arcaded lantern. (Carder T: The Encyclopedia of Brighton: Lewes: 1990-).

DRAFT

Lewis Karslake

Lewis Albert Frederick Karslake (1844-1912) was born in London, the 9th son (and 15th child out of 17) of a solicitor. He qualified as an RIBA district surveyor in 1873 and became a partner in the firm of Karslake and Mortimer (35 Old Queen Street, Westminster). He was surveyor to several London estates, being retained as architect and surveyor of the Brompton Hospital Estate from 1881. After Mortimer died in 1895 Karslake soon after retired from practice. The Real Ice Skating Rink was one of his last works.

Frank Matcham**Surviving theatres****Original designs**

Aberdeen, His Majesty's
 Belfast, Grand Opera House
 Blackpool, Grand
 Bristol, Hippodrome
 Buxton, Opera House
 Cheltenham, Everyman Theatre/Opera House
 Edinburgh, Empire (Palace)/Festival
 Glasgow, King's
 Harrogate, Royal Hall (with R J Beale)
 Leeds, County Arcade (adjoined Empire)
 London, Hackney Empire
 London, London Coliseum
 London, London Hippodrome
 London, Richmond Theatre
 London, Shepherd's Bush Empire
 London, Stratford Borough—façade remains
 Liverpool, Olympia
 London, Victoria Palace
 London, Wood Green Empire—façade remains
 Portsmouth, Southsea King's
 Wakefield, Royal Opera House

Reconstructions, alterations

Aberdeen, Tivoli—auditorium altered, reconstructed
Brighton, Hippodrome—major reconstruction
 Douglas, Gaiety—major reconstruction within existing shell
 Eastbourne, Devonshire Park Theatre—internal alterations
 Lancaster, Grand—alterations
 London, London Hippodrome
 London, Lyric Opera House—reconstructed 1979 within new structure
 London, London Palladium—new theatre behind façade
 London, Stratford Theatre Royal
 Manchester, Palace—alterations, present interior by Crewe
 Morecambe, Winter Gardens (with Mangnall and Littlewood)
 Newcastle upon Tyne, Theatre Royal, Grey Street—reconstruction of interior
 Nottingham, Theatre Royal—adaptation of C J Phipps original
 Portsmouth, New Theatre Royal—major reconstruction

Frank Matcham

Francis (Frank) Matcham (1854-1920) was born in Newton Abbot, Devon, the son of a brewer. After being articled in the office of local architect and surveyor George Sondon Bridgman in 1868, he moved to London in 1875, apparently without qualifying, and joined the practice of J T Robinson (1829-1878), then consulting theatre architect to the Lord Chamberlain, who had statutory control over theatre censorship.

In 1877 Matcham married Robinson's daughter and, when Robinson died a year later, he took over the practice. His redesign of the Grand Theatre, Islington was the first to use cantilevered steel to create balconies without obstructing sightlines—a concept he patented and which boosted his reputation as it also allowed seating capacity to be increased.

He established his own firm, Matcham & Co, c1884 and worked on theatre designs for the Revill family, one of the largest regional owner-operators. His staff and collaborators included Felix De Jong, a decorative artist and expert in fibrous plasterwork, and Albert Dean, a master furnisher.

The exact number of theatres Matcham designed is uncertain and according to some sources could be as many as 170 but is certainly by common consent at least 120. These included some of the best known in the country, such as the London Palladium, Hackney Empire, Shepherd's Bush Empire, London Coliseum, Buxton Opera House, Belfast Grand Opera House, Blackpool Grand, Manchester Palace and the Victoria Palace (see panel). Most are now Grade II or Grade II* listed. His Tower Ballroom in Blackpool is Grade I listed. Only 24 of his theatres are known to survive: the Brighton Hippodrome is believed to be the only one still not restored to use.

In Brighton Matcham designed the Grand (aka Eden) Theatre in North Road (1887) and the Alhambra Opera House and Music Hall (later the Palladium Cinema) in King's Road (1888). (See Appendix 3.)

He retired to and died in Westcliff-on-Sea and left over £86,000 (equivalent to more than £3.8m now). At least 15 of his surviving theatres are now marked by blue plaques, as are two of his later homes in Crouch End, London and Westcliff-on-Sea.

The Frank Matcham Society, which enthusiastically supports work of Brighton Hippodrome CIC, commemorates and celebrates his work.

Bertie Crewe

William Robert Crewe (1860-1937) trained as an architect in London and Paris and specialised entirely in theatres and

later cinemas. He was well acquainted with Frank Matcham but never confirmed Matcham's claim that Crewe had at one time worked for him. His early work was with W G R Sprague. Between them, Matcham, Sprague and Thomas Verity were responsible for more than 200 of the theatres built between 1885 and 1915. His first work for Thomas Barrasford was for alterations at the Royal Hippodrome in Liverpool; he went on to design a number of other theatres for Barrasford. As with Matcham, most of his work has been demolished.

J Emblin Walker

Joseph Emblin Walker (1841-1932) qualified as an architect in the 1860s; he also worked as an engineer and spent a period in the 1880s as clerk of works with the eminent theatre architect C J Phipps (who had rebuilt the Theatre Royal, Brighton in 1866). His later practice with Frederick Jones and Robert Cromie (who had worked for Crewe before the First World War) renovated several theatres, notably the Grade I Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (1922). The firm also designed the Hammersmith Apollo (1932), and continued after Walker's death.

E M Lawson

Edwin Maddison Lawson ARIBA (1895-1971) was born in Chester-le-Street. His practice, Edwin M Lawson & Partners, was based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As well as the work he did at the Hippodrome in 1955, he converted the Matcham-designed London Hippodrome into the Talk of the Town cabaret-restaurant in 1958 and designed studio centres for Tyne Tees Television in Newcastle (1958) and Border Television in Carlisle (1960). He also designed or modified several large country houses, mainly in his native north-east of England, including his own home in Plawsworth, Chester-le-Street.

Eric Neve & Associates

Chartered architects at 36-38 Whitefriars Street, London (1977). The firm worked on modifications at other theatres: Capitol Theatre, Scarborough (1968), Middlesborough Empire (1973), Lyceum Theatre, Exeter Street, London (1977), Liverpool Olympia (1986).

Metcalf Roundhill Design

A Leeds-based interior design firm carried out the works in 1993-1994 that included insertion of the mezzanine floor above the stage.

A WARNING FROM HISTORY What has been lost in Brighton

Attending an event at the Brighton Theatre in Duke Street (from 1790) or its replacement the Theatre Royal in New Road (from 1807) was one of the important aspects of the social scene as the town became fashionable and continued to be so for over 150 years.

■ By 1900 there was a choice of four theatres;



EDEN THEATRE | GRAND THEATRE
NORTH ROAD. Architect: Frank Matcham; 1,125 seats. Operated as Eden and then Grand Theatre 1887-1931; became Grand Cinema 1931-1940; Grand Theatre again 1941-1955; demolished 1955 after a fire.

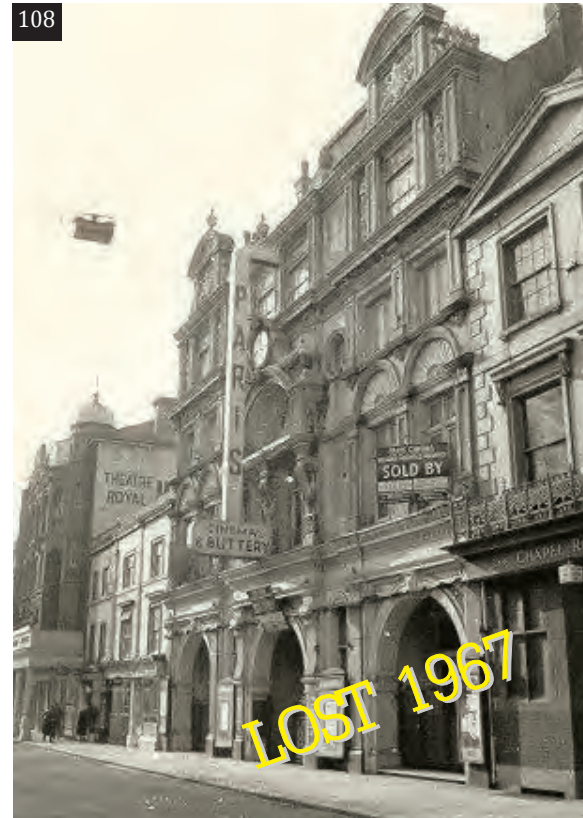


ALHAMBRA OPERA HOUSE AND MUSIC HALL | PALLADIUM/ODEON CINEMA
KING'S ROAD. Architect: Frank Matcham; 1,200 seats. Operated as Alhambra 1888-1912; Palladium Cinema with occasional live shows 1912-1956; demolished 1963, when still evidently a theatre, as shown here.

■ After the Second World War Brighton had eight large town centre theatres and a dozen cinemas.

It was on this cultural infrastructure that much of Brighton's civic reputation was built. Brighton was the theatre capital of the South-east region.

Central Brighton now has only one purpose-built theatre of any significant size, one concert hall, one multiplex (for now) and a boutique twin-screen cinema, one conference centre and several pub theatres and small venues.



EMPIRE THEATRE OF VARIETIES COURT | COURT CINEMA | DOLPHIN THEATRE | PARIS CINEMA
NEW ROAD. Empire Theatre of Varieties 1892-1909, Court Cinema 1909-1947, Dolphin/Her Majesty's Theatre 1946-1955, Paris Cinema 1955-1963; 1,400 seats (finally 713); demolished 1967.

This is a pale imitation of what Brighton used to boast.

In 2001-2002, buoyed by the success of the Place to Be campaign that led to city status in 1997, Brighton and Hove embarked on a £350,000 campaign to become European City of Culture in 2008⁶³. As Brighton and Hove still entertains the ambition to make the city a cultural destination, to do so without the Hippodrome as part of the arts and culture offer, would appear to be shortsighted.

It is now recognised that the city has surrendered much of its leading position as a south-coast cultural location to



IMPERIAL THEATRE | ESSOLDO CINEMA
NORTH STREET. Architect: Samuel Beverley. Operated as the Imperial Theatre 1940-1948; 1,870 seats; became the Essoldo Cinema 1948-1964 with occasional live shows 1957-1964; demolished in 2001.

Eastbourne, Hastings and Worthing, and is slipping behind nationally. This was recurrent theme in the workshops about the new cultural framework.

This process has been worsening for the past 50 years: in the late 1950s and 1960s other towns— Coventry, Sheffield, Bolton, Nottingham, Liverpool—built or acquired civic theatres.

Brighton Corporation considered acquiring the Hippodrome in 1964 as a municipal theatre but more likely for replacement by a multi-storey car park.⁶⁴

The round of workshops held to inform discussions about a cultural framework for the city has shown the extent of (largely uncoordinated⁶⁵) grassroots activity in the arts and culture. To coalesce this latent potential into a dynamic trend the process needs catalysts that are in themselves dynamic, visible and unavoidable—like opening a new theatre.

Such important tasks of developing young people’s skills are long-term propositions. Adopting the stated aims of becoming a ‘centre of excellence for culture and wellbeing’

and a ‘pay it forward’ city⁶⁶, creating a virtuous circle of cultural investment, restoration of the Hippodrome along the lines proposed in the business plan would be one of the surest and fastest routes to a significant leap forward. (It could be said that for over 60 years the Hippodrome did ‘pay it forward’ as a key component of the city’s economy.)

Nationally famous in its day, the Hippodrome is still available for restitution. Meanwhile, it stands as a decaying epitome of what Brighton once was—but could be once again.



WEST PIER THEATRE
Operated 1893-1940, 1946-1965; 1,000 seats; damage and eventual collapse of pier.



PLAYHOUSE THEATRE | CONTINENTALE CINEMA
SUDELEY PLACE. Architects: H N Goulty, Denman & Matthew. Former chapel, operated as King’s Cliff Cinema 1920-1946; Playhouse Theatre (repertory) 1946-1949; Playhouse/Continental Cinema 1949-1986. Converted to housing 1990.



THEATRE ROYAL
NEW ROAD. Theatre Royal. Architects: C J Phipps, C E Clayton, 952 seats (but 200 with restricted views).



PALACE PIER THEATRE
Operated 1901-1940, 1946-1973; 1,500 seats; removed to storage 1973 with an unfulfilled promise of reinstatement.



ASTORIA
GLOUCESTER PLACE. Architect: Edward Stone. Operated 1933-1977; 1,823 seats, stage facilities occasionally used but closed off 1958; reduced to 1,230 seats; bingo hall 1977-2007; Grade II listed in 2000. Demolished 2018.



HIPPODROME
MIDDLE STREET. Architects: Frank Matcham, Bertie Crewe; 1,350-1,500 seats (potential). Circus-theatre 1901-1902; theatre 1902-1964; bingo hall 1967-2006.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

The ice-skating rink was intended for public recreation. Nonetheless, exhibition and competitive events took place.

The circus-theatre was too short-lived (and probably too poorly managed) to have left a significant mark.

1902-1920

Right from the start the variety theatre was populated by acts of fame and distinction. Many of these had been engaged in music hall and earned their reputations in the late Victorian era. Among names still known to even a casual awareness of music hall are Harry Lauder, G H Elliott, George Robey, Lily Langtrety, Will Fyffe, Little Tich, Hetty King and Vesta Tilley (married to Walter de Frece, owner of the Hippodrome from 1910).

Acts came from the United States: Eugene Stratton, Harry Houdini and, in 1911 (four years before his first film), W C Fields. Visitors from the Continent included Yvette Guilbert (famously portrayed in posters by Toulouse-Lautrec), Grock and Sarah Bernhardt (performing in French).

Famous thespians, seeking to broaden their appeal, toured one-act plays and sketches as part of the variety bill. Brightonians saw Mrs Patrick Campbell, Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss, Bransby Williams, Madge Temple and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree on the Hippodrome stage and were offered the Imperial Russian Ballet, La Scala Opera and dancer Adeline Genée.

The Hippodrome's significance involves people as well as the building.

116: The Beatles in their Hippodrome dressing room

117: which was still identifiably unchanged in 2017.



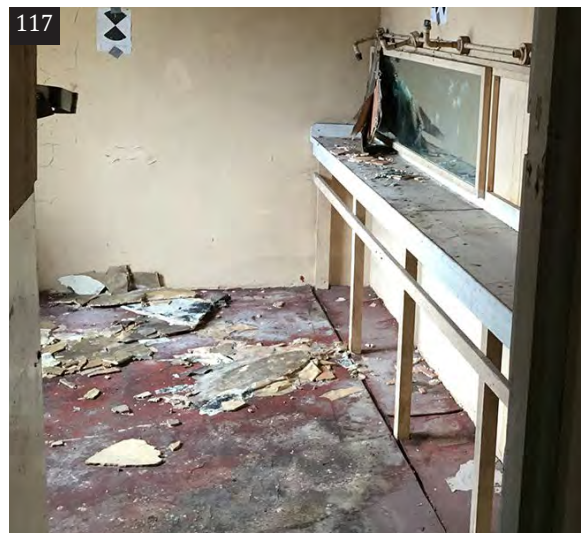
Shows attracted audiences from across the social spectrum, the average Brightonian (if there is such a thing) rubbing shoulders with the quality and even royalty: Alfred Vanderbilt, the Duke and Duchess of Fife and the future Edward VIII.

1920-1950

As what had been called music hall became known as variety, performers already working on stage and in some cases making gramophone records became more familiar through the wireless. Audiences wanted to see what they looked like and when talking pictures arrived at the end of the 1920s, audiences wanted to see the likes of Gracie Fields, George Formby and Arthur Askey even more than before their screen fame.

Dance bands were a staple element of broadcasting from the late 1920s and played in theatres: Jack Hylton, Jack Payne, Roy Fox, Lew Stone, Harry Roy and Henry Hall all regularly topped the bill at the Hippodrome. The BBC broadcast *Henry Hall's Guest Night* from the stage in 1942 and visited the Hippodrome periodically for live relays until 1960.

The first live broadcast, however, was a 90-minute performance of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* by the Covent Garden company, conducted by John Barbirolli, in March 1931. In fact, the Hippodrome was the Brighton theatre of choice for opera and ballet companies: the D'Oyly Carte, Sadlers's Wells and British National opera companies, the latter conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham as well as Barbirolli. Anna Pavlova, Sadler's Wells Theatre



Ballet and the Markova-Dolin Company of Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin also visited.

International stars included Dame Nellie Melba, Paul Robeson, Louis Armstrong, Sophie Tucker, Fats Waller, The Millas Brothers, The Ink Spots and even Tom Mix and his wonder horse Tony.

Producers increasingly put together variety shows as themed revues. Musical from both sides of the Atlantic toured: *No! No! Nanette!*, *Rio Rita*, *Chu Chin Chow* and the works of Ivor Novello, a regular visitor to Brighton, who starred in his own productions. The roll-call of actors was impressive: Gertrude Lawrence, Sybil Thorndike, Raymond Massey, Jack Buchanan, Gladys Cooper, Jessie Matthews and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Lawrence Olivier, aged 17, made his professional debut in a one-act play for a charity show in August 1925 and tripped on his entrance.

Max Miller

The great actor may have been Lord Olivier of Brighton but if any one stage star is associated with the Hippodrome, it is Brighton's own cheeky chappie Max Miller. He first appeared, well down in the bill, in 1928 and returned two or three times a year until 1960. In the second house on 3 March 1938 he established a record for a single variety turn by performing for 41 minutes without a break—at a time when the average was 10-15 minutes. In autumn 1940 he played at the Hippodrome for 12 out of 14 weeks, with only two one-week breaks for other shows, at the top of a regularly changing bill. His statue stands in the Pavilion Gardens, opposite the Theatre Royal but spiritually belongs in Middle Street.

1950-1964

The evolution after the Second World War was gradual but relentless and eventually radical. Variety had been included in television broadcasts from the start of the regular BBC service in 1936. But from 1955 the addition of ITV placed much more emphasis on light entertainment. Hardly surprising as the new companies were often headed by variety agents and theatre owners.

ITV's flagship programme was *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, presented by Val Parnell, managing director of Moss Empires, owner of the Hippodrome. The chairman of Moss Empires, Prince Littler, was also a director of ATV. It could be argued that the strategy of capitalising on variety for the benefit of their lucrative television contracts sounded the death-knell for their theatres. Although audiences wanted to see the big comedy

and singing TV stars—Max Bygraves, Frankie Vaughan, Ken Dodd, Tony Hancock, Morecambe & Wise, Frankie Howerd, Tommy Cooper and the rest—the appeal of lesser-known acts diminished.

As variety faded, touring plays and musicals filled more weeks at the Hippodrome: John Osborne's *The World of Paul Slickey* and *The Entertainer* (a return for Laurence Olivier), Arnold Wesker's *Chips with Everything*, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop production of *Oh! What a Lovely War* and a number that are now well buried in theatre history. Some actors at the start of their careers—Julie Andrews, Michael Crawford, Sean Connery, Michael Caine and Nigel Hawthorne—were in the casts that came to the Hippodrome.

Dance was still important, represented by Ballet Rambert, the Festival Ballet (with John Gilpin and Anton Dolin), the Royal Ballet and the Red Army Singers, Dancers and Musicians.

American stars still came: Laurel and Hardy, Billy Eckstine, Chico Marx and Sammy Davis Jr. But by the end of the 1950s it was pop stars that drew the crowds: Americans like Sam Cooke, Ben E King, Brenda Lee, Gene Vincent and Carl Perkins alongside the home-gown variety—Tommy Steele, Lonnie Donegan, Marty Wilde, Cliff Richard and The Shadows, Helen Shapiro, Frank Ifield and Mark Wynter—paving the way for the last wave of variety shows headed by the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, The Who, The Hollies, Te Animals and, of course, The Beatles, whose third visit in October 1964 was documented in unique back-stage photographs for *Beatles Monthly*.

Stage entertainment had changed and in 1964 the Hippodrome offered little more than Sunday night pop concerts and the occasional play. Even that year's summer-season variety show starring another Brighton favourite, Dora Bryan, could not pull in audiences.

Selected shows

Revue

The Passing Show
The Whirl of the Town
Shell Out
Hot and Cold
Hanky Panky
Airs and Graces
Ciro's Frolics
The Passing Show of 1918
Laughing Eyes
Any Lady
The Passing Show of 1919
The Follies of 1919
Flashes
The Passing Show of 1920
The Follies of 1920
Stunts
Jingles
Patches
Spangles
Charlot's Revue
What Price the Navy
Folies Bergère
London Rhapsody
Here Lies Truth
The Shining Hour
The Gay Divorce
This'll Make You Whistle
Black and White Minstrel Show
Sweet Aloes
Jill, Darling
Twenty to One

Musicals

The Belle of New York
Mlle Zozo
Cash on Delivery
High Jinks
The Better 'Ole
Petticoat Fair
No! No! Nanette!
Too Many Girls
Hullo America!
A (K)Night in Venice
The Circus Queen
Pretty Peggy
Whirled into Happiness

Our Liz
Irene
Battling Butler
Little Nellie Kelly
Poppy
Mercenary Mary
My Son John
Sky High
The Street Singer
The Apache
Shake Your Feet
The Gay Lieutenant
One Dam Thing After Another
Funny Face
The Five O'Clock Girl
Bitter Sweet
Show Boat
Sunny Side Up
Mr Cinders
The New Moon
Chu Chin Chow
The Fleet's Lit Up
You, Of All People
The Women
Me and My Girl
Proscenium
Murder in Mayfair
French for Love
Lights Up!
Crest of the Wave
Lilac Time
Rio Rita
The Dancing Years
The Love Racket
Perchance to Dream
King's Rhapsody
Under the Counter
This Year of Grace
Wake Up and Dream
Operette
She Wanted a Cream Front Door
The Marquise
Bless the Bride
Gay's the Word
The Teahouse of the August Moon
Grab Me a Gondola
South Pacific
Salad Days
Wildest Dreams

Vanity Fair
Fings Ain't What They Used To Be
Expresso Bongo
Stop the World—I Want to Get Off
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

Plays

Candida
The Constant Wife
The Long and the Short and the Tall
Ashes
A Taste of Honey
Make Me an Offer
The Haunted Light
The Entertainer
Little Darlings
Roar Like a Dove
A View from the Bridge
The World of Paul Slickey
The Night Life of a Virile Potato
Wild Violets
The World of Suzie Wong
Rebecca
Return to Mirredal
Little Mary Sunshine
Boss Woman
Don't Tell Father
The Gimmick
Spoof
Just William
Chips With Everything
The Poker Session
Man on the Stairs
Oh! What a Lovely War

Operetta

Maid of the Mountains
Rose Marie
The Student Prince
The Merry Widow
White Horse Inn
The Chocolate Soldier
The Desert Song
Chu Chin Chow
The Vagabond King
Peter Pan
Lilac Time
The Quaker Girl

THEY PLAYED AT THE HIPPODROME

1901-1920

Music hall

Imperial Russian Ballet
La Scala Opera
Lyceum English Operatic
Company
Moody-Manners Opera
Company
Sir Joseph Beecham's English
Grand Opera Company

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree
Sir Frank Benson
Sarah Bernhardt
Mrs Patrick Campbell
Adeline Genée
Seymour Hicks & Ellaline
Terriss
Decima Moore
Madge Temple
Irene Vanbrugh
Violet Vanbrugh
Edmund Gwenn
Bransby Williams
Albert Chevalier
Charles Coburn
G H Elliott
Harry Lauder
Charles Penrose
George Robey
Eugene Stratton
Florrie Forde
Will Fyffe
Wilkie Bard
Lily Langtrej
Ada Reeve
Ella Shields
Marie Lloyd
Vesta Tilley
Hetty King
Vesta Victoria
Nellie Wallace
Billy Bennett
Harry Tate
Alice Delysia

Yvette Guilbert
Lily Morris
George Leyton
Little Tich
Albert Whelan
Chung Ling Soo
David Devant
Harry Houdini
Marriott Edgar
Eight Lancashire Lads
R G Knowles
Lupino Lane
Ernie Lotinga
George Mozart
Naughton & Gold
Scott & Whaley
Robb Wilton
Grock
W C Fields

1921-1950
Radio and cinema
British National Opera
Company (Sir Thomas
Beecham, John Barbirolli)
Covent Garden Opera Com-
pany (cond John
Barbirolli)
Royal Carl Rosa Opera
Company
D'Oyly Carte Opera Company
Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet
Sadler's Wells
Opera/Operetta
Markova Dolin Company

Dame Nellie Melba
Alicia Markova
Anna Pavlova
John Barbirolli
Sir Thomas Beecham
Billy Mayerl
Richard Tauber
Paul Robeson
Louis Armstrong & His Band
Jack Hylton & His Band
Henry Hall & His Orchestra
Roy Fox & His Band
Debroy Somers' Band

Jack Payne & His Band
Lew Stone & His Band
Paul Whiteman & His Band
Jay Wilbur & His Band
Harry Roy & His Band
Ambrose & His Orchestra
Billy Cotton & His Band
Ivy Benson & Her All Girls
Band
Geraldo & His Band
Nat Gonella & His Georgians
George Formby
Max Miller
Ronald Frankau
Will Hay
George Burns & Gracie Allen
Max Wall
Arthur Lucan & Kitty
McShane
Gracie Fields
Stanley Holloway
Tommy Handley
Elsie & Doris Waters
Monsewer Eddie Gray
Nat Jackley
Flanagan & Allen
The Crazy Gang
Jewel & Warriss
Bebe Daniels & Ben Lyon
Jack Warner
Tommy Trinder
Sandy Powell
Frank Randle
Arthur Askey
Richard Murdoch
Ted Ray
Vic Oliver
Sid Field
Jimmy James
Norman Evans
Cyril Fletcher
Hylda Baker
Sybil Thorndike
Cicely Courtneidge
Jack Buchanan
Jack Hulbert
Gertrude Lawrence
Ivor Novello
Vivien Leigh

Marie Lohr
Raymond Massey
Ralph Lynn
Evelyn Laye
Fay Compton
Douglas Byng
Gladys Cooper
Douglas Fairbanks Jr
Jessie Matthews
Tallulah Bankhead
Frank Lawton
Robertson Hare
Leslie Banks
Tubby Edlin
Sonnie Hale
Florence Desmond
Elizabeth Allan
Layton & Johnstone
Sophie Tucker
Fats Waller
Mills Brothers
Carl Brisson
Elsie Carlisle
Vera Lynn
Anne Shelton
Leslie Sarony
The Two Leslies
Clapham & Dwyer
Flotsam & Jetsam
Western Brothers
Elsie Randolph
Adelaide Hall
Elizabeth Welch
Larry Adler
Daisy & Violet Hilton
Houston Sisters
Turner Layton
Leslie Hutchinson (Hutch)
Charlie Kunz
Rawicz & Landauer
Reginald Foort
Tom Mix with his wonder
horse Tony
Tessie O'Shea
The Street Singer (Arthur
Tracy)
Tiller Girls
Wilson, Keppel & Betty

1946-1964

Television, pop music

Festival Ballet (Anton Dolin,
John Gilpin)
Red Army Singers, Dancers
& Musicians
Royal Ballet
Manuela Vargas & Company
African Dance Company
(Senegal)
The Masovian Ballet (Poland)
South Coast Light Opera
Company
Ballet Rambert
Theatre Workshop (Joan
Littlewood)

Max Bygraves
Frankie Vaughan
Ken Dodd
Tony Hancock
Morecambe & Wise
Frankie Howerd
Tommy Cooper
Jimmy Edwards
Des O'Connor
Bob Monkhouse
Fred Emney
Michael Bentine
Freddie Frinton
Terry Scott
Benny Hill
Bruce Forsyth
John Inman
Larry Grayson
Charlie Chester
Arthur English
Arthur Haynes
Richard Hearne
Jimmy Wheeler
Al Read
Harry Secombe
Arthur Worsley
Mike & Bernie Winters
Jimmy Tarbuck
Norman Vaughan
Harry Worth
Terry-Thomas
Roy Castle

David Nixon
Dagenham Girl Pipers
Morton Fraser's Harmonica
Gang
Peter Brough & Archie
Andrews
Joe Loss & His Band
Semprini
Josef Locke
Dennis Lotis
Litz Roza
Dorothy Squires
Donald Peers
Jimmy Young
John Hanson
Dickie Valentine
Andy Stewart
David Whitfield
Ruby Murray
Eddie Calvert
Winifred Atwell
Dicky Henderson
Edmund Hockridge
Beverley Sisters
Petula Clark
Alma Cogan
Matt Monro
Laurence Olivier
Wilfred Hyde White
Marius Goring
Hermione Gingold
Max Adrian
David Kossoff
Bernard Miles
Dora Bryan
Ursula Howells
Ian Carmichael
Leslie Sands
Donald Sutherland
Norman Rodway
Bernard Cribbins
Nigel Hawthorne
Julie Andrews
Michael Crawford
Michael Caine
Sean Connery
Sadler's Wells Opera
Jean Sablon
Red Ingle & Company

Laurel & Hardy
Chico Marx
Nicholas Brothers
Guy Mitchell
Olsen & Johnson
Sammy Davis Jr
Deep River Boys
Al Martino
Mel Tormé
Billy Eckstine
Don Lang & His Frantic Five
Little Richard
Chuck Berry
Gene Vincent
Carl Perkins
Bryan Hyland
Sam Cooke
Ben E King
Brenda Lee
Jerry Lee Lewis
Little Eva
Roy Orbison
Tommy Steele
Anthony Newley
Temperance Seven
Georgie Fame
Cliff Richard & The Shadows
Marty Wilde
Helen Shapiro
Vernons Girls
Mark Wynter
Dusty Springfield
Johnny Kidd & The Pirates
Lonnie Donegan
Frank Ifield
Russ Conway
The Batchelors
Adam Faith
John Barry Seven
The Beatles
Gerry & The Pacemakers
Billy J Kramer
Swinging Blue Jeans
The Rolling Stones
The Kinks
The Animals
Dave Clark Five
The High Numbers
The Hollies

HIPPODROME TIMELINE

1784

- Reference to a school opened by Cornelius Paine (1755-1826) is believed to relate to 44 (later 52) Middle Street.

1785

- Rental value of the school is 5 gns.

1845

- 44 Middle Street is occupied by George Wigney (1789-1847), brewer, and by his widow until c1850.

1852

- 44 Middle Street is occupied by brewer Charles William Catt (1815-1900). The household comprises Catt, his wife, four children and eight servants.

1882

- Middle Street is renumbered: 44 becomes 52.

1884

February 13 and 21 Planning application for new portico at 52 Middle Street.

1887

June 2 New building plans for conservatories at 52 Middle Street submitted to Brighton Borough Council by Denman for Catt.

1896

- Charles Catt sells 52 Middle Street.

September 3 Building plans for a skating rink submitted to Brighton Borough Council by Lewis Karlake.

October 1 New building plans for a skating rink submitted to Brighton Borough Council by Karlake.

December 3 Building plans for skating rink machinery sheds submitted to Brighton Borough Council by Karlake.

- Drainage plan [for skating rink].

1897

October 16 **Building opens as the Real Ice-skating Rink.** The rink is open seasonally from October to March.

1899

October 14 Brighton Ice Rink re-opens for the season. J B Mellison, proprietor of the roller skating rink in West Street, is the new lessee and manager.

November 17 Brighton Real Ice Skating Palace Ltd is struck off the Companies Register.

1900

April 21 **Skating rink closes** 'for the summer'.

May 24 Auction of the ice skating rink is announced.

June 5-6 Contents of 52 Middle Street, the club rooms for the skating rink, are auctioned.

June 25 The ice skating rink is offered for sale at auction but attracts no bids. Ellis Bramall decides to convert the building into a circus, a Hippodrome. Frank Matcham is appointed.

1901

January 3 Plans for conversion of skating rink to hippodrome.

July 4 Application for cornice.

August 28 **Hippodrome Theatre and Circus opens**, delayed by two more days. The opening was already been delayed by a week as the electric light is not ready.

October 18 Ellis Bramall mortgages the Hippodrome to the London City and Midland Bank.

1902

August 23 **Hippodrome closes.**

October 7 Hippodrome is auctioned by order of the mortgagees but withdrawn at £2,200.

October 22 Thomas Barrasford and his architect Bertie Crewe visit the Hippodrome to settle the 'rearrangement of the house, doing away with the ring, and redecorating, reseating, and renovating on the lines of the successful Hippodromes Mr Crewe has designed for Mr Barrasford in Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester.'

November Tom Barrasford, proprietor of music halls in the north of England, buys the building, reportedly for £40,000. He moves his headquarters to Hippodrome House, where he and his wife live.

November 27 Bankruptcy Court examination of Ellis Brammall jun, concluded. Brammall said his speculation to convert the Hippodrome from ice rink to circus involved expenditure of £35,000, including £15,000 for the alterations—about four times what he had calculated. 'He had kept no books to show how the money had gone.'

- Brighton Hippodrome Ltd incorporated (company number 73558).

December 18 Planning application for alterations.

December 22 **The Hippodrome Theatre of Varieties opens.**

1910

February 1 Tom Barrasford dies at his home in Hippodrome House after a long illness, aged 50.

March 3 Variety Theatres Controlling Company (VTCC) is registered with a capital of £50,000 in £1 shares with its principal objective to acquire Barrasford's theatres, which is achieved soon after. Directors are Walter de Frece and Alfred Butt.

1911

September 12 W H ('Billy') Boardman replaces Bertram J Brown as manager.

1915

July 13 Four drawings of alterations to the roof of the projector chambers, etc by J Emblin Walker submitted to Brighton Borough Council, approved on 20 July.

July 29 Planning application for alterations, which are carried out with no interruption in performances.

December 20 Land at the rear of 18-19 Ship Street to extend the stage house is conveyed to the Variety Theatres Controlling Company Ltd and Barrasford Ltd by Frederick Thomas Mascall.

1916

October Seating altered by J Emblin Walker from two aisles to one central and two side aisles.

1918

May 16 Planning application by H Tillstone for repairing pavement etc, 50 Middle Street and Hippodrome, etc.

1919

June 23 Palm Court opens to the public.

1920

March Palm Court granted a liquor licence.

June 8 Conveyance between (1) John Francis Wilcox Wyer and Frederick Francis Wyer and (2) Frank Leonhardt Botting and Harrie Ewart Botting containing restrictive covenants, including a provision as to light or air.

1923

January Picture shows on Sunday evenings at 18:00-22:30 and daily *thés dansants* in the Palm Court.

1924

February 24 The land to the north of the theatre occupied by the former stables is sold to the Dreadnought Garage and Motor Engineering Works Limited. This contains the Hippodrome within its present curtilage.

1928

March Hippodrome and Palm Court acquired by General Theatre Corporation (GTC), which becomes a subsidiary of Gaumont-British Picture Corporation (GBPC). VTCC goes into voluntary liquidation.

1932

April 5 Building plans for a garage submitted to Brighton Borough Council by Stavers Tiltman for D Penfold.

May 17 Planning application for garage as before.

- General Theatre Corporation (GTC) merges with Moss Empires to form Moss Empires Group but the Moss name is now applied to the Hippodrome until 1947.

- Projection room added, alterations to circle seating and the entrance canopy.

1935

June The large bar at the side of the stalls is reconstructed in Tudor style.

1936

August Reconstruction of the balcony and proscenium, new stage re-laid, general alterations carried out by T J Braybon & Son.

1938

October 11 New entrance canopy.

1947

July Hippodrome absorbed into Moss Empires circuit (chairman: Prince Littler; managing director: Val Parnell).

1949

- Alterations to foyer and saloon.

1954

December 1 Land at 20-21 Ship Street is acquired by Moss Empires.

1955

June 19 Planning application for stage extension to north and additional dressing rooms. Architect: E M Lawson.

1960

- Moss Empires planning to close theatres, aiming for chain of 12-14 theatres 'of the caliber of the London Palladium'. The Hippodrome is spared.

1963

- Progressive one-week closures begin: the theatre is dark for 9½ weeks during the year.

1964

May 18 A door and leaded glass are damaged during mod and rockers incidents.

July Brighton Corporation first considers acquisition to secure the future of the building but decides against. (The Corporation's Planning Committee suggests demolition to build a multi-storey car park.)

November 22 Last Sunday night pop concert. **Theatre closes.** The theatre has been closed for 24 weeks of the year to date.

- Buildings at 20-21 Ship Street demolished and site cleared.
- Associated TeleVision (ATV) takes over Stoll Theatres Corporation and Moss Empires.

1965

October Bernard Delfont, Robert Nesbitt and Rex Henshell visit the Hippodrome to consider a plan to collaborate with Fortes to convert the building a 'luxury night-spot on the lines of the West End's Talk of the Town'.

1966

March 23 Application for change of use of theatre (excluding flats above) and car park for production of films and recording programmes for television, approved on 29 August. World Colour Services is the tenant.

- ATV is acquired by Lew Grade's Associated Communications Corporation (ACC).
- A flat floor is installed. World Colour Services applies for a helicopter landing pad and exterior location shooting site.

1967

January 19 Freehold of the Hippodrome Theatre and land adjoining is to be registered in the Tunbridge Wells District Land Registry by Moss Empires.

May 4 *The Stage* reports that the new lessee, Mecca, has applied for planning permission for change of use. Moss Empires applied for a court order and has repossessed the theatre. A plan to collaborate with Fortes to convert the building into a night-spot has fallen through.

May 16 Application for change of use to dance hall [sic] within Class XIX of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1965.

June 16 Approval for change of use. Mecca Bingo takes over the site.

October 10 Application for approval of bingo club and prize area.

October 12 *The Stage* reports that Mecca has acquired the Hippodrome to open as a bingo hall later in the year, scotching for good 'local speculation as to the possibility of raising funds to reopen' the theatre.

November 7 Approval for bingo club and prize bingo area.

November 13 High Court issues a winding-up order for World Colour Services on a petition by Scaffolding (Great Britain) Ltd.

- **Mecca Social Club opens.**

1971

- Remodelling of stage and extension to kitchen.

1972

April 12 Plans by Eric Neve & Associates for Mecca Social Club.

May 9 Plans approved for alterations to Palm Court and stair to Venetian bridge leading up to a 'Tudor Lounge' for 'Old Time Music Hall' on the first floor of Hippodrome House. Architects: Eric Neve & Associates. Not executed.

June 9 Opening night for Olde Tyme Music Hall.

1976

July 14 The pathway on the south side of the yard is removed from title number SX87955 (20-21 Ship Street) and numbered ESX16942 in a transfer between Moss Empires Limited and Davenport Developments Limited but with reserved rights.

1980

May Planning approval for erection of replacement entrance canopy, approved 15 July.

1981

- New buffet and false ceiling at rear of stage.

1985

December 20 English Heritage lists the Hippodrome and Hippodrome House as Grade II*.

1989

- Planning application for three-storey office building fronting Ship Street on car park withdrawn.

1990

- Rank Organisation acquires Mecca Bingo and rebrands its Top Rank bingo operations with the Mecca name.

1991

November 11 Planning application refused for alterations to ground, first and second floors of Hippodrome House, including patio terrace at rear of second floor flat. Four dormer windows on front elevation, together with external decorations.

1992

June 2 Planning approval for provision of four dormer windows on Middle Street elevation. Alterations on existing ground, first and second floors, including terrace to rear of second-floor flat. External alterations and removal of existing sign to front.

1993

February 22 Building control plan for Hippodrome flats: four dormer windows and internal alterations

1994

August 8 Planning approval for erection of front wall and entry gates to car park in Ship Street.

September 20 Planning approval for internal alterations to re-arrange seating, bar and refreshment facilities, installation of mezzanine floor and external alterations including the extension of the entrance canopy across frontage.

1996

June 4 Retrospective planning permission for existing extract duct on east (rear) elevation to terminate at roof level, and installation of air supply unit at first floor level.

2000

October 11 Planning application by Mecca Bingo Club for 'minor internal alterations'.

2001

February 7 Planning approval for minor internal alterations.

2003

October The freehold is acquired by London Merchant Securities (LMS) for £1.6m. Rent for the Hippodrome is £109,796 a year. LMS already owns Dukes Lane.

2006

August 8 **Mecca bingo hall closes.**

2007

January 31 Derwent London (Urbanfirst)—new name for LMS—values Dukes Lane and the Hippodrome site at £13.1m following acquisition.

February 16 Academy Music Group (AMG, LiveNation is principal shareholder) acquires 30-year lease.

May 2 Application for certificate of lawfulness. withdrawn on 21 September.

June 11 Planning application submitted for redevelopment of the auditorium, including the provision of tiered standing areas, toilet facilities and escape routes.

September 6 Planning application withdrawn before being determined.

September 12? Derwent London sells Dukes Lane and the Hippodrome site to Cheval Properties for £20.0m.

September 12 Allied Irish Banks becomes mortgagee.

- The Hippodrome is included in the Theatres Trust's Theatre Buildings at Risk register.

2012

February 24 LiveNation expects to submit a planning application for a scheme costing more than £9m.

summer/autumn Academy Music Group/LiveNation abandon music venue proposal following advice from BHCC licensing that a late-night licence is at best unlikely.

November 20 LiveNation presents cinema/restaurant plan to BHCC.

2013

Over the next seven months various site visits and planning meetings are held about the proposals by Russ Drage Architects, Alaska Planning Consultants, Indigo Planning and LiveNation, involving Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC), English Heritage, The Theatres Trust and amenity groups.

April 18 Indigo Planning meeting with BHCC planning department and Russ Drage Architects. Plans are for cinema and restaurants include new structures. No specific mention of Vue.

April 24 Indigo tells BHCC that the site area is 0.49ha and thus not subject to an EIA. Council agreed 28 May.

October 11 Planning officer Adrian Smith's formal pre-application advice to Indigo Planning dismisses the need for any more theatres.

October 15 English Heritage pre-application advice to Indigo Planning.

October 18-19 Public exhibition of plans in the Hippodrome Service Yard.

October 20 Meeting about the cinema plans convened by Professor Gavin Henderson at the Friends Meeting House.

December 20 Planning applications BH2013/04348 and /04351 submitted by Indigo Planning on behalf of Kuig Property Investments No 6. Rejected by BHCC as incomplete.

2014

- During the year Our Brighton Hippodrome (OBH) holds meetings with Brighton & Hove City Council officers and members, Brighton Hebrew Congregation, English Heritage, LiveNation/Academy Music Group, the Theatres Trust.

February 11 Planning applications registered.

February 15 First meeting of future Our Brighton Hippodrome (OBH).

July 9 OBH and then others ask the Secretary of State to call in the planning applications, nominates the Hippodrome as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) and submits an FOI request to see the District Valuer's report.

July 16 BHCC planning committee approves application.

September 18 The Theatres Trust press conference about Theatre Buildings at Risk (TBAR) at the Theatre Royal. The Hippodrome is #1 on the list for the second year, partly because of the threatened conversion.

September 19 Planning minister Brandon Lewis rejects the call-in request.

November 28 Planning approval decided. Agreement between BHCC, Kuig Property Investments No 6 and Allied Irish Banks signed.

December Kuig puts Dukes Lane and the Hippodrome on the market.

2015

- During the year, the CIC holds meetings with Academy Music Group/LiveNation, Arts Council England, Brighton and Hove City Council officers and members, Caroline Lucas MP, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England, Monument Trust, Ship Street & Middle Street Residents Association, the Theatres Trust.

March 6 The ACV nomination is rejected on the grounds that too much time has elapsed since last in use.

March 26 BHCC debates future of the Hippodrome.

April 14 Brighton Hippodrome CIC ("The CIC") is incorporated as a community interest company.

April 24 Academy Music Group (AMG) buys the freehold of the Hippodrome site.

June 5 Approval of planning application BH2015/00787 for installation of steel door coverings, anti-climb fences and security fences (retrospective).

July 22 Inception meeting with Colliers International.

August 4 Second meeting of Stakeholder Group at Theatre Royal, Brighton.

September 17 Theatres Trust press conference for Theatre Buildings at Risk. The Hippodrome is #1 for the third year running.

November 6 Final version of Colliers International report delivered to stakeholders.

December 10 The CIC is awarded £44,600 by the Department of Communities and Local Government's Coastal Revival Fund; the bid was supported by BHCC.

2016

- During the year, the CIC holds meetings with Academy Music Group/LiveNation, Brighton and Hove City Council officers and members, Historic England, Theatres Trust, Vertex, Save Our Hippodrome, Ship Street & Middle Street Residents Association.

February 4 Meeting with BHCC re OTCA character study.

March 9 The CIC receives confirmation of £10,000 award from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

March 23 The CIC confirm award of £3,000 from the Architectural Heritage Fund.

April 4 Exploratory meeting with DTZ, managing agents for Dukes Lane.

July 13 Stakeholders (CIC, Academy Music Group, Capitol London, Theatres Trust, Historic England, Frank Matcham Society) make a presentation to BHCC officers and members.

August Heads of terms for acquisition of the site are negotiated by AMG and Capitol London, and for collaboration between Capitol London and the CIC.

October 6 Capitol London, in association with Brighton Hippodrome CIC, makes an offer for the freehold. It is rejected as falling below what the site is worth.

2017

January 16 Vertex signs a six-month exclusivity agreement with AMG.

July 19 AMG confirms that the exclusivity period has ended with no deal.

July 20 Another exclusivity period for an unknown potential purchaser begins.

November 7 Academy Music Group sells the freehold to Hippodrome Investments Limited (registered in Guernsey) for £2,075,000 plus VAT.

November 7 Registered charge (SX85045) in favour of Pivot Lending Limited, which is under an obligation to make further advances that will have priority to the extent afforded by s49(3) Land Registration Act 2002. Written consent of Pivot Lending is required for any disposition of the registered estate.

2018

April 27 Aized Sheikh and Nick Lomax (LCE Architects) present their scheme at a meeting arranged by Caroline Lucas MP with the CIC and representatives of amenity groups and Old Town residents and traders. Only the auditorium is to be kept, but its restoration and operation will be passed on to others.

November 22 Planning consent for a temporary car park in the service yard.

This timeline is extracted from a more complete version compiled by David Fisher, which can be consulted on request.

DRAFT

Notes

- 1 David Fisher: *Cinema-by-Sea: Film and Cinema in Brighton & Hove since 1896*. Brighton: Terra Media, 2012: pp43ff
- 2 That number appears to have applied to both properties thereafter, although some sources identify it as 51
- 3 *Brighton Gazette*, 3 October 1850: p5e
- 4 Street directories, *passim*
- 5 ESRO BD/D/8/2447, 2450
- 6 ESRO DB/D/7/2480
- 7 His widow, proprietor in her own right of the Dyke Hotel at Devil's Dyke and the Court Theatre/cinema in New Road, was still in residence in 1916. It was then occupied by W H ('Billy') Boardman, the Hippodrome manager, and from 1924 by his successor as manager, Harry Masters.
- 8 92/01691/FP and 92/0692/LB
- 9 Ice skating had become popular briefly in the early 1840s but was revived in the 1870s as a middle-class recreation. The country's first rink opened in Brighton's Corn Exchange in February 1874; by the spring of 1876 the town had six rinks (London had 50). [Lynn F Pearson: *The People's Palaces: The story of the seaside pleasure buildings of 1870-1914*. Buckingham: Barracuda Books, 1991, p66.] Interest waned in the 1880s and was replaced by the imported American craze for roller skating, for which a rink opened at the Hove cricket ground around 1884 and at the Grand Concert Hall in neighbouring West Street by 1895.
- 10 ESRO DB/D/7/4398
- 11 ESRO DB/D/7/4408
- 12 ESRO DB/D/7/4441
- 13 Letter from W A Padfield of the Exeter Gas Light Office, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 8 July 1897, p4a
- 14 The manager was Sir William Call, 4th bt (1849-1903). Performances were given in November 1897 by Harry Stiegert from Hamburg, silver medallist in the 1888 and 1889 German Figure Skating Championships. The first challenge match between Brighton Ice Hockey Club and Princes Ice Hockey Club from Hammersmith, London took place on 4 January 1899 (Brighton won 4-2) and the National Skating Association held its first international competition here soon after. [iceskatingresources.org/Ice&RefrigerationSystems.pdf]
- 15 *London Gazette*, 28 July 1900, p4663; 17 November 1899: p6910
- 16 *Brighton Gazette*, 12 April 1900: p6a
- 17 *Brighton Gazette*, 2 June 1900, p4f
- 18 *Brighton Gazette*, 28 June 1900, p4f
- 19 ESRO DB/D/8/4781
- 20 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 August 1901: p6c
- 21 *The Era*, 25 May 1901: p18b
- 22 The contractor was Maurice Fileman of 99 Queen's Road, Brighton [*Brighton Gazette*, 8 March 1902: p7d.]
- 23 *Brighton Gazette*, 29 August 1901: p5f
- 24 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 August 1901: p6c
- 25 Early in 1902 the stage manager left and the owners lost two court cases—one from performers who claimed they were not paid for the period of the delays in opening, [*The Era*, 25 January 1902: p20d] and another for non-payment of Edwin Oldroyd & Co, a contractor who supplied the asbestos safety curtain, claimed by Ellis Brammall to be too short in response to which the plaintiffs said the stage was lowered without their knowledge and 'that there was an overstrain of the curtain, due to the peculiar construction of the theatre'. [*The Era*, 8 February 1902: p30b.]
- 26 *The Era*, 29 November 1902: p24d
- 27 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 November 1902: p10c
- 28 ESRO DB/D/8/5073
- 29 Advertisement for A R Dean & Sons, *The Era*, 23 November 1907: p5
- 30 Eighteen of them were called the Hippodrome. Barrasford also owned and operated the Alhambra in Brussels, Alhambra in Paris, El Teatro de Novedados in Barcelona, Le Casino Variété in Marseille. 'I am contemplating starting a dozen new music-halls on the Continent,' he told *The Stage*.
- 31 Both Butt and De Frece became Conservative politicians and both were knighted after World War One; Butt was subsequently created a baronet
- 32 ESRO DB/D/7/46/833, DB/D/8/6851
- 33 ESRO DB/D/145/1931/15
- 34 source untraced
- 35 55/674
- 36 ESRO DB/A/1/1017
- 37 *The Stage*, 4 May 1967: p1
- 38 ESRO DB/D/84/5299
- 39 It is believed that a series featuring Cyril Fletcher—of which there is no physical or documentary trace—was made here but a variety series made in 1966 by Rediffusion and called *Hippodrome*, which some have attributed to the Brighton Hippodrome, was filmed at Wembley Studios.
- 40 712/1133
- 41 Members of the bingo club (free membership) would be charged 25p admission. Mecca intended to apply for a licence to serve drinks in the auditorium as well as the licensed bars. The opening (and possibly only) night for Olde Tyme Music Hall was held on 9 June 1972. Any performers who ever appeared at the Hippodrome were invited with all eats and drinks on the house. [*The Stage*, 1972-05-18: p24.]
- 42 94/0189/FP and 94/0190/LB-
- 43 BH2000/02795/LB
- 44 The Fifth Belfry Properties (UK) plc Directors' Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2013. Dublin: Companies Registration Office.
- 45 BH/2007/02204
- 46 [https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000118/M000005135/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000118/M000005135/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
- 47 This company is owned in turn by Hansard Trust Company, also registered in Guernsey, which has two shareholders: Millennium Trust Company, registered in (St Kitts &) Nevis, and Julie Margaret Welsh, a resident of St Vincent and the Grenadines. A registered charge (SX85045) exists in favour of Pivot Lending Limited, which is under an obligation to make further advances that will have priority to the extent afforded by s49(3) Land Registration Act 2002. Written consent of Pivot Lending is required for any disposition of the registered estate.
- 48 Land Registry SX85045
- 49 BH2018/01516
- 50 National Planning Policy Framework, Annex 2. February 2019.
- 51 The city's three other buildings in category A are churches. There are five more in other categories, of which two are churches
- 52 <http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/how-we-help/theatres-at-risk/175-brighton-hippodrome>
- 53 Angel Sharp Media: *Bombastic Rubbish! The theatres of Frank Matcham*. 2017; video online at vimeo.com/202799420
- 54 Dr Michael Shapland: *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for Brighton Hippodrome, Middle Street, Brighton*. Portslade, Brighton: Archaeology South-East (UCL Institute of Archaeology), March 2014.
- 55 *The Argus*. 18 May 2001 (theargus.co.uk/news/6779902__350_00_for_culture_capital_bid/); *The Guardian*, 5 October 2001 (theguardian.com/society/2001/oct/05/communities.artsfeatures/), etc
- 56 *Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One*, March 2016, para 4.55; online at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/FINAL%20version%20cityplan%20March%202016compressedwith%20forward_0.pdf
- 57 *Old Town Conservation Area Character Statement*. Brighton & Hove City Council, February 2017, p41; online at [brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/OTCA Final Version 2 with cover.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/OTCA%20Final%20Version%20with%20cover.pdf)
- 58 *ibid*, p44
- 59 *Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan*. Brighton and Hove City Council, October 2018, p22
- 60 BH2007/02204 [brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/Weekly_List_we_200707WM.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/Weekly_List_we_200707WM.pdf)
- 61 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20Applications%20Sub-Committee/20071010/Agenda/\\$Item%2078%20E%20dele%20list%2010%20oct%2007.doc.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20Applications%20Sub-Committee/20071010/Agenda/$Item%2078%20E%20dele%20list%2010%20oct%2007.doc.pdf)
- 62 [https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000118/M000005135/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000118/M000005135/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
- 63 BH2013/04351
- 64 BH2015/00786 and BH2015/00787

Image sources

References are to image numbers

arthurlloyd.org.uk, courtesy of: 17, 19
Be My Guest screen grabs (1964; dir Lance Comfort, dist Columbia Pictures): 60-67
Beatles Monthly (November 1964): 116
BBC: 10
Chris Horlock: 68, 71
David Fisher: cover, 1, 4, 7, 16, 18, 35, 41, 45-48, 50-53, 74, 90, 92, 93, 96, 98-100, 102-105, 115, 117
East Sussex Record Office (ESRO): 13, 14, 23-26, 28, 29, 31, 36, 69, 70
Google Earth/Street View: 11, 37-40 (2009), 94, 114
Jaques Muir & Partners 30
Jo Jameson: 44, 91, 97
John Earl: 20, 21, 32-34, 42, 43, 49, 78, 81-84, 86-88
Jonathan Swain: 79, 80
National Archives: 27
Ordnance Survey: 2, 5, 6
Regency Society James Gray Collection: 3, 8, 9
Royal Pavilion & Museums: 12, 89, 95, 101, 107-113
Theatres Trust: 56, 57
Theatres Trust (Ian Grundy): 58, 59
Theatres Trust (Mark Price): 15
University of Kent: 106

Current plans courtesy of Foster Wilson Architects

Sources

Primary

John Earl: *Brighton Hippodrome Conservation Plan*, 2007

Newspapers

Brighton Gazette
The Era
Exeter and Plymouth Gazette
The Guardian
London Gazette
Pall Mall Gazette
The Stage

Secondary

David Fisher: *Cinema-by-Sea: Film and Cinema in Brighton & Hove since 1896*. Brighton: Terra Media, 2012
Lynn F Pearson: *The People's Palaces: The story of the seaside pleasure buildings of 1870-1914*. Buckingham: Barracuda Books, 1991

Reports

Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One. Brighton and Hove City Council, March 2016
Old Town Conservation Area Character Statement. Brighton & Hove City Council, February 2017
Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan. Brighton and Hove City Council, October 2018

Websites

Theatres Trust:
<http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/how-we-help/theatres-at-risk/175-brighton-hippodrome>
<https://database.theatrestrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/show/41-brighton-hippodrome>

Wikipedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton_Hippodrome

Arthur Lloyd:
<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Brighton/Hippodrome/HippodromeTheatreBrighton.htm>

DRAFT