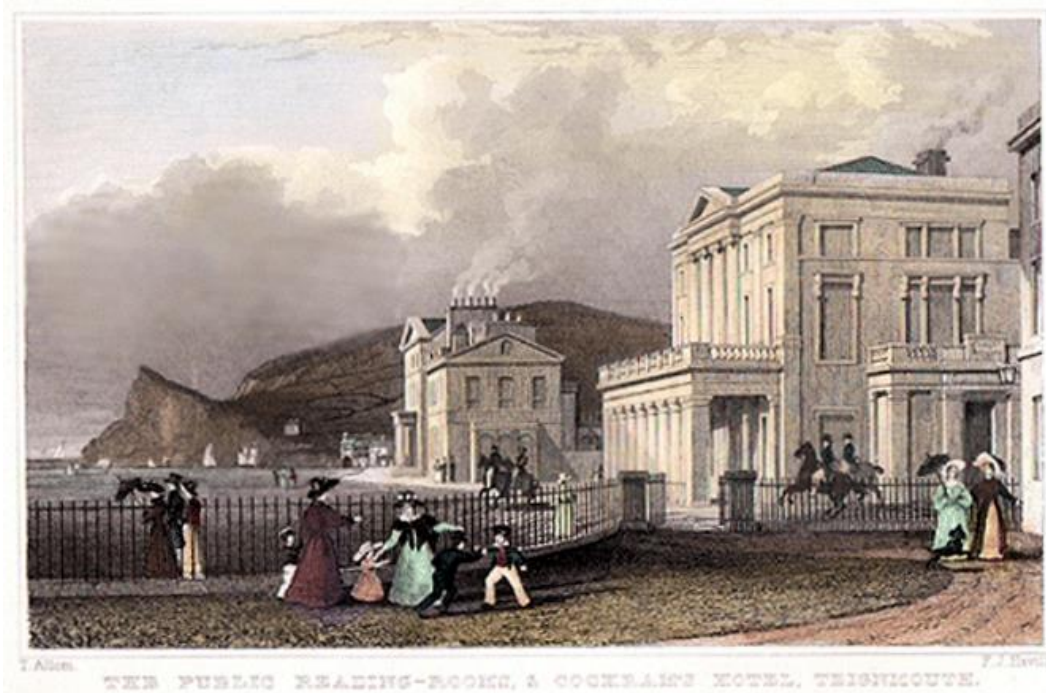


The Lost Entertainment Palaces of Teignmouth

The Riviera

Originally built as the Assembly Hall in 1825 and serving as a reading room, The Riviera became the first venue in the town to show films.



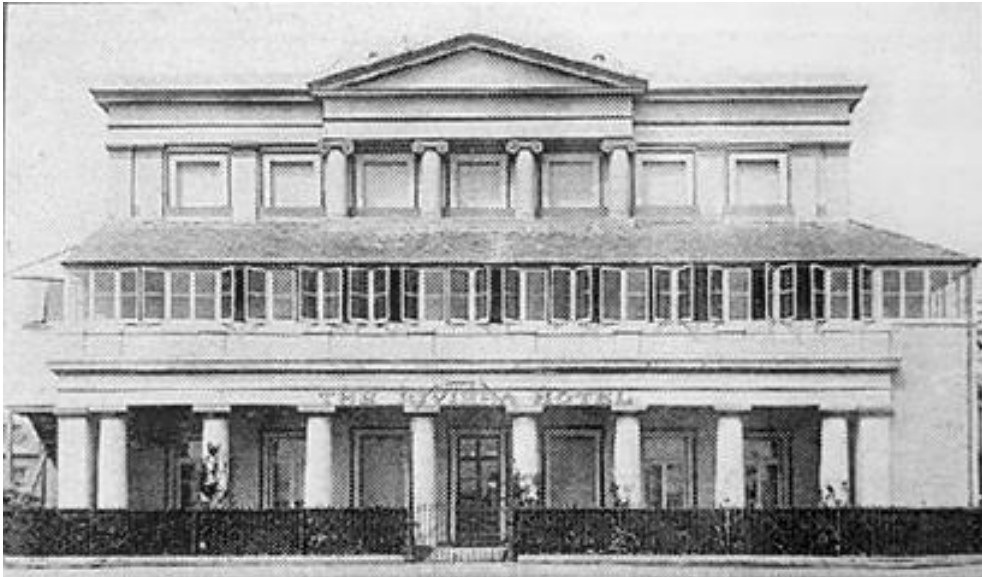
First view of The Riviera, 1826.

Designed by architect Andrew Patey, externally the building is a fine example of a Classical style building, with a colonnade at street level and a series of ten pilasters (columns) across the facade in between windows. There is a central pediment (tri-angular space) over the main entrance. The Assembly Rooms were the hub of the town's social life in the 19th century and lavish balls took place in the 70ft long ballroom. It was converted to an exclusive gentleman's club in the 1870s.

It continued to function as a place of assembly until around 1912 when the ballroom above the Assembly Hall was converted into a cinema by Charlie Poole and named Poole's Perfect Pictures. Mr Poole's Perfect Pictures opened on Easter Monday 1912 with a programme of short films including *Cheated By Fate* ("a thrilling story of opium dens") accompanied by live entertainment ('refined Scottish comedian' Hector Gordon), inaugurating a 95-year run, believed to have made the Riviera one of the oldest continuously operated, privately owned cinemas in the country.



View across the bowling green to Poole's Perfect Pictures. 1912.



The cinema was accessed from the covered terrace via 2 staircases on Carlton Place and Den Road. 1920.

In 1933-1934 the interior of the building was structurally altered and re-opened as the Riviera Cinema on 16th July 1934 with Jack Hulbert in "Jack Ahoy". It now had a total of 901 seats, 586 in the stalls and 315 in the circle. The Art Deco style auditorium was designed by architect Howard Williams. The front of the stage was 45 feet wide.

There was also a cafe incorporated in the building which could seat 80 diners and a roof garden on top of the building.

In the mid-1940's the Riviera Cinema came under the control of the independent Mayfair Cinemas (Control) Ltd.

PAGE 4 THE TEIGNMOUTH POST AND GAZETTE,

RIVIERA

CINEMA—TEIGNMOUTH 24

WEEK COMMENCING MON., MAY 28th, 1945
CONTINUOUS DAILY from 2 p.m.

Mon., Tues., Wed. 3-15, 6-5, 8-50

SUSANNA FOSTER
TURHAN BEY
BORIS KARLOFF

with
GALE SONDERGAARD JUNE VINCENT
THOMAS GOMEZ GEORGE DOLENZ JANE FARRAR LUDWIG STOSSEL

The CLIMAX
in **TECHNICOLOR**

A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

MOON OVER LAS VEGAS
with **ANNE GWYNNE & DAVID BRUCE** (A)

2-4, 4-50, 7-40

Thurs., Fri., Sat. 2-0, 5-15, 8-30

A WELCOME REVIVAL
Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland
Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains
The Adventures of Robin Hood
TECHNICOLOR (U)

3-55, 7-5
Ann Miller
with a Host of Musical Stars in
Hey Rookie
Smiles and Miles of Entertainment (U)

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

WANTED, Unfurnished Rooms with cooking facilities or Small Flat.—Box 11225, Post and Gazette.

WANTED, Daily Domestic Help; also Young Girl to look after two small children.—Apply, Mrs. O'Connor, Lynn.

FOR SALE, Pye Portable Battery Set, £8 10s.—Box 11211, Post and Gazette.

WANTED, Boy or Girl for Newaround, able to cycle an advantage, easy hours. Good wages.—W. H. Smith and Son Ltd., Royal Libraries, Teign-

FOR HIRE, Microphone, Loud Speakers and Spotlight for Dances, Meetings, etc.—W. S. Holland, Triangle, Teignmouth Phone 459.

LONELY! Join Friendship Circle. Details 6d. Secretary E. S. 24, Honeywell Road London, S.W.11.

CHEEK PADS kept in stock. Prices reasonable.—The Brunswick Printing Co. Ltd., Brunswick Street, Teignmouth.

WANTED to rent in Teignmouth, modern 3 bedroom House or large Flat (unfurnished), permanent, good tenants, three adults.—Manager, Cope estate, Crampton Castle Street Exeter.

WANTED any good sound business. Trade, price immaterial if showing good profits. Write, Woodside, Bradwell, Braunton.

WRITE to us if you want business, London, Eastern Southern, Western or Home Counties. Long Lease businesses for sale always available. Essex Business Agency, 36, Beestcheap City, London, E.C.3.

1/4 190. Brussels, Antwerp, Orleans, Cailliflowers Savoy, Broccoli, for succession.—Lane, Altavista, Dawlish Road.

SECTIONAL Garage wanted.—Box 4933, Post and Gazette.

WANTED, Folding Pushchair also Baby's High Chair.—Box 11185, Post and Gazette.

FOR SALE, Fair Bowls (Crown Green) and Jacks, in carrying case, £3; Split Cane Fly Box and brass reel and line, £4; Camera in cowhide case (takes V.P.K. size) as new, £4.—Box 11187, Post and Gazette.

WANTED, Cashier for pay box; also Doorman to assist generally, Carlton Cinema, Teignmouth.—Apply, Manager.

WANTED, Dressmaker willing to alter girl's summer frocks of good material.—Box 11186, Post and Gazette.

FREEHOLD House, Torquay detached with woods and garden. Room to build another house or garage. View of Bay. Very large rooms, built about 1930 St. Marychurch district. Wanted House in exchange, the Teignmouth and Dawlish or Maidencombe dis-

Advert from 1945.

There was little else of note to report for the next few decades as the cinema continued to be a source of entertainment for residents and holidaymakers alike.



Image from the 1960's.



Internal images of the cinema.



In 1970, the cinema was closed for alterations in order to form a two-tier building. An amusement arcade, 'Purple Penny' amusements, occupied the ground floor, whilst a 520 seat cinema was created in the former circle area, which had been extended forward.



The cinema pictured in 1975 has hardly changed in appearance.



Image from 1984. Credit: Len Gazzard.

During its time The Riviera has also been a dance hall, a conference centre, billiards hall and latterly a pub and restaurant in the ground floor.

We now fast forward another couple of decades to 2000 when The Riviera Cinema closed on 26th March. The last films being shown were "Topsy-Turvy" with Allan Corduner and Ralph Fiennes in "The End of the Affair".

The reason given for closure was a large rise in the rental from the landlords. The building then lay empty for a while before a planning application proposed to build luxury flats on the top of the building (where the roof garden used to be) and to re-furbish and re-open the cinema.



Image from 2001. Credit: David Simpson

Despite much opposition to the conversion, these were defeated and the flats were built, but to date, the cinema has not re-opened.



By August 2007 the new luxury flats had been built on top.

The Riviera was converted into a church in 2017.



As part of the renovations, the Mars Hill Church planned to bring the restaurant back to a 1930s art deco style, while the auditorium/cinema would be retained as close as possible as it stood at the time, but would be re-wired for sound and stage lighting with the view to hold theatre productions, and in time, installing a new screen for the use as a cinema as well.



The Riviera as a church and a poster from a Christian play performed at The Riviera.



Tea Room at the front of The Riviera.

When the plans to approve the renovations to The Riviera were granted, Pastor Dave Longman said: "We want to do the building credit and bring it back to its former glory and make it a viable space for the community.

Unfortunately this business only lasted for around 7 years and the Tea Rooms closed on 19th October 2024.

Again we fast forward to today and show some views from the top of The Riviera on the balcony of one of the luxurious apartments.....



Looking up the Teign towards Dartmoor.



Looking out over the English Channel with the Den Bowling Club and Pier in the foreground.



Looking East up the coast with Holcombe Head and Exmouth in the distance.



2024 view of The Riviera.

The Riviera Cinema is a Grade II Listed building.

Personal anecdotes from The Riviera being a cinema include:

Dave Stephens: "Ah....the good old Riviera....many a happy Saturday morning spent there, back in the day!!"

Andy Byrne: "Remember that cinema well, I think I watched some sort of film with gratuitous horror and violence which I won't name."

And one from Bill on the Purple Penny: "I spent many hours in there, and the 'Video Games' inspired my original interest in computers"

Thanks also to Nigel & Barbara for the opportunity to view Teignmouth from the top of The Riviera.

Material collated from Teign Heritage; Devon Live; cinematreasures.org; researchgate.net; Bills Phone Teignmouth.