

Early Cinemas of Llanelli

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This form of amusement shows no sign of diminishing... early film exhibition in Llanelli

For many, the heyday of cinema was the 1920s and 1930s when ‘super cinemas’, ‘talkies’ and A list Hollywood celebrities seized the popular imagination. Consequently, the early years of cinema have received relatively little historical attention. And yet it was during this formative period that the majority of cinemas were established and film exhibition was transformed from a showground sideshow to a mainstream entertainment. This article examines the early history of cinema in Llanelli, from the late 1800s to the end of World War One. Of the nine permanent venues (theatres and public halls as well as purpose built cinemas) that over the years have shown films in Llanelli, all but two started their lives during this period. Whilst covering less than 20 years, it was one of the most energetic times in cinematic history. Entrepreneurs (mainly showmen) crowded into an increasingly competitive market with all kinds of crowd-pleasing initiatives and the inevitable conflict with church/chapel leaders was played out via a new regulatory framework overseen by local government.

‘Ladies and Gentlemen, if you could see this picture, it would be a train emerging from a tunnel’. Thus members of the audience at one of William Hagggar’s first film exhibitions were encouraged to apply their imaginations when a technical hitch caused a complete blackout of the pictures.¹ William Hagggar, who regularly visited Llanelli with his portable theatre in the late 1800s and early 1900s, was at the forefront of film-making and exhibition in south Wales. Travelling theatrical shows were ideal experimental sites for the new medium of film. Their proprietors were always on the look out for new money- making amusements and the films (which in the early days lasted only a few minutes) could be shown between the usual dramatic and variety turns. However, being at the forefront of the genre required determination and practical ingenuity. Early shows were beset with technical problems, including light failure, broken film, missing reels and even the occasional explosion.

In spite of this shaky start, the ten years preceding the First World War saw a massive expansion in film exhibition across most areas of the UK. From a sideshow novelty in the 1890s, film exhibition had developed into the dominant cultural medium by the outbreak of war in 1914. The powerful appeal of cinema in its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s may explain why historians have paid relatively little attention to the formative days of the industry. And yet these early years are crucially important. Cinema did not arrive on the popular entertainment scene fully formed; it was shaped by the attitudes, behaviour and expectations of a variety of interests, including entrepreneurs, audiences, civic authorities and church/chapel, and by the specific blend of economic, social, cultural and technological forces that was in place at the turn of the twentieth century.

This article examines film exhibition in Llanelli from the late 1800s to the end of World War One. Whilst covering less than 20 years, it was one of the most energetic periods in cinematic history. Entrepreneurs (mainly showmen) crowded into an increasingly competitive market with all kinds of crowd-pleasing initiatives and the inevitable conflict with church/chapel leaders was played out via a new regulatory framework overseen by local government.

⁽¹⁾ As recalled by William Hagggar’s son, Walter Hagggar, in *Recollections: An account of the early bioscope* (unpublished paper, 1953), referred to by Peter Yorke in *William Hagggar, Fairground Film Maker: Biography of a pioneer of the cinema* (Mid Glamorgan, 2007).

Film Pioneers

In many ways, film was able to assimilate itself quickly and easily into people's social lives because of its strong links to earlier entertainment forms. In spite of its technical novelty, much of the experience of watching early films would have been familiar to audiences. Early film exhibitors were the showmen who, with their travelling shows and theatres, had brought intermittent entertainment to Welsh towns and villages for many years. Even in the elegant surroundings of a new generation of urban theatres, films drew heavily on earlier forms of popular culture, such as melodrama and farce, and were easily assimilated into the familiar format of the variety programme.

Travelling theatres and shows were given impetus in the second half of the nineteenth century by the Theatres Act 1843 that excluded booth and tent theatres from the requirement that all stage plays and theatrical buildings should be licensed. This meant that the owners of travelling theatres had considerable freedom to stage whatever entertainment they liked, as long as they secured a licence for erecting their temporary 'buildings' and moved on when their licence expired (usually when a local fair or race meeting closed).

Some of the largest travelling theatres could accommodate a thousand or more spectators and the shows they staged could be as spectacular as anything shown by a permanent theatre. In fact, during this period, there was significant overlap between temporary and permanent venues; travelling theatres would often stage their shows in permanent buildings such as taverns or public halls (for example, at Llanelli in 1897 there was a delay in the portable Prince of Wales Theatre obtaining a licence and they moved their performances to the Athenaeum for a week²) and some portable theatres would remain in the same place for several months or longer (for example, John Noakes' Star Theatre stayed in Llanelli for six months in 1890³).

Furthermore, some 'permanent' theatres were little more than sheds. In 1930 a reader of the local paper the *Llanelly Star* shared his memories of early theatres in the town. He recalls Warren's Prince of Wales theatre in Holloway's Yard in Murray Street engaging a theatrical company for a week.⁴ The company arrived on the Monday morning and failed to locate the theatre, which wasn't surprising because it was little more than a dilapidated wooden shed. When directed there by locals the actors found 'the poor old manager' on the roof with sheets of cardboard and a box of tacks endeavouring to mend the roof in order to keep out the rain. 'Needless to say they, being rather a high class company, did not perform at Llanelly, but took the first train on to some more flourishing and attractive theatre.'⁵

The entertainment provided usually consisted of a lively mix of melodrama, farce, dance, song and recitation, often drawing on older cultural traditions. In an article on portable theatres in Wales, published in 1952, Cecil Price writes:

⁽²⁾ A Llanelli Chronicle, compiled by Gareth Hughes, published 1984 by Llanelli Borough Council. Extracts are from *The Cambrian* (from 1804), *Llanelly and County Guardian* (from 1863), *Llanelly Mercury* (from 1891) and *Llanelly Star* (from 1909).

⁽³⁾ A Llanelli Chronicle, compiled by Gareth Hughes, published 1984 by Llanelli Borough Council. Extracts are from *The Cambrian* (from 1804), *Llanelly and County Guardian* (from 1863), *Llanelly Mercury* (from 1891) and *Llanelly Star* (from 1909).

⁽⁴⁾ Warren's Prince of Wales Theatre moved to Cowell Street. In 1880 Thomas Rees who owned theatres at Swansea and Neath acquired the site and built a new wooden theatre, the Theatre Royal (which opened in 1881). The Theatre closed in 1885, having had 5 different owners in 4 years. The building was burnt down in 1894 (*The Llanelly Star*, 6th Jan 1881, *The Llanelly Star*, 10th November 1881, Arthur Lloyd website, arthurlloyd.co.uk

⁽⁵⁾ *The Llanelly Star*, 6th February 1930.

*There was nothing at all formal about these theatres, and the actors were able to make a direct and intimate appeal of the kind also found in the music hall. Their audiences were unsophisticated and liked broad jokes, rude wit and violent action. They had come there to enjoy themselves in their own way, and they warmed their hands at the open braziers, satisfied their appetites by roasting potatoes or chestnuts on the fire, and satisfied their instincts by applauding the heroine and hissing the villain.*⁶

A ‘Son of Elli’ reminiscing about Llanelli drama in the local paper in 1923 recalls being enticed by some bigger boys to visit a wooden shanty theatre in the town where he ‘snatched a fearful joy’. The place was ‘frowsy’ and the piece ‘unedifying’ consisting of ‘dancing, love making, and “terrific broadsword combats”’. ‘I don’t fancy these dramas were greatly patronized by the elite,’ he wrote. ‘Probably there were too many souvenirs to carry away in the shape of fleas and such things’.⁷

Although much of the entertainment was undoubtedly bawdy, some companies prided themselves on providing better quality, more respectable drama. For example, in 1855 the Drury Lane Opera Company performed at the Llanelly Schoolroom before a ‘small yet respectable audience’. However, the local newspaper lamented that the attendance was not large enough ‘to encourage future visits from parties presenting such an array of talent.’⁸ The opening of the Athenaeum in 1858 provided a permanent venue for ‘first class’ concerts, plays and balls. Alongside the more elevated ambitions of venues such as the Athenaeum, there was a strong demand for amusement and travelling showmen were ever alert to commercial opportunities to adapt new technologies to meet popular tastes. The names of shows were exotic, and often had scientific connotations. Chas Poole’s Myriorama, for example, which toured extensively in south Wales, consisted of paintings of exotic scenes from around the world on thin but tough material, each scene being full stage size in height and breadth. As each picture was presented, spotlights and sound effects were used to add drama and a dapper guide dressed in white collar and tails used a long stick to point out important features. After a dozen or so screens, a variety act would take to the stage whilst the next roller was prepared.

By drawing on, usually spurious, scientific and educational references, entertainers sought to legitimise their shows at a time when mindless amusement drew harsh criticism. If an entertainer could introduce an educative element, with a lecture or a demonstration of the latest scientific invention, the authorities were more likely to be tolerant. A number of showmen adopted the title Professor or Doctor to provide added professional credibility. Film, at least initially, was viewed as another technical novelty in an age hungry for innovation and spectacle, and was seized upon by enterprising showmen eager to draw the crowds.

Berry, in his review of the first hundred years of cinema in Wales, writes that the first films to be viewed in Wales were shown at Oswald Stoll’s Panopticon in St Mary’s Street, Cardiff in December 1894. Stoll, a showman of long standing, had acquired two penny-in-the-slot Kinetoscope cabinets developed by Thomas Edison in his studio in Orange, New Jersey. The cabinets, which were installed in the ‘curio hall’ offered spectators a peep-hole view of a number of short films including hair being cut in a barber’s shop, a round of a prizefight, skirt dancing and a strong man performing physical jerks.⁹

⁽⁶⁾ Cecil Price, *Portable Theatres in Wales 1843-1914*, National Library of Wales Journal, 9 (1955-6), p. 66.

⁽⁷⁾ *The Llanelly Star*, March 17th 1923.

⁽⁸⁾ *A Llanelli Chronicle*, compiled by Gareth Hughes, published 1984 by Llanelli Borough Council. Extracts are from *The Cambrian* (from 1804), *Llanelly and County Guardian* (from 1863), *Llanelly Mercury* (from 1891) and *Llanelly Star* (from 1909).

⁽⁹⁾ David Berry, *Wales and Cinema: The First Hundred Years* (Cardiff, 1994), p.18.

Projected films were developed just a year or so later by a number of early film pioneers, the most notable being Robert William Paul, his one-time employee Birt Acres, and the Lumiere brothers. The first public screening in Wales was of Birt Acres' Kineopticon at the Fine Art, Industrial and Maritime Exhibition held in Cathays Park, Cardiff in 1896.¹⁰ During the early days of film exhibition there was considerable competition between film pioneers. Within the space of just a few months in 1896, Cardiff hosted Birt Acres' Kineopticon, Robert William Paul's Theatrograph and the Lumiere brothers' Cinematographe.¹¹

However, early film pioneers were primarily scientists and inventors, not entertainers, and they became disillusioned that film so quickly became 'the instrument of the showman' and was so intimately associated with the music hall. By 1900, the early pioneers of film exhibition had left the field. Berry describes how, after just a few years, Birt Acres abandoned film demonstration and returned to his laboratory. He did not want the Kineopticon to become a 'show' rather than the remarkable scientific spectacle he believed it to be.¹² However, it was only when showmen replaced inventors that film achieved wide spread distribution and popular appeal. Seldes has written that the moving picture had to be taken away from its inventors by 'aggressive and ignorant men without taste or tradition, but with a highly developed sense of business', before it could be transformed from a mechanical novelty into a mass entertainment medium.¹³

By the early 1900s there were some 150 touring film or bioscope shows in the UK, from small ground booths to magnificent organ-fronted edifices.¹⁴ Most early film exhibitors converted gradually from other forms of travelling entertainment, incorporating films into their existing shows. For example, Walter Haydn Davies in his recollections of boyhood life in the Bedlinog area in the early 1900s, describes how he saw his first film 'The Funeral of Queen Victoria' in the same tent as two caged lions called Wallace and Sourpuss. The cages were covered whilst the film was shown so as not to disturb the lions and distract the audience. Following the film, the covers were lifted and Captain Marco put the lions through their reluctant paces.¹⁵

In the very early days of film, the average length of film was around 40ft that gave a running time of less than a minute. These short films needed as much action and movement as possible; the subjects tended to be dramatic snatches from sporting events, natural phenomena, or civic/royal events. Chanan has written that 'since each film lasted only a minute or so and the camera was completely static, early film culture was hardly able to contain anything more than a miscellany of visual tit-tats'.¹⁴ A few fictional films were made in these early days, one of the most famous being Lumiere's Teasing the Gardener (L'arroseur Arrose). Made in 1895, the film involves a young boy stepping on and off a water hose and sending a jet stream of water into the gardener's face before receiving a beating. In the early days, the most usual format was for a dozen or more 'shorts' to be interspersed amongst a pot pourri of variety acts. As films became longer, they could sustain more complex narrative structures and they increasingly drew on stage and literary works.

William Haggar, one of the first showmen to exhibit films at Llanelli, was a film enthusiast - making as well as showing films - but his transition to full-time film exhibition was also a gradual one. For many years he combined drama with films; it wasn't until 1907 that he took the plunge and

⁽¹⁰⁾ Berry, *Wales and Cinema*, p.23. A plaque in Cardiff University's Bute Building commemorates the first film to be publicly shown in the city.

⁽¹¹⁾ Berry, *Wales and Cinema*, pp. 20-27.

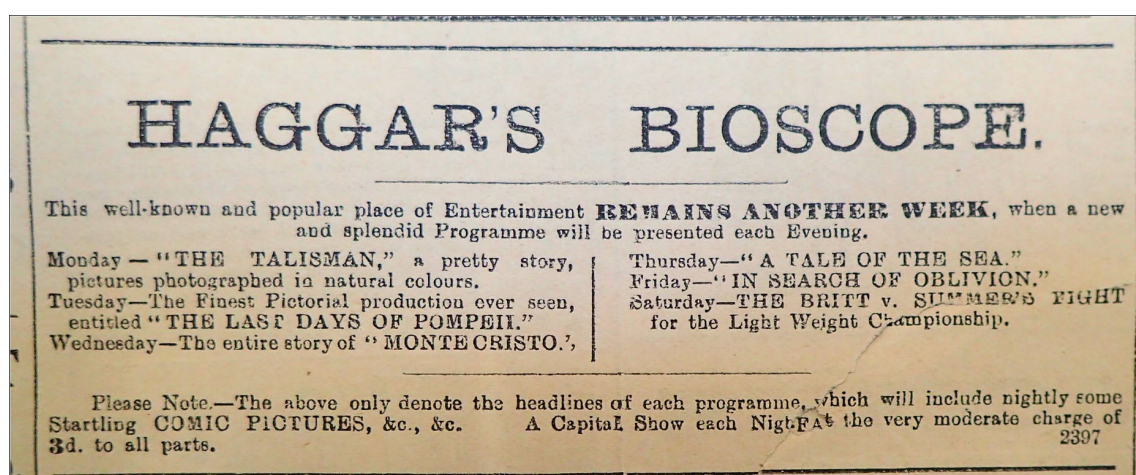
⁽¹²⁾ Berry, *Wales and Cinema*, p. 33.

⁽¹³⁾ G. Seldes, *The Movies Come From America* (New York, 1931), p.18.

⁽¹⁴⁾ K. Scrivens and S. Smith, *The Travelling Cinematograph Show* (New Era Publications, 1999).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Walter Hadyn Davies, *Ups and Downs* (Swansea, 1975).

opened Haggar's Electric Coliseum, an elaborate mobile venue dedicated to film exhibition. A contemporary commentator described it as having 'a most beautiful and elaborate front, a mass of gold work and beautiful figures, with lovely panelling at the sides and roofing the stage. The organ was one of the new 110-key Gaviolis, which had just begun to arrive in the country. One of the main features of Haggar's show was a troupe of dancing girls (members of his own family) on the walk-up platform. Parading in front of the show to attract customers was a custom borrowed from the travelling theatres. There was also a doorman/lecturer whose job it was to attract potential customers into the show and provide a commentary on the silent films. A contemporary of Haggar remembers Cyril Sydney Yorke, who worked for Haggar, striding up and down the aisle, adding the voice of comedy and drama to the silent films in true thespian style when he thought it necessary (and that was often): 'Ha! How beautifully she sleeps. Little does she know who is around the corner. Who can it be? Why, it's the dastardly Sir Jasper!'¹⁶



Llanelly and County Guardian, May 20th 1909

In spite of these efforts, during the period preceding the First World War many travelling theatres, including film shows, were finding it increasingly difficult to compete with the larger, more commodious permanent theatres and halls that were springing up in Welsh towns. These theatres engaged touring acting companies and actively promoted the sophistication and respectability of their programmes, which often included the latest films. Most travelling theatres appeared tawdry and old fashioned in comparison and experienced growing difficulty securing licences for their temporary residencies. In 1908, the Stage Year Book noted towns in south Wales where portables were not welcome, including Carmarthen which was still visited but 'a little difficulty was experienced in obtaining a licence'.¹⁷ Whilst no mention was made of Llanelli, we know from other sources that portables were experiencing difficulties securing licences. For example, in 1893 John Johnson applied for a licence to stage plays at his Prince of Wales Theatre, a wooden structure erected on the Fair Field. His application was opposed by John Noakes who just a year previously had built the Royalty Theatre, Llanelli's first purpose built theatre.¹⁸ Noakes argued that his theatre was 'ample for the needs of the Llanelly public' and 'another licence was unnecessary in the town.' John Johnson presented a 3,000 name petition in support of his application but his case was irretrievably damaged when the licensing authority discovered that 'all the names on one of the

⁽¹⁶⁾ Sir Jaspar J. Emlyn Evans, *William Haggar: Welsh Film Pioneer* (unpublished, Aberdare).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Quoted in Cecil Price, *Portable Theatres in Wales, 1843-1914*, National Library of Wales Journal, 9 (1955-6), p.90.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The Llanelli Community Heritage site llanellich.org.uk includes histories of J.E. Noakes and the Royalty Theatre.

pages of the petition had been written by the same person.’ The licensing authority rejected his application.¹⁹

Public hall and working men’s institutes had also jumped on the film exhibition bandwagon. The Athenaeum Hall at Llanelli began showing films from around January 1910 under the management of Thomas Hay Samuel. The venue was already staging variety type entertainments and films could be easily inserted into these miscellaneous programmes.

The 1909 Cinematograph Act dealt a further blow to struggling portables by introducing more stringent safety standards. The inflammable nature of celluloid and the inexperience of early projectionists caused a number of fatal fires that received widespread press coverage. The 1909 Act introduced a range of safety requirements and gave local authorities powers to inspect any premises showing film, whether temporary or permanent.²⁰ Some travelling theatre/show owners, such as William Hagggar, responded to these difficult market conditions by setting up permanent bases. In July 1910 he acquired his first permanent venue in Wales, the Royalty Theatre, Llanelli and almost immediately rebranded it Hagggar’s Theatre.²¹



Hagggar's Theatre , September 1920

Other portable theatres and bioscopes struggled on but few survived beyond the outbreak of the First World War. One of the last portable film shows to be shown in Llanelli was at the Fair Field in 1914 and was hosted by Mrs Elizabeth Crecraft who at the time was 94 years of age. Free performances were given on New Year’s Day and each child was presented with a ‘suitable New Year’s gift.’²⁰ Mrs Crecraft died at Tumble in 1917 aged 97 years of age, the Carmarthen Journal describing her as a ‘well known travelling cinema proprietress’ who had ‘never known what it was

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Reporter*, 6th October 1893.

⁽²⁰⁾ Chanan, *The Dream That Kicks*, pp.160-161.

⁽²¹⁾ Vicki Hagggar, *From Mummer’s Booth to Silver Screen: the Life and Times of the Hagggar Family*, Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society (2016).

like to live in a house.’²²

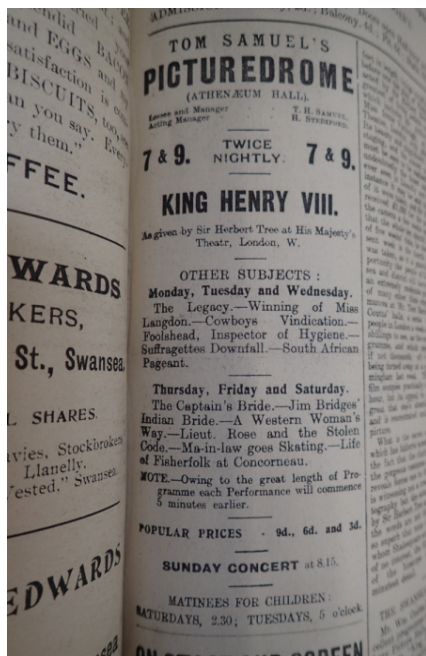
From portables to permanent venues

Of the nine permanent venues (theatres and public halls as well as purpose built cinemas) that over the years have shown films in Llanelli, all but two started their lives during the three or so years preceding World War One (see Table 1 below). Whilst the pre-World War One years couldn't be described as the golden age of cinema – talkies, super-cinemas and record cinema attendances were to come later in the 1920s and 30s- there was a frenzy of entrepreneurial activity.

Cinemas²³ at Llanelli – Years of Opening

Cinema	Open	Years
Picturedrome (Athenaeum)	1910-15	c. 5 yrs
Royalty/Haggars	1910-17	7 yrs.
Parkinson's/Vaughan's Picture Palace	1910-11	1 yr.
Vint's Electric Palace/Palace Cinema	1911-1973	62 yrs
Popular Cinema	1912-1929	17 yrs.
Llanelly Cinema	1913-c1970	c. 57 yrs.
New Dock/Astoria Cinema	1913-c1961	c. 48 yrs.
Regal	1929-1960	31 yrs.
Odeon	1938-1976	38 yrs.

* The New Dock Cinema became the Astoria in 1932. In the late 1940s and early 1950s it operated principally as a theatre.



S. Wales Press, April 5th 1911

When William Hagggar took over the Royalty Theatre in July 1910 and renamed it Hagggar's Theatre, there were two other venues in Llanelli regularly showing films. The Picturedrome (leased by the Athenaeum to Thomas Hay Samuel) began showing films early in 1910. The 'Drome,' as it was known locally, included historic/travel/religious films alongside the more commercial offerings of comedy and drama, possibly because of the Athenaeum's educational ethos. For example, in August 1910 they showed the film *The Romans* and at 5pm on Tuesday at the children's matinee, the 'capable lecturer' Mr Jenkins gave an accompanying lecture. On another occasion, a film of King Edward VII's funeral was shown, with Miss Bessie Smith providing songs and recitations during spool changes.²⁴

In March 1910, the *Llanelly Star* congratulated the lessee Mr Samuel on his appointment of Mr W.H. Parkinson as manager, praising the 'old gentleman' for making hosts of friends locally and for being a 'good old figurehead of the place.'²⁵

However, three months later in June 1910, Mr Parkinson had

⁽²²⁾ *Carmarthen Journal*, 11th May 1917.

⁽²³⁾ Early cinemas were often also theatres or public/working men's halls.

⁽²⁴⁾ *Llanelly Star*, June 11th 1910.

⁽²⁵⁾ *Llanelly Star*, March 30th 1910.

opened his own picture house, Parkinson's Picture Palace (P.P.P), at Cwmbach Buildings, Vaughan Street. The local paper described the new venue as 'cool, cosy, clean and comfortable.'²⁶



Llanelli Star, August 6th 1910

Whilst Hagggar's Theatre was undoubtedly in competition for custom with the Picturedrome and Parkinson's Picture Palace, it prided itself on being the prime venue for 'high class' drama. The aim was to strike a profitable balance between 'amusing' the crowds and maintaining a respectable reputation. When Hagggar took over the Royalty, the local paper wrote that he 'had gained a reputation in Wales as the pioneer of healthy and clean amusements for the people and will spare no efforts to make his theatre one of the finest in the principality.'²⁷ Advertisements for the theatre emphasised the modern and commodious accommodation – the building had been updated to include electric lighting and heating and the seating arrangements 'transformed'²⁸ – and the up-to-date, metropolitan character of the dramas. The *Llanelli Star* regularly congratulated Hagggar on procuring the finest dramas for the town – 'the company playing is one of the strongest now touring'²⁹; 'the drama has been played all over the UK'³⁰; 'Mr Hagggar deserves the thanks of the community for bringing the talented company to the town'.³¹ In fact, by this time, Hagggar had acquired a number of theatres across south Wales and no doubt dramatic companies moved between his venues.

Whilst endeavouring to stage the best possible dramas, the Hagggars were also fully committed to film exhibition, although the films were interspersed with colourful variety acts including:-

- *Sabino, the merry musical monarch who will render selections on the harp*
- *Sterling and Cashen, the famous military and comedy duo and champion dancers*
- *Palette and Otto, real comedy musicians, jugglers and lightning painters*
- *Mr Jerome Howard and Miss Elsie Wallace, the renowned dialogue entertainers*
- *The Condons and their acrobatic pot pourri act*

⁽²⁶⁾ *Llanelli Star*, June 25th 1910.

⁽²⁷⁾ *Llanelli Star*, July 23rd 1910.

⁽²⁸⁾ *Llanelli Star*, July 16th 1910.

⁽²⁹⁾ *Llanelli Star*, September 24th 1910.

⁽³⁰⁾ *Llanelli Star*, October 29th 1910.

⁽³¹⁾ *Llanelli Star*, January 31st 1911.

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THE GREAT FIGHT,
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Fought at Cardiff on December 20th, 1910, for £2,500.
The Whole Fight as it was Fought and many other Up-to-date and Pleasing Pictures.
ALWAYS GOOD AT HAGGAR'S.

TWICE NIGHTLY, 7 and 9. Doors open Half-hour previous.
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PICTUREDROME
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Largest and Manager George W. Samuel.
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feet in length, brings vividly and realistically before one the play of King Henry VIII. as acted by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree—the greatest of living actors—and his company, which includes Mr. Arthur Bourchier and Miss Irene Vanbrugh, at His Majesty's Theatre, London, with phenomenal success. Its beauty and magnificent effect, the superb scenery and the almost unexampled acting

REMA

South Wales Press, April 5th 1911

industries, we cannot do better than go to see home produced films.'³²

The competitive nature of the entertainment market is indicated by the fact that Parkinson seems to have run his picture palace for only six months or so. In January 1911 advertisements for Parkinson's Picture Palace are replaced by Vaughan's Picture Palace and since both are on Vaughan Street it is likely that they are the same venue. Vaughan's is also short lived closing in July 1911, the local paper reporting 'Mr Vaughan's absence will undoubtedly be regretted seriously, but as the saying goes "if one thing doesn't happen, another does", and so as we learn that Vint's Picture and Variety Theatre will shortly be opened, the vacuum will soon be filled. By the looks of things this new theatre is going to be a pretty decent and well managed place'.³³

In September 1911 Vint's Electric Palace opened in the town, on the site of the old Llanelli public baths on the junction between Market Street and Murray Street. William Hagggar objected to Vint's licence application to Carmarthenshire County Council on the grounds that the town was already well provided for in terms of entertainment. However, the objection was over-ruled and the 1,000 seater new picture theatre entered the competitive fray. Leon Vint was a showman of long standing who would have been known locally. The *South Wales Press* described him as a 'born caterer of amusements' who had toured the country with a choir and an orchestra, the main feature of his

⁽³²⁾ *Llanelly Star*, December 12th 1914.

⁽³³⁾ *South Wales Press*, July 19th 1911.

show being a mind reading act performed with his wife Madame Vint. When he developed the cinema in Llanelli, he already owned six cinemas in London and also cinemas at Neath, Aberavon, Barry Dock, Kettering, Loughborough, Long Eaton, Ilkeston and Exmouth. Like Haggar's and the Picturedrome, Vint's also supplemented films with live turns on stage. On the opening night on September 25th 1911, there was a programme of three films, *A Mexican Joan of Arc* (a powerful western drama), *Grandfather Stands Treat* (Vint's laughter-maker) and *Outlaw and Samaritan* (a splendid cowboy drama), as well as two variety acts, The Mayfair Trio (refined drawing room entertainment) and Rose and Wold (an acrobatic comedy wire act).³⁴

South Wales Press, November 1st 1911

During the following two years, 1912-1913, three more cinemas opened in Llanelli, the Popular cinema on Old Castle Road adjacent to the Fair Field site in 1912, the New Dock Cinema on New Dock Road in May 1913 and the Llanelly cinema on Stepney Street in July 1913.

The Popular Cinema was initially called the Electric Theatre. It had an ornamental façade with four candlestick shaped pillars each topped with a small pointed dome. Part of the building collapsed in August 1912 and had to be rebuilt. When it reopened in April 1913 it was renamed the White Cinema because its façade had been repainted white. In late 1915 it became the Popular Cinema, a name it retained until its closure in c1929 when the larger Regal Cinema was built alongside it.

Llanelly and County Guardian, June 26th, 1919

⁽³⁴⁾ *A Llanelli Chronicle*, compiled by Gareth Hughes, published 1984 by Llanelli Borough Council. Extracts are from *The Cambrian* (from 1804), *Llanelly and County Guardian* (from 1863), *Llanelly Mercury* (from 1891) and *Llanelly Star* (from 1909).



Photograph courtesy of Lyn John

The Llanelli Cinema, ‘a handsome white fronted building’, was opened on Stepney Street in July 1913 ‘under the patronage of Sir Stafford and Lady Howard’. The local press declared that ‘no expense was spared to secure the greatest comfort for the audience, and the decorative scheme promises to be the most attractive yet seen in Llanelli.’³⁵

The cinema is one of only two purpose built cinemas in Llanelli to survive to this day (the other being the Odeon on Station Road). In May 2000 it opened as a Wetherspoon’s pub, The York Palace, with a number of original features, such as the handsome stone façade and internal features such as balconies and plaster decorations, retained. The New Dock Cinema in the Seaside area of Llanelli, had a fairly

chequered history, switching between drama, variety and film until its closure in the early 1960s.



Llanelli and County Guardian June 19th 1919

A competitive market

By 1913 the town had six venues regularly showing films and survival depended on gaining the competitive edge through pricing, novelty and comfort. During the pre-WW1 period, ‘popular prices’ for film exhibitions seem to have settled at 9d, 6d and 3d across all venues - although Haggar’s also had more expensive seats denoting its flagship theatre status. A guide on how to run a picture theatre published by *Kinematograph Weekly* in 1912, included advice on a wide range of topics including location, design, advertising and promotion.³⁶ One of the guide's strongest messages was that proprietors needed to keep their eye on the competition and pay close attention to the needs of an often capricious audience. Safety was essential, comfort hugely desirable, but ‘the ambitious proprietor should aim for luxury.’

⁽³⁵⁾ *The Cambria Daily Leader*, July 19th 1913.

Early film was highly inflammable and one of the greatest safety risks was fire. When Parkinson's Picture Palace opened in 1910, the *Llanelly Star* reassured its readers that 'being on the ground floor, with the machine away in the balcony, the slightest suspicion of danger is at once overcome. Children may be sent to the P.P.P. on Saturday and Tuesday afternoons without any fear at all.' Adequate ventilation was also an important safety concern because of the risk of infection presented by the enclosed, often cramped conditions of most cinemas. The *Kinematograph Weekly* guide reports that '*there are still a great many showmen who, incredible as it may seem in this enlightened day, still have no artificial means of ventilating their theatres, and rely on simple electric fans. As a consequence, the tiny germs of ravaging diseases, in millions to the square inch, might remain quiescent, but the breeze from the electric fan sets them agog like sprightly maidens at a fair, only instead of being hilarious and harmless, they are exceedingly angry and dangerous*'. When Vint's Electric Palace opened in 1911 it advertised that 'all parts of the house are perfectly ventilated by Electrically driven Extraction Fans,'³⁶ an arrangement that presumably would not have satisfied the author of the *Kinematograph Weekly* guide.

The importance of creating an impression of comfort and luxury meant that there was pressure on cinemas to periodically up-grade their premises, but in reality most improvements made to these early cinemas were fairly modest such as redecoration and new seating. As a letter of complaint to the editor of the local newspaper suggests, cinemas were often so crowded some customers were unable to secure a seat let alone be cosseted in comfort:-

*Together with a friend, I visited this cinema on Tuesday evening last, but was unable to get a seat, or even see anything of the pictures – even the gangway at the rear of the balcony being crowded. I think it only fair to the public that they should be informed before they buy their tickets whether seats are available.*³⁷

Cinema proprietors were quick to adjust their programmes to maximise audience appeal, introducing twice nightly shows (for example, at 7pm and 9pm), children's matinees and twice weekly programme changes. Other crowd pleasing additions included 'special pictorial entertainments every Sunday' and continuous performances so 'no matter when you come in, you can see the entire entertainment and leave at your convenience.' Parkinson's Picture Palace advertised that it did not object to smoking – 'patrons are quite welcome to bring their pipe, tobacco and cigarettes to the PPP'³⁸ and a number of cinemas offered free bicycle storage.

The guide for cinema proprietors and managers devotes considerable space to advertising and promotion. Amongst other attention grabbing tactics, it discusses posters and hoardings, give-aways, competitions and local topical films. One 'good dodge' it described as having seen carried out in practice was to 'throw or give away small portions of tweed which bear a label such as "this piece of cloth was torn from the trousers of a man trying to get into X pictures last night."' It also recommended linking promotional material to an important film being shown. A female cinema proprietor, interviewed by Audrey Field, described the lengths she and her family went to in order to gain an edge on the local competition.³⁹ Once when a circus film was playing she had wanted to hire an elephant but that would have cost £10 a day so she settled on a camel. However, 'the camel sat down in the middle of the high street and wouldn't budge for a long time. When he did, he raided a greengrocer's shop and then scared a milkman's horse so that the horse went dashing away

⁽³⁶⁾ *South Wales Press*, November 1st 1911.

⁽³⁷⁾ *Llanelly Star*, November 24th 1917.

⁽³⁸⁾ *Llanelly Star*, August 27th 1910.

⁽³⁹⁾ Audrey Field, *Picture Palace: A Social History of the Cinema* (London, 1974).

upsetting the milk and causing an uproar. Writs were served right, left and centre'. However she remembers the incident fondly, claiming that 'it was even fun at the time.' One of Haggar's descendants recalls that James (Jim) Haggar, who managed the Royalty at Llanelli on behalf of his father, acquired a monkey that he dressed in top hat and tails and placed in reception to help draw the crowds. However, the monkey developed a nicotine habit and 'was getting through fifty fags a day, sadly depleting the takings.'⁴⁰ The guide also recommended running competitions ideally tied into the theme of a particular film. For example, during September 1915 several local cinemas hosted Charlie Chaplin look-a-like competitions to coincide with the showing of the film *The Tramp*. In June 1917, during national Baby Week, the Llanelly cinema showed the film *Motherhood* and Lady Howard gave free passes to 'infant welfare mothers.'⁴¹

More important than these side-show gimmicks was the procurement of films that matched the tastes of local audiences. The guide advised that the owner or manager should 'know the locality and what will appeal most to its requirements'. Much was made of the considerable efforts made by cinema proprietors and managers to procure the best and most appropriate films for the town. For example:-

'The films at the Drome this week are tip top. They couldn't be better. Mr Samuel has gone to much expense in order to obtain a most excellent selection. The educational and moral value of them are literally unsurpassable.' The South Wales Press, March 8th 1911.

'There is no holding Clarke's The Man, nor does there seem to be any limit to his enterprise. Since the Llanelly cinema has come under his management, local picture enthusiasts have had presented to them one great masterpiece after another, and the cry is still they come' Llanelly Star, January 17th 1914

'The Popular is destined to be the Mecca of all picture-loving folk next week as Mr C.S. Jones who keeps a ceaseless watch for great films.' Llanelly Star, February 23rd 1918

The guide to running a picture theatre also recommends that cinema proprietors make their own films or 'topicals' of local events since 'everyone loves to see himself, or herself, or friends or children on the screen'. The guide goes on to say that a good topical is worth every penny it costs to make for it is an unfailing source of revenue in most provincial towns for at least ten days or a fortnight after the event has occurred'. Given the very basic advice provided by the guide one can only speculate on the quality of many of the films that were produced locally. For example, the guide advises film-makers not to turn the handle when the cap is still on the lens and to remember to take the handle with them because otherwise they 'will need a clever blacksmith or else go home and fetch it'. The Haggar family were accomplished film-makers and so at least their topicals would have been made to professional standards. In September 1911, James Haggar, who managed the Royalty Theatre on behalf of his father William Haggar, filmed the wedding of Sir Edward Stafford Howard and Lady Catherine Meriel Cowell at St Elli's church, Llanelli, and showed the film at Haggar's Theatre before presenting the film to the couple on their return from honeymoon.⁴²

Music was an essential accompaniment to silent films. The picture theatre guide advised that 'it should be borne in mind that picture theatre patrons do not like their pictures neat, but diluted with a little music'. The type and quality of the music provided was an important way for cinemas to

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Vicki Haggar, *From Mummer's Booth t Silver Screen: the Life and Times of the Haggar Family*, Pembroke and Monkton Local History Society (2016).

⁽⁴¹⁾ *Llanelly Star*, June 23rd 1917.

⁽⁴²⁾ The film can be seen at <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-stepney-wedding-1911-online>

distinguish their programmes. At the most basic level, someone would hammer out some tunes on an old piano but more up-market venues, such as Hagggar's Theatre, had a resident orchestra. Advertisements boasted that special musical arrangements were made to suit the programme, thereby indicating that in less discriminating venues the same old tunes were played regardless of which films were being shown.

Gathering opposition

Whilst many people in Llanelli welcomed the expansion of entertainment opportunities and a new theatre or cinema was often perceived as an important civic embellishment, there was opposition in other quarters, in particular amongst religious groups. In contrast to the worlds of work and religion, which were rule bound and hierarchical, commercial leisure provided a space where people could exercise a much higher degree of personal freedom with all risks that posed for civic misbehaviour. The concerns are in many ways understandable. The mass attendance of cinema by children and young people represented a major social change and early programmes were an amalgam of every sort of entertainment, some more edifying than others. There was also a broader concern amongst church and chapel leaders at the growing secularization of south Wales society; some feared that the theatre and cinema were supplanting the chapel/church as the principle institution of Welsh life. At a meeting of the Free Church Federation held at Carmarthen, for example, the Rev. Trevor Jones of Llanelli said that he 'preached against the cinema as strongly as he preached against the drink...It was a damnation to religion and he thought that his own church would in a few years lay down that no member was allowed to enter a cinema. The cinema was nothing but the new delusions and the stain of the pictures was on the character of the people'. However, a more liberal minority view was also expressed at the meeting. The Rev. Evans Jones disagreed with the sweeping condemnation and said that there were many pictures that should be welcomed and hundreds of thousands were drinking less because there were cinemas for them to go to.⁴³

Relatively quickly religious leaders realized that outright opposition to the theatre and cinema would be futile, and disapproval coalesced principally around the issues of children's access to cinema and Sunday opening. The main dangers to children were perceived to be; educational (a 'dumbing down' of cultural values including a reduced incentive to read); moral (many films were of questionable quality and taste and could encourage degenerate behaviour including criminal acts); and health related (eye-strain, lack of sleep from attending late evening shows and the risk of spreading infectious diseases).

The Sunday opening of cinemas was an even more contentious issue. Sunday observance, the commitment to keep the Lord's Day holy and free from work and other secular activities, was a fundamental pillar of the Nonconformist faith that dominated much of Wales.⁴⁴ The Sunday Observance Act 1780 had made it an offence for any premises to which the public paid for admission to be used for public entertainment or amusement on Sundays. As a consequence, only the public house and chapel were open on the Welsh Sunday, and any attempts to provide counter-attractions to the public house were strenuously resisted by Sabbatarians.⁴⁵ Drinking and drunkenness became increasingly problematic with the arrival in south Wales of a large floating

⁽⁴³⁾ *Carmarthen Journal*, December 21st 1917.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See, for example, D. Densil Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales, 1914-2000* (Cardiff, 2011); R. Tudor Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales 1890-1914*, (Cardiff, 2004); Robert Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-1939* (Cardiff, 1998).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ W. R. Lambert, 'The Welsh Sunday Closing Act, 1881', *Welsh History Review*, 6:2 (December 1972), p. 166.

population of single men and lodgers freed from the restraints of a settled and responsible home. Churches and chapels were unanimous in their condemnation of drinking on the Sabbath and complaints of respectable church and chapel-goers having to run the gauntlet of drunk and disorderly crowds were common-place. Opposition to Sunday drinking culminated in the Welsh Closing Act of 1881 that closed public houses on Sunday other than to bona-fide travellers. It is significant that this act was the first piece of Wales-specific legislation to be passed by Parliament since the union. For many, Sunday observance became a symbol of Wales' distinctive culture and identity at a time when the Anglicisation of large areas of south Wales was perceived to be diluting the essence of Welsh culture. The resistance to Sunday opening persisted in Wales until the 1950s, in sharp contrast to the situation in England where Sunday film shows had become commonplace by the 1920s.

In spite of strong feelings regarding Sunday observance, in most areas film shows had been running for a number of years before opposition gathered pace. Initial tolerance may have been due to the fairly well established practice of holding 'sacred concerts' on Sundays with any proceeds going to charitable causes (thereby sidestepping the Sunday Observance Act that outlawed charging for entertainment on a Sunday). The Athenaeum appears to have held Sunday evening concerts with silver collections for charity from at least 1909/early 1910, and when Haggars' opened in July 1910 the theatre almost immediately hosted special programmes every Sunday evening from 8.15pm. The inclusion of the occasional short film into these 'respectable' programmes does not appear to have provoked very much reaction initially. For example, the Haggars held a special programme one Sunday that involved Mr Jas. Haggar reciting the poem *The Women of Mumbles Head* by Clement Scott 'illustrated by a special film taken at the Mumbles for Haggar's bioscope'.⁴⁶ Opinion began to turn, however, when film shows began to replace 'sacred concerts' as the dominant Sunday evening entertainment. Film exhibitions were an attractive option for theatres and public halls as once a cinematograph machine had been purchased overheads were relatively low, certainly much lower than engaging actors, singers and musicians. A number of religiously themed films were available for exhibition – for example, in September 1910 the Picturedrome showed the films *Joseph Sold by his Brethren* and *The Resurrection of Lazarus*, the local paper described the former as 'a fine coloured picture' and encouraged 'every Minister and layman to see this incident of the early days'.⁴⁷ However, some of the films included in Sunday film exhibitions undoubtedly fell below 'chapel standards' and in the run up to the First World War opposition gained traction.

The regulatory framework introduced by the 1909 Cinematograph Act became the frontline for pro and anti-cinema forces. The Act placed a range of safety requirements on commercially run cinemas and gave local authorities the power to inspect and license premises. Increasingly local authorities used their powers to attach additional (other than safety related) conditions to licences – including the requirement that cinemas closed on Sundays – and cinema proprietors did not have any right of appeal. The 1909 Cinematograph Act was not the only control at the disposal of local authorities. It was common practice for silent films to be accompanied by live music, usually a pianist or orchestra, and this required a music and dancing licence which, distinct from a cinematograph licence, was usually granted by the magistrates court rather than the local authority. A number of local authorities also used pre-existing legislation, such as public health acts, to impose additional conditions on cinemas.

It is clear that by 1911, Carmarthenshire County Council, which was responsible for issuing cinematograph licences, was becoming increasingly uncomfortable allowing cinemas to open on Sundays. It should be remembered that most councillors would have described themselves as

⁽⁴⁶⁾ *The South Wales Press*, July 19th 1911.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ *The South Wales Press*, May 25th 1910.

religious, many were actively involved with their chapels/churches and some were serving vicars and ministers. Also, a Court of Appeal decision in favour of local authorities attaching non-safety related conditions to licences under s2 of the 1909 Act (as long as those conditions were reasonable) emboldened anti-cinema groups, such as the Free Church Council, to lobby local authorities to introduce a Sunday opening ban. When Leon Vint appeared before Carmarthenshire County Council in 1911 to apply for his cinematograph licence, Free Church Ministers applauded him when he told the committee that whilst he held seven day licences in other towns, none of his venues opened on a Sunday. A member of the committee, Rev. H.M. Edwards replied that 'although we are not fanatically puritanical, we are not blind to the signs in the town of an increase in the cult of pleasure. I firmly and humbly believe that that kind of thing is gradually and surely affecting the morals of the town'.⁴⁸

Whilst Vint stuck to his commitment to close on Sundays and Vaughan's Picture Palace advertised in the local press that they held 'No Sunday Entertainments', Haggard's Theatre and the Picturedrome continued to hold 'special' Sunday performances during 1911. The council decided they needed to take action and passed a resolution that they would no longer issue seven day licences. When cinematograph licences came up for annual renewal later that year, they were issued for six days a week only.

It is often assumed that a blanket ban on Sunday opening persisted in Wales until the 1950s. However, the reality is that local bans came and went, and the issue was far from a settled one. At Llanelli, cinemas opened up again on Sundays in the 1920s and 1930s (for benefit performances), the local newspaper reporting, 'many Non-conformists up to the outbreak of the war looked askance upon these Sunday events. On the other hand, other social workers were perturbed over the fact that there were no attractions which would take the young folk off the streets on Sunday evenings. War time experiences rather changed the views of the Puritanical ones and nowadays not a voice is raised against these Sunday events'.⁴⁹

The argument that cinema was a better alternative to 'loafing' about the streets or propping up a public house bar was a powerful one. Church and chapel leaders had for years criticized the tendency for young people to parade the streets aimlessly on Sunday evenings. For example:-

'A meeting of Clergy and Ministers of the town of Llanelly was held in the Vestry of the Presbyterian Chapel on Monday last to consider whether united action might be taken to improve the conduct of young people in our streets on Sunday evenings, between the hours of eight and ten o'clock. Most of the clergy and ministers of the town attended, and it was unanimously resolved that all ministers of religion should use their influence through the pulpit, the Sunday School and otherwise in endeavouring to improve the rude and rough behaviour of young men and women, and of boys and girls, in our streets. The promenading, especially through Bridge Street, Market Street, Stepney Street and Vaughan Street, is attended with a degree of rough, rude and immodest behaviour which shocks right minded people and must be injurious to the morals of the young'.⁵⁰

Also, in spite of the Sunday Closing legislation, drinking and drunkenness on the Sabbath remained a significant problem in many south Wales towns in the early 1900s when Non-conformists were

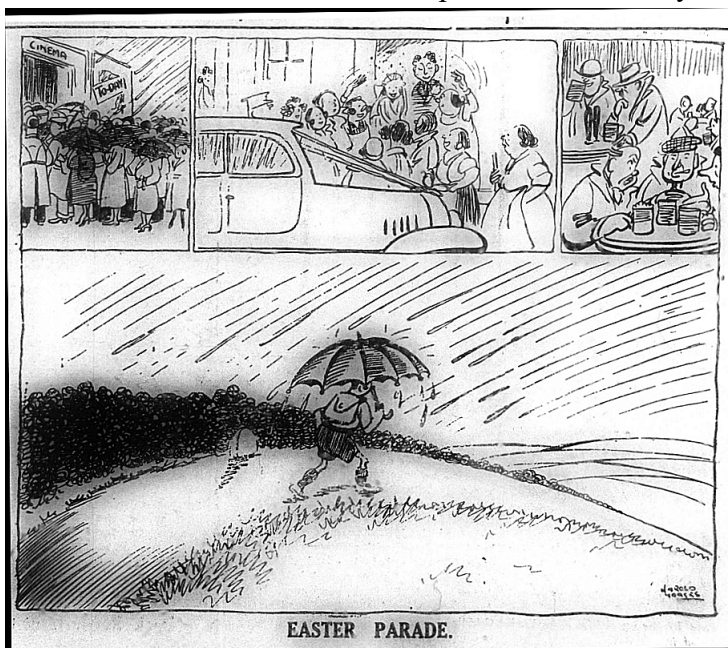
⁽⁴⁸⁾ Reference

⁽⁴⁹⁾ *Llanelly Star*, April 5th 1930.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ January 27th 1887. *A Llanelli Chronicle*, compiled by Gareth Hughes, published 1984 by Llanelli Borough Council. Extracts are from *The Cambrian* (from 1804), *Llanelly and County Guardian* (from 1863), *Llanelly Mercury* (from 1891) and *Llanelly Star* (from 1909).

campaigning against the Sunday opening of cinemas. Although public houses were closed, there was a proliferation of private clubs that, as long as they registered with the local authority and were properly constituted, could open on Sundays with impunity. Although cities experienced the greatest expansion in the number of private clubs or 'shebeens' (a census conducted by the Western Mail in 1889 found that there more than 480 clubs in Cardiff alone), the considerable advantage of clubs being able to side-step the Sunday drinking rules incentivised their opening in many areas, including Llanelli. When the Deputy Chief Constable of Carmarthenshire gave evidence to a Royal Commission on Licensing, he underlined the problem of drinking clubs located in small domestic houses often right opposite and alongside places of worship. 'Whilst people are going into those places of worship, you will find a big crowd of members going into these clubs to drink.'⁵¹ Over the years, the churches and chapels in Llanelli passed various resolutions to bring the clubs under the jurisdiction of the licensing justices and open to police supervision and inspection.⁵²

The level of Sunday drunkenness allowed the pro-cinema lobby to quite reasonably argue that attending a Sunday evening film show was a more palatable alternative to hanging about street corners or paying a visit to a private drinking den. Those in support of Sunday opening also drew attention to the hypocrisy of churches/chapels who themselves held Sunday evening concerts. When an application was received by Carmarthenshire County Council from James Haggard to give a 'sacred concert and cinema entertainment on Sunday for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the men killed in the Glynea colliery disaster', Nathan Griffiths, a Labour councillor, supported the application saying that 'there was nothing wrong in giving a sacred entertainment in a respectable show which compared favourably with any religious services given in the town'. He had a point since it was not uncommon for chapels to hold Sunday evening oratorios and cantatas, sometimes



Easter Parade Cartoon Llanelly Star April 27th 1935

even charging for entry. Nevertheless, Haggard's application was rejected 29 votes to 12. Applications to open on Good Friday and Christmas day were more successful. Vint's and the Tivoli Cinema, Tumble applied to open on Good Friday 1914, the proceeds to be devoted to charity. Once again Cllr. Nathan Griffiths supported the application arguing that 'Good Friday is emphatically not a Sunday. If you go to Llanelly on Good Friday you will see all the chimneys smoking and all the workmen go to work. The farmers are on the land and the shops are open. Those puritanical people who are opposed to picture houses being open on Good Friday do not object to receiving any benefit on the backs of those who work on Good Friday and Sundays. It is

the height of hypocrisy'. This time permission was granted as long as proceeds were devoted to charity.⁵³ During the early years of World War One, it seems that cinemas and theatres were almost always granted permission to open on Good Friday and Christmas Day (with the profits going to charity) but applications to open on Sunday were consistently rejected.

⁽⁵¹⁾ *Llanelly Star*, March 8th 1930.

⁽⁵²⁾ *Llanelly Star*, March 31st 1923.

⁽⁵³⁾ *Carmarthen Journal*, March 20th 1914.

As World War One progressed it seems that attitudes to Sunday opening softened. A new breed of local Labour politicians was more accepting of cinema and, in the extraordinary circumstances of war, old hostilities were more likely to be set aside. Cinema proprietors greased the wheels of Sunday opening by making well publicized donations to a range of charitable causes (e.g. the Red Cross and the Belgium Refugees' Fund) and enhancing their community role by showing war-time information films. Further, the legal basis for banning Sunday opening had become more tenuous. The Sunday Observance Act of 1780 could only be used to outlaw opening on Sunday if members of the public were charged for entry, meaning that charitable events were exempt. There were also limitations on the extent to which the Cinematograph Act 1909 could be used to restrict Sunday opening. Whilst a 1910 Court of Appeal decision supported councils attaching non-safety related conditions to licences as long as those conditions were reasonable, a number of subsequent legal judgments threw doubt on the amount of latitude local authorities had in the matter. Furthermore, the exhibition of non-inflammable film fell outside the scope of the 1909 Act, thereby providing an opportunity for exhibitors to side-step the legislation.

Conclusion

In the space of just ten years or so film exhibition had been transformed from a sideshow novelty to one of the most dominant forms of popular entertainment. By World War One Llanelli had six venues regularly showing films, and in one way or another films had changed Llanelli life. Cinema going had become part of the fabric and routine of people's social lives. Cinema very quickly became hugely popular with children due largely to its novelty, cheapness (as little as 2d and so affordable out of pocket money) and accessibility (continuous programmes meant that children could come and go as they pleased). On a wintry Saturday afternoon it provided an inviting alternative to idling away time at home or playing with friends in the cold streets. For women, too, cinema provided an accessible and cheap form of entertainment - they could slip a coat over work-a-day clothes and enjoy the window that cinema provided on other worlds.

Cinema entrepreneurs were often prominent local figures. Not only did they exercise a considerable amount of influence on the audience experience, they were also active players in their local communities, cultivating relationships with civic leaders, contributing to a range of local good causes and promoting the community benefits of cinema. Given the controversial nature of cinema, they became adept 'cultural brokers' negotiating with regulatory authorities, appeasing oppositional groups whilst keeping a weather eye on fluctuating popular tastes.

By the end of World War One the cinema was here to stay.