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Hiding in Plain Sight: A Case Study of a Cinema History Project in Leeds, UK

Laura Ager

Abstract: Hiding in Plain Sight *is an illustrated history of the former and present cinemas in the city of Leeds. Launched in the summer of 2020, it is the most recent output of an ongoing cinema history research project at the Hyde Park Picture House. With over 80 cinemas once existing in Leeds and now only a handful remaining, the 106-year-old Hyde Park Picture House is one of the city's lucky survivors. The Grade 2 listed cinema is a much-loved independent venue, a home for new films and repertory film programming alike. The* Hiding in Plain Sight *project was one of a series of activities hosted by the organisation in line with their objective to engage as many people as possible with the cinema's valuable heritage. The cinema had recently received a substantial grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for its refurbishment and, connected to this award, was an agreed action plan that included the production of collaborative activities to place the cinema within its local historical context. I was employed by the Hyde Park Picture House as their Creative Engagement Officer in 2019 and 2020 and in this role I developed the project's framework and its research strategy*. Hiding in Plain Sight *is an interactive website that engages Leeds residents in a participatory reminiscence project about cinemas and cinemagoing. In this article, I outline the project's origins and stages of development and consider how the methods used in the research phase have interacted with the design and production of the* Hiding in Plain Sight *website to produce unexpected insights. I also reflect on some essential stages of project renegotiation during the extraordinary and turbulent summer of 2020.*

> With over 80 cinemas once existing in Leeds and now only a handful remaining, the 105-year-old Hyde Park Picture House is one of the city's lucky survivors. […] From small neighbourhood picture houses to gigantic super-cinemas, dozens of historically important buildings remain in our lives today, repurposed into shops, clubs, offices, strangely familiar and *Hiding in Plain Sight*. (Hyde Park Picture House, "Launch")

Introduction

This article describes an audience engagement project that was undertaken by a team of staff at a small cinema in Leeds, UK. As an inductive, multimethod case study of cinemas, audiences and memory in a specific location, it can be seen as a piece of research that fits well within the growing academic field known as "new cinema history" (Biltereyst, Maltby and Meers). In 2007, Nirmal Puwar wrote: "Within cinema studies, there is much work that needs to be done on collecting and working with people's accounts of being in and going to the cinema—especially in relation to those periods when it was the key social activity" (258). Puwar's interest in cinema studies was in locating the socio-spatial impacts that under-represented, diasporic groups had had on film culture in British cities, with a special focus on Coventry. In the decade and a half since that was written, much has changed within the field of cinema studies. The evolution of "new cinema history" has seen scholars across different disciplines rethinking the history of cinema as the history of the *experience* of cinema. In the recently published *Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, the editors suggest that new cinema history is a methodologically heterogenous field, a "strategic coalescence" (Biltereyst,

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Maltby, and Meers 4) of research traditions around a dialogic agenda that is interested in all of the "phases" of the experience of cinema. The idea of phases itself comes from an earlier agenda for film research developed by sociologist Paul G. Cressey in 1938, who proposed to study "cinema as a series of reciprocal relationships: between the screen and the spectator; between screen patterns and social values; and between the dark space of the cinema and the community in which it was located" (Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers 6).

The Hyde Park Picture House is a small Edwardian cinema located in a suburban setting in Leeds. It lies about twenty minutes' walk from the city centre, close to the university district and easily accessible by bus, bicycle and car. It is surrounded predominantly by housing and is open every day of the year except Christmas Day. As a Grade 2 listed building, there is an entry for the cinema in English Heritage's online directory. Here are some of the unique features of the building as they are described in its listing: "Red brick, Marmo details. […] Entrance: semicircular open lobby with Ionic columns in antis support moulded cornice and entablature with raised lettering: 'PICTURE . HYDE PARK . HOUSE'" ("Hyde Park Cinema").

The listing speaks of architectural values, but the cinema's heritage value is not simply linked to its status as a rare historic building, it has tangible and intangible dimensions (Ahmad). Historic buildings are easily understood as tangible cultural assets, but the intangible heritage that they represent is the social and cultural history of a community, the meaningful processes and choices through which people actually live their lives. The architectural details of the cinema that are mentioned on English Heritage's website are the features that create a welcoming threshold for visitors to cross when they arrive at the cinema: a pair of glazed wooden doors, a little ticket booth in between them, set behind pillars covered in pale, decorative faience tiles. Marmo is an imitation marble that was manufactured locally by the Leeds Fireclay Company and can be found adorning the facades of several other historic cinemas in the city.

Inside the auditorium, nine gas lamps are lit up for every public screening. There are 270 tip-up seats, split between the stalls and the balcony. The front of the balcony is draped with swags of plaster roses, the heavy red velvet curtains open and close in front of the screen with a pleasing whirr. The projection room upstairs houses a pair of restored 1960s Italian 35mm projectors, these were salvaged from The Lounge cinema in nearby Headingley when it closed down in the 1990s. Generations of Leeds residents and students have come to see films here. The author worked at the cinema in a front-of-house role for several years, during which time it became apparent that former students of the surrounding Leeds colleges and universities would return to visit the building, sometimes to pay it a visit when their own children enrolled at a university in Leeds. They were always delighted to see the old cinema still standing, still open and practically unaltered. Affection for the place could frequently be overheard in conversations between customers, members of the volunteer team and the staff.

Heritage Funding and Audience Engagement

The Hyde Park Picture House organises many of its activities in line with the organisation's objective to engage as many people as possible with the cinema's valuable heritage. The aspect of the *Hiding in Plain Sight* project that this paper will address in detail is the production of an online illustrated history of the former and present cinemas of Leeds. The background to the commission of this piece of work is worth including here, however, as funding environments are often key conditions of the production of both artworks and research

projects. In 2016, a public announcement was made that the cinema was to receive a substantial grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) which would fund repairs and improvements to the building. Architects Page/Park were chosen to work with the cinema's manager and owners to remodel and restructure some parts of the building and the refurbishment would also deliver changes that would finally bring the cinema's facilities into line with twenty-first century audience expectations. This achievement represented decades of work done by Hyde Park Picture House's volunteers, supporters and staff to find a viable way to safeguard the cinema from the obsolescence that had affected almost every other early twentieth-century cinema in the city. The announcement in 2016 confirmed that the cinema's application had passed Round 1 of the NLHF process, although it wasn't until the start of 2019 that the Round 2 stage was completed and the project could finally get underway. As part of the agreement made with the funders, the cinema was to deliver a four-year programme of activities that would provide opportunities for people to engage with the building's heritage, including educational and creative projects aimed at specific audience groups. Extra staff were recruited to facilitate this agreed programme and activities funded by the NLHF project began to be delivered in the second half of 2019.

Hiding in Plain Sight is one such project. It brought together existing strands of research that were already being done within the organisation and added extra capacity for the production of new activities through the creation of the new staff roles. The Hyde Park Picture House team could now go beyond the essential business of keeping the cinema open every day and start to explore some of the interesting avenues for research presented by the constellation of evidence about the scores of former cinemas and picture houses in the city.

The origins of the *Hiding in Plain Sight* project can be found in an earlier clutch of heritage activities organised by the cinema in 2013. These were conceived as a way to approach the marking of the cinema's centenary the following year. Public tours of the cinema and especially those that included a trip into the projection room had always been very popular events. For many years, the Hyde Park Picture House offered these tours as part of Heritage Open Days, a national festival of culture and heritage when historic buildings across the UK throw open their doors to visitors (Ager). In 2013, artists Conway and Young were commissioned to curate a fresh set of public events based on the cinema's history which aimed to anticipate and celebrate its coming anniversary. One of the projects they organised was a guided walk through the city centre, looking for traces of former cinemas. This one-off event, delivered by Ben Waddington, became the starting point of the development of a much bigger series of talks, tours and walks that aimed to locate the remarkable story of the Hyde Park Picture House's survival from 1914 to the present day within a broader history of the city's cinemascape.

A revised version of the city centre walking tour was produced by the author in 2019, within the NLHF-funded activity programme. Places on the initial few tours were offered to the cinema's audiences. These events went under the name *Hiding in Plain Sight* and the tours visited the sites of about twelve former cinemas in Leeds city centre, finding them repurposed into office and retail space or hospitality venues. These walks were relaxed and unhurried events; they allowed members of the group to share their own observations and cinema memories as they progressed from place to place. Laminated photographs were handed around at certain points on the tour to illustrate particular features, or more often than not their disappearance. This activity involved about fifteen people at a time and group discussions naturally varied greatly depending on the make-up of the cohort.

During the research and development phase for the guided tours, an illustrated talk had also been assembled which had the potential to engage far greater numbers of people in a single event. Soon these cinema history talks were taking place at least once a month, usually hosted by social and educational groups, such as "active elders" groups, the Women's Institute and the University of the Third Age, and they were presented on screens in libraries, churches and meeting rooms. In the autumn of 2019, tours of the cinema were made available to audiences once again and they filled up quickly, with numbers limited to eight people per tour due to the available space in the projection room.

"A Brief History of Cinema"

In the autumn of 2018, during the final stages of writing the second stage of the application to the NLHF, the Hyde Park Picture House had submitted a funding application to the local authority's year-round grants for the arts programme Leeds Inspired. Identifying sources of match funding from other organisations is a prerequisite element of applying for a grant from the NLHF. The Leeds Inspired fund is primarily for nonprofit projects or events that will employ local artists; the application guidance notes also request that the proposed activity makes "a positive contribution to the profile of the city".

The Hyde Park Picture House had submitted an application with the working title "A Brief History of Cinema", this outlined four unique activities that would combine to tell the story of how the popularity of cinemas has ebbed and flowed in Leeds throughout the twentieth century. One activity was the development of a series of guided cycle tours to take small groups of people to visit sites of former historic cinemas that couldn't be included in walking tours due to distances involved. Another was a programme of film screenings organised in conjunction with local film clubs and societies to draw comparisons between a corporate cinema setting and the "cinema as community" ethos of amateur film watching groups. A significant element of the proposal was the commissioning of a series of illustrations of Leeds cinemas from Leeds based artist Adam Allsuch Boardman, who had worked with the Hyde Park Picture House previously. The commission aimed to produce artwork that could be used to decorate the hoarding that would be erected around the building site, once the renovation works began. Adam's pitch included the design for an accompanying printed interpretative guide that would explore the story of film and cinema in Leeds, which was the fourth activity mentioned in the grant bid. The value of this brochure was articulated as follows:

> the creation of a resource which will allow audiences to explore this topic in their own time and at their own pace. For those new to the city it will be an introduction, for those who have lived here for a long time it will invite people to notice the details, fostering debate and discussion on how our built environment is evolving in line with societal change and increasing the visibility of some of the "scars" that this evolution can leave in its wake. (Hyde Park Picture House, "Proposal")

Using archive pictures and close observation of the actual buildings, where they were still intact, Adam had already begun to create playful but detailed illustrations of the cinema facades that would have been visible in Leeds throughout the twentieth century. He sent a proposal to the cinema with drawings and ideas for how the hoarding and the guide might incorporate them into an illustrated history.

Once the funding had been secured, Adam and I, the cinema's Creative Engagement Officer, pooled our knowledge and created a database of cinemas past and present using Google Sheets. The list expanded rapidly to over eighty individual cinema entries, with additional details such as addresses, opening dates, closing dates and numbers of seats being added over time. This phase of the research drew on three valuable publications by local history enthusiast Robert Preedy and two significant internet resources: the global, crowd-sourced cinema mapping website *Cinema Treasures* and the online photographic archive *Leodis*, which is managed by the Leeds Library and Information Service.

Both websites display large numbers of photographs and enable users to comment on them. Cinema Treasures elicits its content from its network of users, Leodis is a substantial cache of photographic archive material collected from diverse sources including the Tramway Museum Society, the Leeds Museums Service and the collections of many named individuals.

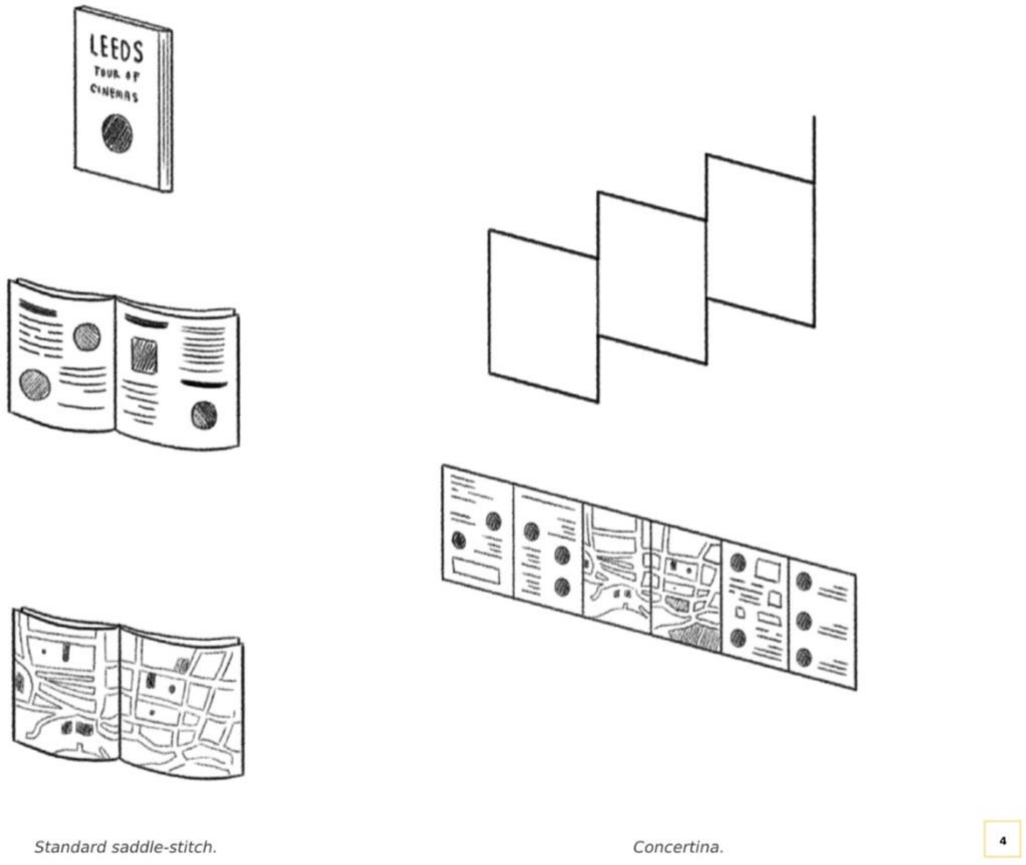


Figure 1: Illustration of proposed guide layouts by Adam Allsuch Boardman, 27 March 2019.

Mapping as Method

Some initial field research into the condition of former cinema buildings beyond the city centre had been carried out by the author in 2018 and this had found that their ongoing uses were mixed. Some buildings had been repurposed into dwellings, at least two were now tile outlets, one large cinema had a fish and chip shop occupying the former lobby and a builder's yard using the auditorium for storage. A large former 1930s cinema was

simultaneously a gym and a house of worship, on different floors. One claimed to be a massage parlour, although after further research it became apparent that West Yorkshire police had accused the owners of running it as a brothel in 2017. Two were so badly damaged and derelict that they seemed beyond repair and have been demolished since the start of this project.

Adam began to place the cinemas onto an online map, using large scale maps held in the Leeds Central Library that showed the city in the early decades of the twentieth century, supplemented where necessary with visual information found on Google's Street View service. Colour-coded markers denoted their status: red for "demolished", yellow for "still visible" and green for "open".

Up to this point the research had followed an inductive course, collecting, collating and analysing all of the forms of evidence available, but now some questions were starting to emerge. What can the varying condition of these comparatively similar buildings tell us about different parts of the city? Why are the only two cinemas from the early part of the twentieth century that still operate as cinema businesses both in the LS6 postcode area of the city?

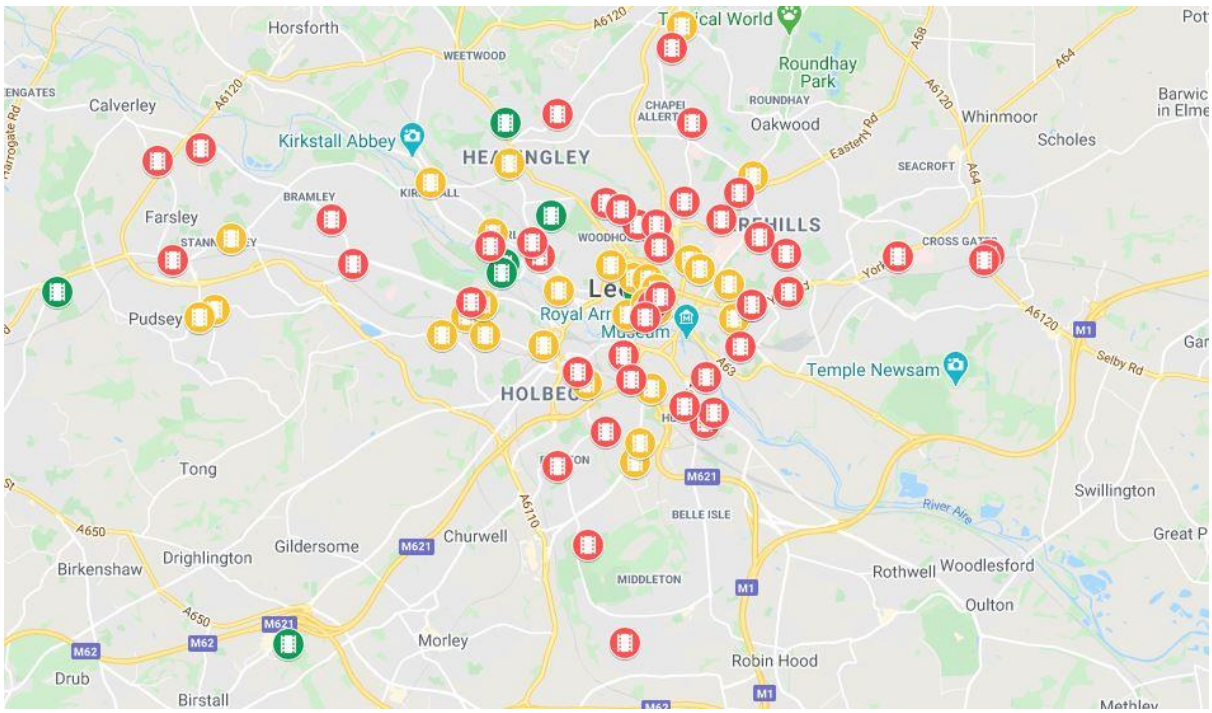


Figure 2: A screenshot of the map of former cinema buildings in Leeds under construction by Laura Ager, 14 February 2020.

To investigate these questions, the author decided to revisit and expand the fieldwork phase and started working on a way to combine visits to the outlying cinemas with some of the valuable reminiscences, observations and knowledge sharing that had occurred in a relaxed way on the walking tours. In February 2020, the author attended a meeting of the Leeds Cycling Campaign to seek advice about safety techniques for leading group rides and there gained two more maps. These had been produced by the city council in partnership with local and national cycling advocacy groups and showed all the cycle routes around the city. Routes were plotted and sites were visited by bicycle, photographs were taken and the safety of potential cycle routes assessed in advance of public participation.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Project

On 16 March 2020 all physical events and screenings at the cinema ceased. The film programme at the Hyde Park Picture House was at this exact point part of the way through its planned transition from being delivered in the cinema into taking its screenings out to a range of temporary spaces around the city. The cinema was on the verge of closing its doors for the refurbishment to begin. Buoyed by the incredible success of the theatrical release of *Parasite* (Bong Joon-ho, 2019) and having seen good audience numbers turn up to see *Bait* (Mark Jenkin, 2019) and *The Lighthouse* (Robert Eggers, 2019), this sudden closure was a blow for the cinema staff.

The immediate closure of all public events brought about by the outbreak of Covid-19 also put an end to the programme of history talks and the ban on meeting people outside your household halted the development of the planned second phase of guided tours. The cycle tours that had been planned to start in April were delayed indefinitely. The timing of the UK-wide lockdown undermined every aspect of the cinema's preparations for the coming months, including the hard-won cycle fitness of the prospective tour guide. After an exciting, if exhausting, few weeks of managing full houses and making preparations to host screenings in unfamiliar places, life in the quiet city under lockdown was unnerving.

Launching a new website became the focus of the next phase of activity. Adam's set of illustrations, almost complete, offered a way to maintain audience engagement during the prolonged period of closure. As the erection of a hoarding would be delayed due to the pandemic halting the planned construction work, the *Hiding in Plain Sight* project was reorganised to support the development of an online resource in which this original work could be published. As the lockdown in the UK entered its second month, project timelines were reorganised, budgets were redrawn and, when the author was taken off furlough in June thanks to an award from the British Film Institute's Film Audience Network Resilience Fund, the threads were picked up and work began on a new iteration of *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

This return to solely desk-based research affected the methodological basis of the research project, particularly in the author's areas of interest which dealt with reminiscence, social history and mapping. This part of the project had followed quite a discursive and phenomenological path up until this point. The walking tours and cycle rides had been designed with a "go and see" conceptual approach borrowed from psychogeography, while the talks had elicited comments and memories from audience members that could be followed up on and, if supported by further evidence, incorporated into the next edition of the talk.

Writing this paper at this point in the project is a valuable opportunity to stop and reflect on the methods being used and the production of a new website, while all other activity remains paused.

Drawing as Method

Adam's illustrations of Leeds cinemas are stylised, but they accurately depict the characteristics of the cinemas' façade architecture: entrance canopies, faience tiles, balustrades and the positions of windows, signs and recesses for displaying movie posters.

During my research I was drawn to the characteristic facades of each cinema. Whether

> it's the intricate terracotta brickwork, or hand-painted and electric signage, each building tells a unique story of its place in Leeds' cultural history. To do my best in honouring their dynamic, grand and eccentric architecture, I felt compelled to systematically draw as many cinemas as possible. (Hyde Park Picture House, "*Hiding*")

The website lostcinemas.co.uk was launched in mid-August, featuring seventy illustrations of cinemas past and present, along with details such as where they were, when they had been open, and what had happened to them since the cinema businesses there ceased to operate.



Figure 3: Proposed design for the *Hiding in Plain Sight* website by Adam Allsuch Boardman, 17 April 2020.

Upon launching the website in a browser, a composite image of colourful tiles slid across the screen, which settled around a welcome message and a button saying "enter". Click on this and a map of Leeds appeared which could be zoomed in and out of and moved about. Digital pins marked the locations of individual cinemas on the map and clicking on a cinema's pin took you to a new page that opened with an illustration by Adam at the top. Underneath each image on an individual page on the *Hiding in Plain Sight* website were the cinema's name, its address, the dates it opened and closed, followed by a descriptive paragraph or two and then some photographs.

An accompanying exhibition of prints of the illustrations was organised to open in August at the same time as the website launch, it was installed at an artists' bookshop in central Leeds and the exhibition continued throughout September and October 2020. All seventy images were displayed together on one of the walls.

When seen as a single body of work, the images raise more theoretical questions. A cinema's façade often looks quite different from the rest of the building. The outer walls of a cinema auditorium might be plain and featureless, but the choice of façade architecture is guided by commercial aesthetics. Doors with glass panes allow the comfort and luxury of the interior to be glimpsed. Display boards are cantilevered out over doorways, bearing the names of films and film stars, and canopies protect ticket buyers from bad weather and distinguish the venue from shops and other buildings in a row. The styles of cinema façade seen in Leeds are contingent on these practical considerations, yet eclectic, and with some colloquial trends: repurposed Methodist chapels, for example, which are found in the first few years of moving picture shows, when existing venues were being adapted for a new entertainment medium.

One interesting finding arising from Adam's close observation was that some of the city's cinemas had their names written in the same font as that which was used by the Hyde Park Picture House. A friend of the cinema forwarded to us a picture of a tile catalogue by the Leeds Fireclay Company; the company had at one time produced tiles bearing individual letters which architects could use to spell out names on commercial façades. Could that be the reason? Might this be an effect that is noticeable in other cities?

Writing Copy as Method

One challenge for the website team was to decide what comparative values could accurately be located for all the cinemas. The available data about individual cinemas was transferred from the research spreadsheet into the website's content manager manually, meaning that choices had to be made regarding how information was to be written up and presented. At the "Google spreadsheet" stage of the research, an empty box against a specified value for an individual cinema was tolerable, but at the "content manager" stage of the website design, this became more of a problem. A value would appear on the page for one cinema and not on another. For example, should a box be added to the template to enter "number of seats" or would that create a problem when that value was not known? And was that a meaningful value to include?

Due to the nature of the sources of information used, some cinemas could only be represented by a short paragraph, so longer text entries had a slightly different format to retain visual harmony – a brief introductory paragraph followed by a "read more" section:

> "With a capacity of over 1,300 patrons, the Clifton cinema opened in 1939. After closure in 1961, the site was used for the sale of building materials until it was demolished."
>
> "A 650 seat cinema on Town Street in Rodley, this cinema was originally called The Picture House. Its name was changed to The Rialto during the 1950s but it closed in 1956. The cinema building was used as a factory before being demolished."
>
> "The Palace Picture Hall opened in 1912. It seems to have been briefly called Pictureland when it was owned by American Bioscope Co. Ltd. It was a conversion job, turning a former rollerskating rink into an enormous cinema during cinema's boom years. It had 800 seats and also operated as a dance hall. Rollerskating reappeared here in 1929 when the popularity of the pastime revived, but part of the building was still in use as a cinema. When film screenings finally ceased in 1964 it went over to bingo instead, being known then as New Western Bingo. In the 1980s it was known as the Armley Amusement Centre. A serious fire broke out in 2016. The fire started in what seems to have been a men-only sauna, the Steam Complex sauna (with overnight accommodation) which had occupied the building at the time. Planning documents in 2007 reveal that prior to the sauna being established there, this part of the building had been Armley Squash Club. It has now been demolished."

Writing the copy for these entries sometimes required close inspection of Adam's illustrations and of any available images of particular cinemas to check small details and resolve occasional incidences of contradictory records. In discussion threads beneath photographs on Cinema Treasures and Leodis people frequently misremembered minor details

or became confused as to which old cinema was which. Again, studying the façades revealed some interesting perspectives on a cinema's changing role in local areas over time, for example where independent concessions were housed within the fronts of the buildings. While a cinema was still in business, these small shops would usually sell sweets and tobacco to cinemagoers, but records suggest that laundrettes, cycle repair shops and fashion boutiques have occupied such units at different times. As in many areas of the UK, a lot of Leeds' cinemas became bingo halls for long periods during the 1960s and 70s, so thinking about how that change of use affected the ancillary parts of the building raised a further question: what might be learned from a comparative study about the ongoing social and cultural values of former cinema buildings in different cities?

Larger cinemas in the first half of the twentieth century contained ballrooms and dance halls and in Leeds this was the case too and at least one large cinema in Armley had hosted rollerskating for a time. The cavernous Tivoli in Middleton had offered its visitors a barbers' shop alongside bingo and snooker. Beneath the text boxes on the individual cinema pages there was further space to display a photograph, or a carousel of photographs, where enough were available. A member of staff at the Leeds Library & Information Service contacted rights holders on the cinema's behalf to track down necessary permissions for reproducing images they already had in their Leodis archive within the *Hiding in Plain Sight* website. Once the website was launched, local people also shared valuable images with us directly, including a former projectionist and cinema manager, Steve Moore, who shared images of many of the cinemas. His collection included one image of the pair of 35mm projectors that are currently in the Hyde Park Picture House when they were installed in the projection room at their former home, The Lounge. A volunteer gave hours of their time to the project to download, upload and organise these images as they became available, which also involved choices about what to include and how the material should be presented. He made the following comment: "we've not manipulated the photos all, so they preserve as much as possible the original source as provided. Likewise, we've not cropped or aligned them either, so retain either their professional or amateur quality, which I think is important" (Robb, 7 October 2020).

The final item that the website's designer was asked to include on each cinema's page was a text box that invited comments from the website's users. It was important to the project's ethos that the site offered a point of contact between the audience and the project team. A contact email address was provided on the site, and the comment function offered an opportunity for people to talk to us and with each other about the social and cultural value of the cinemas as they remembered them. What was hoped for was a personal point of view, people sharing their memories as audience members had done when the materials had been presented as part of a talk, or indeed when cinemas had been visited as part of a guided tour:

> "I went to six different cinemas throughout the 1950s and I loved the Shaftesbury, especially its entrance and lobby. I think it might have been in that cinema that I first saw film which shocked me. Before the 'main feature' there was often Pathe News Reel, an important source of information for people who didn't have television in their home. On one occasion it showed detailed and graphic footage of heaps of dead bodies in one of the concentration camps liberated after the end of the second world war. I was only a child and will never forget those horrifying images."
>
> "As a student, a holiday job at the Classic meant that I saw the film *Belle de Jour* 11 times. I can still quote some of the lines! I remember the stale-smelling, mustard uniform we wore, using a torch to show the customers to their seats while trying to

> avert my eyes to what else was going on in the dark and that hearing the music Colonel Bogey would mean the place was on fire."
>
> "This was the first cinema I ever went to! If I recall correctly, it was the re-release of *The Empire Strikes Back*. The staff showed me the projection room because it was my birthday."
>
> "The flea pit was its local name… Nobody I knew missed it when it closed down."

To Be Continued…

This article has summarised years of research activity, during which time a group of people connected to the Hyde Park Picture House have collectively explored and shared the history and legacy of the city's cinemascape. It has also described how a website that pulled together so much of the information already gathered was shaped as much by editorial and logistical decisions (and by a global pandemic) as it was by the research methods that had produced the different kinds of data. The author acknowledges that are some conceptual challenges with the project's design, not least because as many questions seem to have emerged as findings.

Taking the local history project online in the summer of 2020 increased its reach, while the exhibition of art prints helped to maintain the cinema's profile and provided a source of much-needed cheer and celebration amongst the city's creative community, who had struggled through four bleak months. Despite concerns that the older demographic might not have been able to engage easily with an online resource, or with a physical exhibition due to health fears about travelling into the city centre, news filtered through to the Hyde Park team that the website was being used for intergenerational family reminiscence sessions at home. Local people got in touch requesting that more cinemas be added. A contributor to the comments section shared a short story she had written. Two writers offered their poems about Leeds' cinemas to complement and help to promote the project. The research process has connected and animated people, places, texts, discourses, practices and interests in the desire to collect, learn and share. Has our project uncovered any phenomena which could be understood to be genuine peculiarities of cinemas and cinemagoing in the locality? The *Hiding in Plain Sight* project has produced a microhistory of a city's cinemascape and its associated cinema memory; however, no aspect of the project was created within an academic context, and it is important to bear this in mind. It is closer perhaps to what Puwar has called a "methodological viewfinder" (256). Biltereyst and Meers have called elsewhere in this journal for a more systematic and comparative use of the case study as a method in the field of "new cinema history". During the course of the project, we often thought that it would be a good idea to hold a symposium at the Hyde Park Picture House in which our cinema history research methods could be examined against those being used in similar projects in other places. The value of the work still being done under the *Hiding in Plain Sight* banner lies in discovering how much there is that we can still learn from studying our local cinemas, as material signifiers of forms of cultural and social participation, as well as advocating for the protection of picture houses at risk, like the Hyde Park, and confronting the reasons for the reuse, dereliction and mutilation of so many of them.

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