

THEATRES & CINEMAS IN THE DISTRICT OF HETTON-LE-HOLE

In the days before radio and television people made their own entertainment, with every town and village having their own theatre. Though theatre seems too posh a name for some places, as some were just sheds, usually at the back of a public house.

In Hetton-le-Hole in 1840 in the yard behind the Brewers Arms there was Collets Theatre where Plays such as 'Murder in the Red Barn' and 'Maria Martin' were performed and at Easington Lane in 1890 behind the Free Gardeners Arms there was a theatre run and owned by Mr Thompson the cabinet maker.

THE STANDARD THEATRE

The last place for live entertainment at this time was The Standard Theatre, built in 1874 at Mount Pleasant (The Quay), now George Wrights, Corn Merchant. It had a capacity for 800 people. The entrance was half way along the right hand side for the pit, and through the small left hand side door at the front, for the gallery. (George Wright's office looks like a box office). The open front where George Wright reverses his lorry was a solid wall. This big opening was made in 1916 when the theatre closed and a bus company used the premises for parking their buses. It is believed the gallery was added later along the left wall about 1900. There was not another theatre like it and Roy Hudd came to have a look at it. From 1894 to 1896 a Mr J Watson was the proprietor. The stage had changing rooms at each side (still there) and there was a lean-to shed at the back for the props. Mr Defty's father appeared on stage with Burgess and Murray when he was twelve years old. The stage is still in place but has been extended forward.

THE PAVILION

Ralph Barton (of the salt works) built the Pavilion at the top of Richard Street in 1909 on land known as the Show Field.

In November 1923 the Hetton and District Choral and Amateur Operatic Society performed the comic opera 'Highwayman Love' produced by Eric Mason. By popular request, in March of the following year they gave a repeat performance of 'The Dogs of Devon'. The Pavilion was both a theatre and a cinema. The first manager was Mr W Linden Travers father of the film star. Bill Travers.

Silent films were accompanied by live music. In 1912 the musicians were Mr Hodgkiss – cornet, Mr Barton – violin and Mr Robson - piano. Musicians had a break

between films and they went over the road to the pub for a drink. They were reluctant to leave the pub, so Mr Barton bought a crate of beer and locked them in the Pavilion. Two films were shown each night. After the first film was shown it was taken to 'The Mill' at Rainton Bridge and exchanged with a film that had been shown at the Picture House, Fence Houses. The film 'The Three Musketeers' was shown in 1921 and 'The Prisoner of Zenda' was shown in 1922. The Pavilion closed 6th June 1959 and the last film shown was 'Home before Dark'.

The Barton family ran soup kitchens during the 1926 strike.

THE IMPERIAL

Built in 1922 or 1926 by Hetton Opera Company and situated in Station Road. It was originally a garage. Both films and live shows were seen here. The first talkie film to be shown was the 'Isle of Lost Ships' on 4th March 1930. In 1960 the Imperial was owned by Stall Cinemas and the films came from offices in The Tyne Theatre, Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Films were shown evenings and Tuesday afternoons.

The Imperial closed on 10th October 1962 and the last film was 'The Hangman'.

STAR

The Star Electric Cinema opened on Pemberton Bank Easington Lane in 1912. Only silent films were shown. It was possible to obtain entry by handing in one jam jar. The Star closed in 1930 and became The Salvation Army.

COSY

The Cosy, Easington Lane opened in 1938. The first film was 'Feather your Nest' starring George Formby. It also had special children's film shows on a Saturday morning.

The Cosy became a Bingo Hall in 1959 and closed in 1995.

Shops displaying the weeks' films in their windows were given free entrance tickets.

Although the Pavilion was the first to show films in Hetton around 1910, films were shown much earlier by travelling showmen at the annual Houghton Feast. These were

known as Ghost Shows. Appearing live around 1910 were such stars as Dr Brodie, the Houston Sisters (Billy and Rene), Albert Burdon, Bunny Doyle, George Doonan and Durham county's own Frank E Franks.

Travelling companies gave productions such as 'Sweeny Todd the Demon Barber', 'The Face at the Window', 'Mary Ann Cotton' and 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'.

Music Halls were very popular when no one had radio or gramophone and listed below are some of the popular Music Hall Songs:

1850 – 'I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls', 'When Other Lips'

1898 – 'When we are Married', 'They All Follow Me', 'Little Dolly Daydream' 'Lilly of Laguna'.

1900 – 'Tell Me Pretty Maiden', 'Somewhere a Voice is Calling'.

1902 – 'English Rose', 'The Yeoman of England'

1909 – 'Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay'

1915 - 'Pipes of Pan', 'Charming Weather', 'Keep Your Feet Still Geordie Hinny'

1930 - Monologues – 'The Lion and Albert', 'Sam Pick up thy Musket', 'Brahn Boots', 'Three Ha'pence a Foot'

Retyped from article by unknown author by A T Jackson, for Hetton Local History Group.

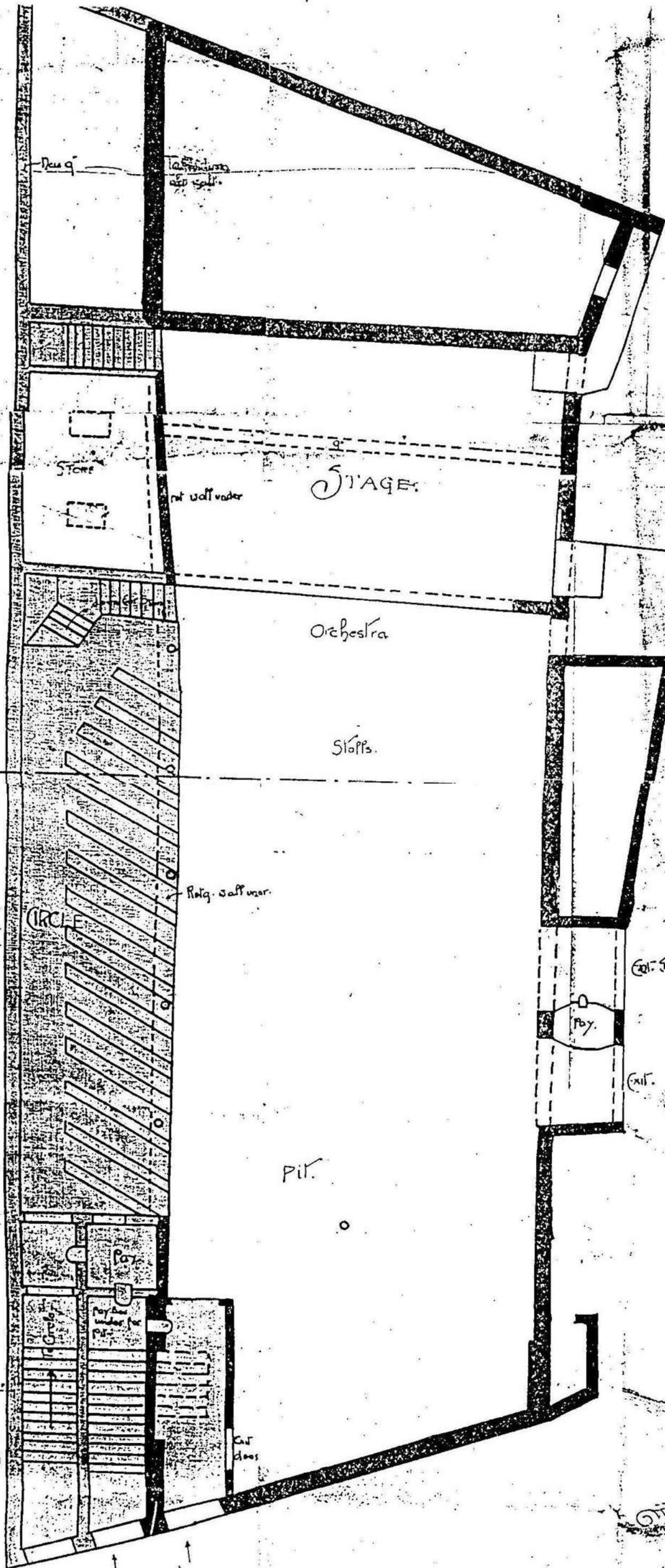
STANDARD THEATRE. (George Wrights - born Merchant)

THE STANDARD THEATRE, HETTON

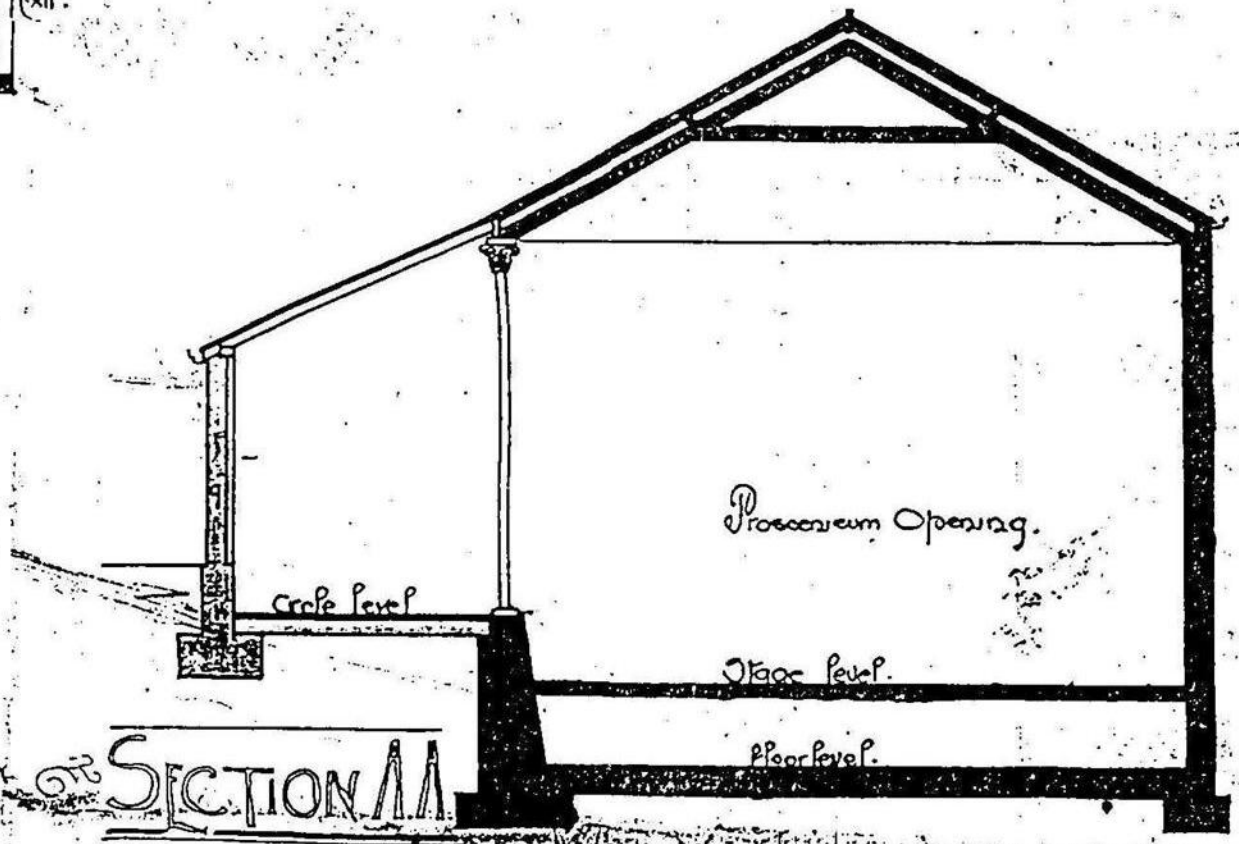
AMENDED PLAN FOR S. JAMES ESQ.

SCALE 8 FEET = 1 INCH

No. 2809-14



GROUND PLAN



SECTION A-A

THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF

Approved of at a Meeting of the said Council on the 14th day of Oct.

Thomas Wilson

MUST BE FORWARDED TO THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF HETTON BEFORE THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL ON THE 14th DAY OF OCTOBER 1895

PERMITS
STAGE OF A THEATRE

J.E. Wright