

The Court Cinema, East Molesey by Rowland G M Baker (1985)



This cinema appears to have been started in late 1911, or early 1912, in a building erected for the purpose by Mr Thomas Usher, in front of his motor works at 62 Bridge Road, and called "The Electric Picture Hall". Mr Usher was a well-known local personality, a sometime member of Molesey Council, and also owned an ironmonger's shop on the other side of Bridge Road. The picture house closed for the summer, and re-opened on 2nd September, when the following announcement appeared: "Patrons of the Electric Picture Hall in Bridge Road will be glad to learn that the re-opening for the winter season is announced for Monday next. The hall has just been redecorated throughout in a most tasteful style, and a new heating apparatus has been installed. These things, in conjunction with tip-up plush seats with which the auditorium is supplied, combine to make it one of the most pleasant and comfortable theatres of its kind in the district".

Not long afterwards, the name was changed to "East Molesey and Hampton Court Picture Hall", and in the early 1920s, when the proprietorship was acquired by Mr Frank Saraski, a European emigré, yet again to "East Molesey and Hampton Court Picture Palace".

In 1932, the cinema was taken over by Mr William Hughes, formerly of the Prince's Cinema at Brighton, who immediately set about modernising the place. A new and more imposing façade was added to the front of the building, described as of "white marble and coloured stone", to the design of Mr F B Trimm, an architect, who was also a member of Molesey Council. The interior was said to be "on compact lines and has accommodation for 500 hundred people. All the seats are on the same floor and have been arranged so that each patron has an unobscured view of the screen. The most up-to-date methods of lighting are employed and include changing effects. Clarity in sound and voice reproduction is secured with the Western Electric talkie apparatus and Ernemann projectors ensure sharp, steady pictures. A heating and ventilation system maintains an even temperature unaffected by outside weather".

It re-opened as "The Court Cinema", on Monday 10th October 1932, when the programme included "Delicious", starring Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, together with Richard Cooper and Ursula Jeans in "Once Bitten", described as a "scintillating comedy of blackmail and domestic differences".

Some years later it was purchased by Central Picture Houses Ltd, owners of the Odeon chain; who about 1950 disposed of it to Mr John Ferris, an independent operator. Mr Ferris's policy was to screen as far as possible the type of films not normally put on by the big cinema circuits. One Surbiton correspondent described it as "a courageous policy of screening films of high quality, films that are not merely a sordid mixture of horror and sex. My wife and I frequently travel to Hampton Court knowing that the Court was the only cinema in this area that could give us, and many others, a happy and enjoyable evening".

However, the competition from other sources was too great; patrons like the one mentioned above were too few, and in October 1958, Mr Ferris announced that the cinema was to close. He sold the property to Kadec Arts Ltd, specialists in art design and colour printing, who are still operating in the premises. The last screening was on Saturday 8th November 1958, when the main feature was "His Greatest Role", starring "the incomparable Fernandel"; supported by Stanley Holloway in "Fast and Loose".

(Thanks to Esher District Local History Society for permission to reproduce this article which first appeared in their newsletter)

COURT

TWO MINUTES HAMPTON COURT STATION
PHONE MOLESEY 1403
Buses: 201 206 152 131 604 216

Privately Owned and Independent. Proprietor; JOHN A. FERRIS

<p>THURSDAY, JULY 1st THREE DAYS Duncan Macrae, John Whitely, Adrienne Corri THE KIDNAPPERS (U) 5.30, 8.45 (Sat. 2.15) Also Cattle Drive (U) Technicolor 7.15 (Sat. 4.00) Joel McCrea, Dean Stockwell</p> <p>MONDAY, JULY 5th SIX DAYS Kenneth Moore, Muriel Pavlow, Donald Sinden DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE (U) Technicolor 5.30, 8.25 (Sat. 2.35) Also Life In The Arctic (U) 7.25 (Sat. 4.20) (Fascinating Nature Study)</p> <p>MONDAY, JULY 12th. THREE DAYS John Gregson, Muriel Pavlow CONFLICT OF WINGS (Technicolor) 5.35, 8.50 (U) Also Operation Malaya (U) 7.25 Filmed in the midst of Jungle Warfare</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 15th. THREE DAYS Kay Walsh, Bill Owen, Robert Morley THE RAINBOW JACKET (Technicolor) 5.15, 8.50 (Sat. 2 p.m.) (U) Also Ma and Pa Kettle at Home (U) 7.10 (Sat. 3.45) Marjorie Main, Percy Kirkbride</p>	<p>MONDAY, JULY 19th. THREE DAYS Nigel Patrick, Elizabeth Sellars, Jack Warner FORBIDDEN CARGO (U) Also The Queen in Australia (U) Official full length film of the Tour in colour</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 22nd. THREE DAYS Walt Disney's SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (U) (Technicolor) Also The Olympic Elk (Technicolor) Disney Nature study</p> <p>MONDAY, JULY 26th. THREE DAYS Charles Vanel, Yves Montand THE WAGES OF FEAR (A) (Quote 'Daily Express'—The tensest film I have ever seen) Also Full Supporting Programme</p> <p>THURSDAY, JULY 29th. THREE DAYS Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, Marjorie Main THE LONG LONG TRAILER (U) (Technicolor) The Great Diamond Robbery (U) Red Skelton, Kurt Kazner</p>
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The upcoming films for July 1954