

Oscar Deutsch - Creator of Odeon Cinemas

DEUTSCH WAS BORN IN BALSALL HEATH, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, THE SON OF LEOPOLD DEUTSCH, A SUCCESSFUL HUNGARIAN JEWISH SCRAP METAL MERCHANT AND HIS



BIRMINGHAM WIFE, LEAH COHEN. AFTER ATTENDING KING EDWARD VI FIVE WAYS, HE OPENED HIS FIRST CINEMA IN NEARBY BRIERLEY HILL, DUDLEY IN 1928. BY 1933 HE HAD 26 AND "ODEON" HAD STARTED TO BECOME A HOUSEHOLD WORD, USED INTERCHANGEABLY WITH "CINEMA" IN SOME PARTS OF THE UK UNTIL AFTER WORLD WAR II.

THE SHEER ENERGY OF OSCAR DEUTSCH, REMAINS BREATHTAKING. IN JUST 10 YEARS BETWEEN THE FOUNDING OF THE CHAIN AND DEUTSCH'S DEATH IN 1941, 258 ODEONS OPENED THROUGHOUT BRITAIN, INCLUDING THE FLAGSHIP CINEMA IN LEICESTER SQUARE, LONDON, MAKING ODEON ONE OF THE THREE MAJOR CIRCUITS IN THE UK. ODEON CINEMAS WERE CONSIDERED MORE COMFORTABLE AND RESPECTABLE FOR MIDDLE-CLASS FILMGOERS THAN THOSE OF THE TWO OTHER CIRCUITS, ASSOCIATED BRITISH CINEMAS (ABC) AND GAUMONT - BRITISH CINEMAS.

ODEONS WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR ART DECO ARCHITECTURE, FIRST USED ON THE ODEON,

KINGSTANDING TO A DESIGN BY CECIL CLAVERING, WORKING FOR HARRY WEEDON. ALTHOUGH CLAVERING ONLY DESIGNED THREE FURTHER ODEONS, AT SUTTON COLDFIELD COLWYN BAY AND SCARBOROUGH "ONE MASTERPIECE AFTER THE OTHER" CONSIDERED "THE FINEST EXPRESSIONS OF THE ODEON CIRCUIT STYLE". LATER IN 1935 HOWEVER CLAVERING STUNNED WEEDON BY RESIGNING TO TAKE UP A JOB WITH THE OFFICE OF WORKS. WEEDON APPROACHED CLAVERING'S FORMER TUTOR WHO RECOMMENDED ROBERT BULLIVANT AS CLAVERING'S REPLACEMENT AND WEEDON WAS



COMMISSIONED BY DEUTSCH TO OVERSEE THE DESIGN OF THE ENTIRE CHAIN.



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

Legends of Balsall Heath