

L.C.

Dear.

My husband will be away
the night. I absolutely
st. see you. I shall expect
at eleven.

I am desperate, and if
don't come I won't answer
the consequences. Don't.
me up.

L.

**"Our true intent is all for
your delight"**

Harry Sanders,
Grantham, December 1937

Research Field Station #4

Harry Sanders: A Life at the Pictures

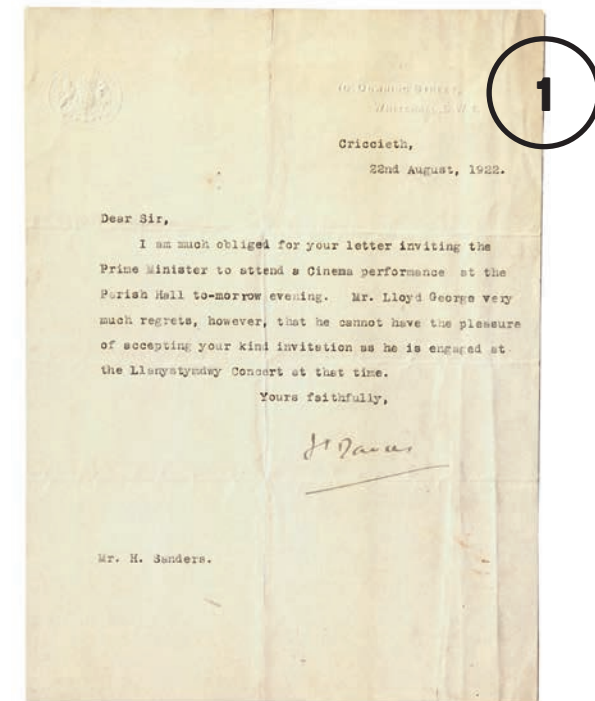
L.C.

My husband will be away
night. I absolutely
see you. I shall expect
eleven.

am desperate, and if
it come I wont answer
consequences. Dont.

by Professor Robert Shail

Harry Sanders was a cinema showman. He spent fifty years working in the film business from 1913 to 1963, and even when he retired he continued to take a keen interest in the medium to which he had given so much of his life. He wasn't a movie star, a producer or a director. He never wrote a screenplay or composed a score. He didn't make a single film himself and yet his role, like many others who shared his vocation, helped to shape the cinema experience of literally millions of people in Britain, generation after generation. Harry Sanders was a cinema manager. His job took him to picture palaces all over the country during an era when cinema was the nation's most popular leisure activity outside the home. This was a time when the cinema manager had a level of freedom rarely seen today. Not only did he choose the films to be shown, he was responsible personally for the publicity materials which would, hopefully, bring in a paying audience. It was the latter which was Harry's real passion and which these exhibits illustrate. Harry's other grand obsession was collecting the materials that he created and over the years the boxes of paper accumulated to become an archive of the cinema showman's trade. These yellowing, fragile pages eventually found their way via his son, Howard, to the archives of the Science and Media Museum, Bradford where this eager researcher saw them; each one a fragment of a man's life, bearing witness to a life at the pictures.



Harry Sanders was born in Maesteg, South Wales, on the 16 September 1898, just three years after the Lumière Brothers had given the first public screening of moving images in Paris. Like his father, and most of the male population of the town, on leaving school he went to work in the local coal mine where he was apprenticed as an engine driver. He might have stayed there if it hadn't been for a film screening which so impressed the fifteen year-old that he decided to try for a part-time evening job in this nascent entertainment business. He quickly graduated from rewind boy at the Gem to part-time assistant projectionist at the Cosy Cinema. By 1917 he was their chief operator, meaning that he had overall responsibility for projecting the films. In 1920 he and his friend, Robert Fisher, moved to Penrhyndeudraeth in North Wales where they established their own cinema management business, Fisher and Sanders, and presided over three venues in Porthmadoc, Criccieth and Penrhyndeudraeth. Responsibilities included managing the venues and staff, organising the publicity, and booking films for the weekly programme. The latter included investing £4 on *The Sheik* (1921) featuring Rudolph Valentino for a week's run in Criccieth. He had already developed an entrepreneurial streak: his diaries record how he took a 'terrific gamble' by paying an unprecedented £40 to book *The Kid* featuring Charlie Chaplin for a six-day run in 1921. His eye for publicity was already well developed. Aware that the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was visiting the area, he wrote to his Secretary extending an invitation to visit his cinema at the Parish Hall, Criccieth; unfortunately the Prime Minister had another engagement. The reply from 10 Downing Street became one of the earliest items in his personal archive.(1)

His abilities as a manager paid off; by January 1923 he had parted from his business partner and was working for E. Gratton Milley overseeing both the Co-op Picture House in Kirkham and the Beehive, Bolton. Next was the Palace, Walkden where he staged a chrysanthemum show in the auditorium, and then the Picture House, Balham (both for the exhibitor Ernesto Carreras whose son, James, would later go on to lead Britain's premier horror producer, Hammer). By March 1927 he was running one of the largest cinemas in the West Country, the Kings in the Old Market district of Bristol. Daily numbers at the Kings could be as much as 4000. Here he began to shape the venue's publicity materials, overseeing or creating the posters, flyers and newspaper adds for its weekly programmes, and even starting to stage the publicity stunts which became his speciality. A playbill he designed from November 1926 showcasing the release of *Camille* starring Norma Talmadge indicates his taste for hyperbole: 'Wonderful clothes! Luxurious Settings! Peerless acting!' (2)

2

NEXT WEEK—"CAMILLE." WONDERFUL CLOTHES! LUXURIOUS SETTINGS! PEERLESS ACTING!

PROGRAMME.

COMMENCING MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14th.
ENDING SATURDAY :: NOVEMBER 19th.

ALL THE WEEK.

Unit 1.—PATHE LAST-MINUTE NEWS IN VIEWS. A Review of Current Events.

Unit 2.—
"REX" THE DEVIL HORSE.
NOTE.—This Film will be shown from MONDAY to WEDNESDAY.
THURSDAY TO SATURDAY—
"WHISPERING WIRES."

Unit 3.—INTERLUDE. THE KINGS' SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.
Alfred A. Freesman, Musical Director.
1. SUITE—"Othello" Coleridge Taylor.
2. SONG—"Camille" David and Austin.
(The theme song to the film "Camille," which will be presented at this theatre next week).
3. FOX-TROT—Selected

Unit 4.—

"THE CLAW"

PLAYERS—
Maurice Stair **NORMAN KERRY**
Diedre Saurin **CLAIRE WINDSOR**
Major Anthony Kinsella ... **ARTHUR EDMUND CAREWE**
Adapted from the Novel by Cynthia Stockley.

Unit 5.—Final Chapter. "THE COLLEGIANS."

The Units of this Programme are subject to slight alteration at the discretion of the Management.

Continuous Performance Daily.
Doors open 2.0: Performance commences at 2.30.
On Saturdays doors open at 1.30. Commence at 2.0.

ATTRACTIONS.

WEEK COMMENCING :: NOVEMBER 21st.

ALL NEXT WEEK.

Exclusive to this Theatre.



A Superb Photoplay!

Norma Talmadge

with

GILBERT ROLAND

in

"CAMILLE"

A Modern Version of Dumas' World-famous Story—the Love Classic of the Century!

A Love Story that has Thrilled and Charmed the Whole World for Half a Century!
The Life and Loves of the most Vibrant Beauty in all History!
Produced with all the beauty of Costumes and Settings that Art and Beauty can devise.

"Camille" is not a costume story but a drama of modern life with up-to-date dresses and settings

Although he still thought it necessary to point out to his audience that this version of Dumas' classic was 'not a costume story but a drama of modern life with up-to-date dresses and settings'. He was beginning to garner recognition from his peers for his work in cinema exploitation and was awarded Third Prize in the Silver Challenge Cup from the trade magazine *The Cinema* for his promotion of the Harry Langdon comedy *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* (1926): his reward was the not insignificant amount of 100 guineas. In their issue of 10 November 1927 they named him one of the '100 Best Showmen in the Country'.

“BRISTOL RADIO WEEK”

COMMENCING MONDAY NEXT, NOV. 21st.

Special Announcement.

The Management have great pleasure in announcing that

**The Kings’
Symphony Orchestra**

under the Direction of
ALFRED A. FREEMAN

will be Broadcast

from this Theatre on

**TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY**

and

FRIDAY

NEXT WEEK,

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE B.E.C. CARDIFF STATION.

The Musical Interlude will be relayed between 6.0 and 6.30 each evening.

3

The Kings was also a variety hall and Sanders took full advantage of the chance to stage other attractions around the film programme. This included booking the Anglo-Australian musical-comedy duo Mr Flotsam and Mr Jetsam (real names Bentley Collingwood Hilliam and Malcolm McEachern) and organising a live broadcast from the cinema to mark Bristol Radio Week. (3) This consisted of a short performance by the cinema’s own symphony orchestra under the direction Alfred A. Freeman. Harry meticulously recorded his activities, building up a roster of artists who he could call upon for performances, from vocalists like Signor Silvio Sideli to jazz ensembles such as Wingate’s Temperance Band. (4) He also began to make notes of all the films he screened and their comparative popularity with audiences. A disappointed entry from 3 October 1927 records that a film version of *Faust* proved ‘too highbrow for Bristol’ with a return of only £623, three shillings and sixpence. The usual British obsession with the weather took on a particular interest for cinema managers like Harry, when sunshine became something to dread as it kept the customers out of his darkened auditorium. The phrase ‘exceptionally fine and warm weather all week’ was not a happy one.

BANDS: Wingate's Temperance Band
Sec. & Business Manager
Mr Ramsden Whitman
178 Manchester Road
Salford 97. Westthorpe, M. 6. 1/2

Vocalists: addresses.
Signor Silvio Sideli
20 Castlemain Road
London W. 9.

Mr George Barnatt - Sec. -
9 Denby Street
Heaton Norris
Stockport.

Done 60k note for Mr. Barnatt
at Morris Bank, Walsley, before 4.30, 12/27.

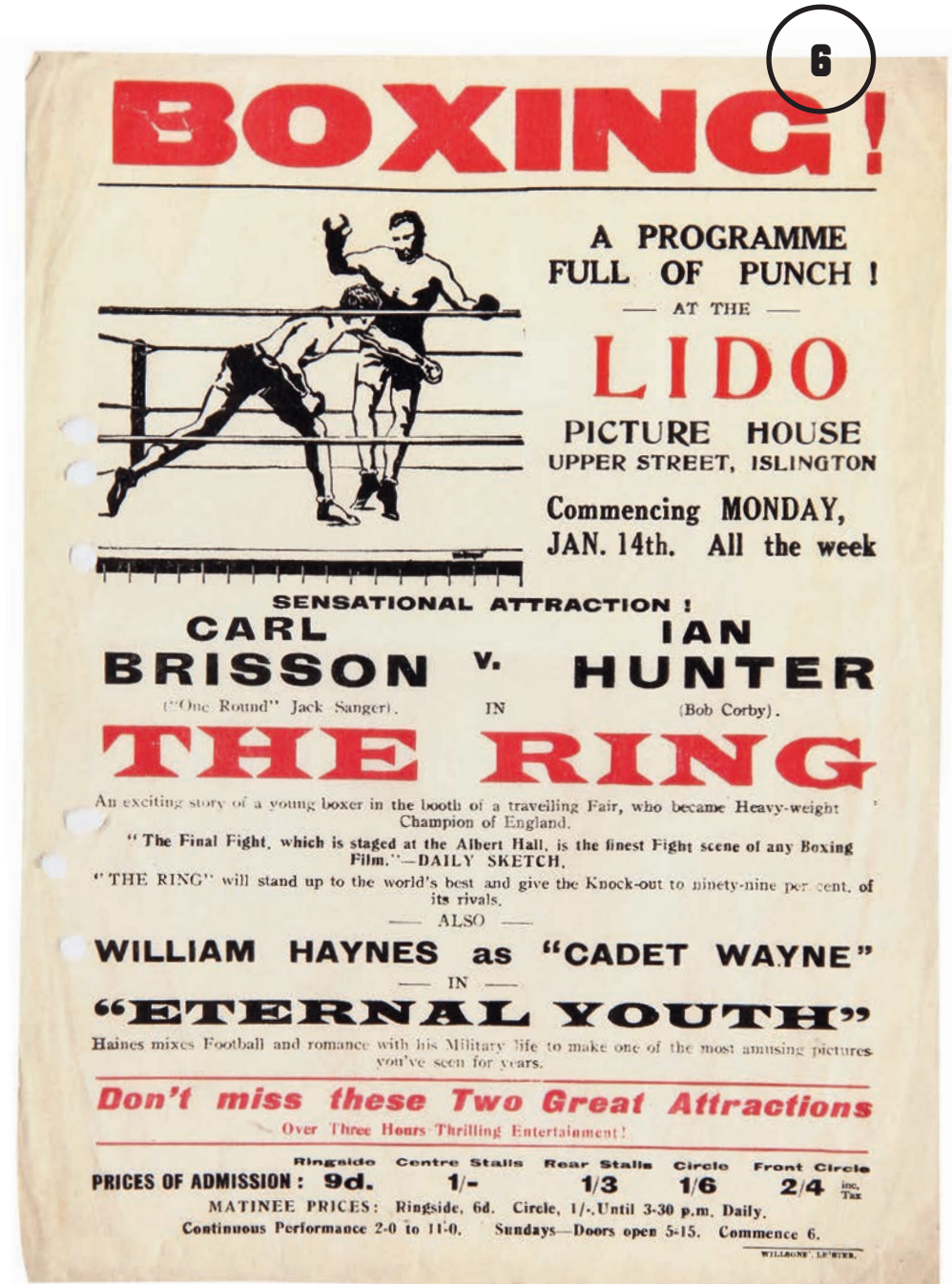
Miss Edith Wilson - Margo Spagno.
12 Westing Road,
Bridfield Road
Rusholme, Walsley.

Mr. David Miller - Sec.
150 Long Canonry
Barnsley.

4



By 1928 Harry had arrived, by way of the Coliseum and the Canton in Cardiff, at one of the new breed of super cinemas being opened by the Carreras circuit: the Lido in Islington. In 1929 it even installed the latest technological breakthrough, sound. The Lido was an art deco palace and Harry created a monthly programme booklet to match, complete with an elegantly stylised cover promoting 'the perfect talkie theatre'. (5) By now he was a master of the art of exploitation and could turn any film into an excuse for an extravagant promotional 'wheeze', the more imaginative the better. For *The Ring* (1927), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, he created a campaign that implied that an actual boxing contest between the two stars, Carl Brisson and Ian Hunter, was going to take place in his auditorium. (6) He couldn't resist the chance to incorporate as much wordplay as possible with references to how the film will 'stand up to the world's best' and 'give the knock-out to ninety-nine per cent of its rivals'.

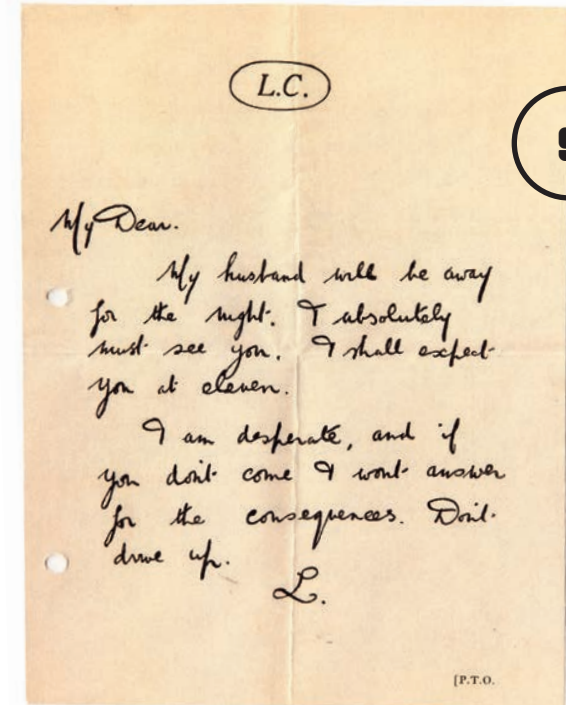




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While at the Beehive Harry developed a penchant for mildly racy campaigns that appealed to the male and female sections of his audience in different ways. For the film *Treat 'Em Rough* (1922 – also known as *Brothers Under the Skin*) he issued two flyers. (7) The first asked in large print 'Should wives be beaten?', while a second one warned wives not to let their husbands see the film without them as it might cause 'poor henpecked, dish-washing, baby-minding, floor-scrubbing, husbands' to rise up in rebellion. (8) These small cards were typically distributed to cafés, bars, libraries and other public areas around the town or city where he was working and left for patrons to discover for themselves. The strategy was always to disguise that they related to a film and catch the attention with an outrageous narrative. Only on closer inspection was the title of a film revealed and the true purpose of the calling card uncovered. A fine example is his campaign for *The Letter* (1940) starring Bette Davies when he distributed what appeared to be a letter from a frustrated housewife in the throes of an affair around various venues in Grantham: 'My husband will be away for the night... I am desperate, and if you don't come I won't answer to the consequences'. (9)

When the Lido in Islington passed from the Carreras chain onto the Ben Rose circuit, and then was swallowed by up as part of the major Odeon network, Harry decided to move on, noting in his diary that he was '*an independent sort of guy*'. Over the next two years he restlessly passed through the Regal at Uxbridge, the Central and the Playhouse at Folkstone and the Ritz at Aldershot, which he described as a '*dismal garrison town*'. He was distinctly unimpressed with his employers, Union Cinemas; he noted that they were '*about the craziest circuit in the business*'. After six months he resigned. There was a brief stay at the Picture House, Oldbury before he finally arrived at the State, Grantham in December 1937. This cinema would be his happy home for the rest of his career in cinema management; another diary entry records that '*it was indeed a very happy Christmas*'. In 1941 it became the Granada and joined this national chain but by that stage Harry seems to have lost something of his defiant individualism and was more willing to toe-the-line with the tighter structures of a large organisation. Times had changed too and cinema managers were not given the same free rein that he had previously experienced. Nonetheless he remained in charge for another twenty-two years until his retirement.

However, he never lost his eye for the chance to generate publicity or to keep his cinema at the centre of public discussion. In 1947 the local authority in Grantham considered the possibility of closing cinemas on Sundays. Harry immediately set to work on a campaign against this action. A public vote was organised by the Council and Harry bombarded the citizens of Grantham with posters urging them to vote to keep cinema doors open. (10) He appealed to '*broad-minded electors*' to vote in favour and in a move which seems remarkably contemporary he targeted the young as those between sixteen and twenty-one years of age were permitted to vote. He urged them to '*protect their enjoyable Sunday evenings*'. The motion to keep cinemas open on Sundays was safely passed by a vote of 4,129 to 859.

TO-DAY

Saturday, September 27th

AT THE

POLLING STATIONS

THE DOORS ARE

WIDE OPEN

FOR ALL

BROAD-MINDED

ELECTORS

TO

WALK RIGHT IN

AND RECORD THEIR VOTES

FOR

SUNDAY CINEMAS

Every Elector will be handed a Voting Paper — and all you have to do is to mark a **X** under FOR—fold up the Voting Paper and, in the presence of the Presiding Officer, put the paper into the Ballot Box.

✱

HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE—BETWEEN 16 AND 21 YEARS OF AGE—NEED **YOUR** VOTE TO PROTECT **THEIR** ENJOYABLE SUNDAY EVENINGS.

See yesterday's "Grantham Journal" and "Grantham Guardian" for complete list of Polling Stations in each District.

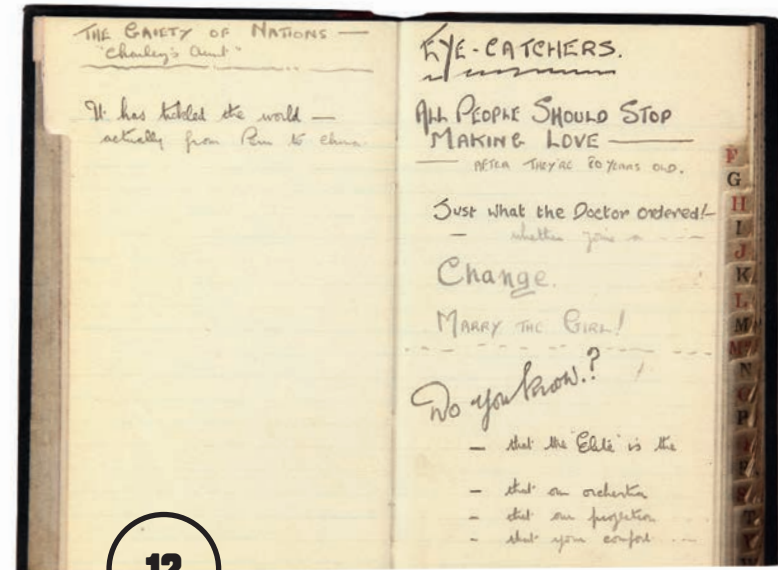
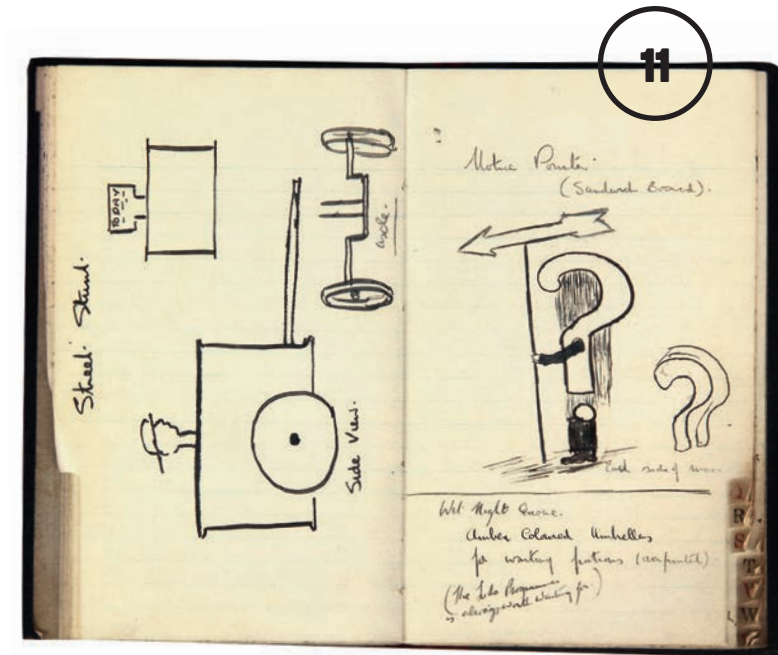
Issued by Grantham Sunday Cinemas Association

Palmer and Son, Printers, Grantham

10

Throughout his career Harry kept careful notes of his plans and ideas for publicity stunts. These included gloriously surreal drawings for costumes or exhibits which he might place around the streets of any town where he was working. (11) In neat, detailed line drawings he depicts curious metal vehicles such as his 'steel stunt' which might be pushed around town to publicise the day's screenings. Another illustration shows a costume in the shape of a question mark to be worn by one of his hawkers along with a large arrow on a stick which they could carry to point the way to the cinema. His spare moments seem to have been taken up with thinking of ever more ingenious ways of catching the attention of the public. If visual devices didn't work, then he would put into play catchphrases or elaborate puns for his signage. He called these 'Eye-catchers' and collected them out in his notebooks. The phrases often had little to do with the film in question but were selected for maximum impact: 'All people should stop making love... after they're 80 years old' proclaimed one announcement, while another simply instructed passers by to 'Marry the girl!' (12) He also used the notebooks to record aphorisms and mottoes designed to remind him of the motivations that always underpinned his activities. Some are sentimental or lean towards cliché but they clearly held personal significance for him, whether it was a copy of Kipling's 'If' or statements like 'All things I thought I knew; but now confess, The more I know I know, I know the less'. There is a touching, almost childlike delight in the way he would print his name at the top of a page or meticulously record the dates of each location in which he worked. The essence of his personality is there in his entry in Grantham in 1937: 'Our true intent is all for your delight'.

For Harry, cinema was a magical medium capable of bringing joy to the people. He kept a diary of his film bookings which provide a fascinating week-by-week history of changing cinematic styles and public tastes from the silent period to the early 1950s, by which time cinema managers typically no longer booked films themselves but accepted a programme dictated by head office. These small volumes, written in a meticulous hand, record the film's title, the rental company from which it was hired, its length in feet (a nicety in film exhibition observed to this day in the magazine *Sight and Sound*), and the price he had paid for the rental. His bookings diaries from the 1930s show that the film being screened was changed everyday. He also notes special calendar dates such the children's half-holidays or St Patrick's Day when he might organise a themed screening. In 1923-4 he typically paid between thirty shillings to two pounds for a one-day rental. Back in Penrhyn at the start of the decade he noted a week's bookings totalled at two pounds. Tucked away within the pages we find odd items like his building insurance policy. He would also scribble occasional asides or reminders in the margins noting that 'combination is the secret of efficiency in every game' or 'the only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth'. On the back page of his diary for 1924-5 he wrote 'a modern pirate - entertainment tax collection or income tax collection'. He also used the diaries to record the comparative takings of different films. For the week commencing 28 March 1927 he bemoaned the 'very mediocre features' which had netted him a mere £597 and fourteen shillings. The weather was a constant cause for concern as it directly affected box office; one exasperated note simply reads 'total gale'.

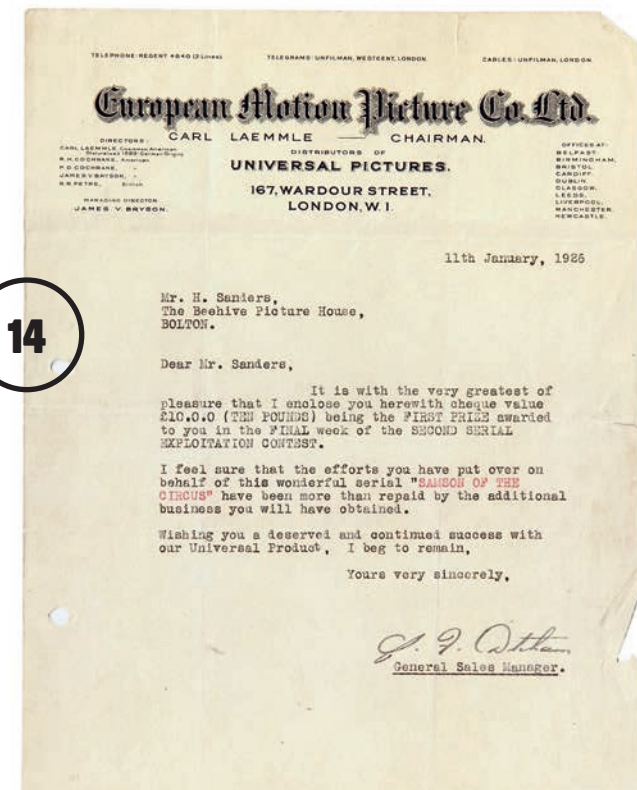
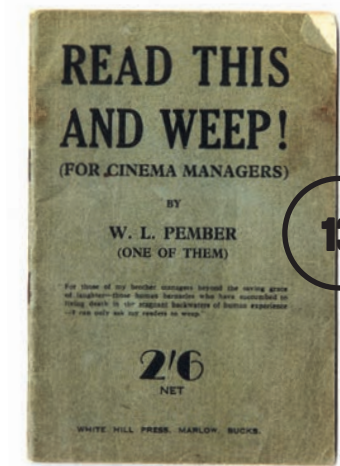


The diaries chart the gradual shift from a daily change of film, towards three different programmes per week, then two, and finally just one per week; high interest films might run for longer. He also recorded his income and his outgoings which provide a testament to both gradual inflation and to the pressure cinema managers began to experience in the 1950s as audiences declined. A list for 1930 records the following costs:

National Screen Service	£1 per week
Film Transport	£1 per week
Youngers Publicity	£50 (London)
Rateable Value	£717
Music and Dance Licence/ Cinematograph Licence	Costs not recorded
Refuse Removal	£2 10/-

Similarly he recorded the gradual increases in ticket prices so that in 1940 he was charging two shillings for the best seats in the stalls and three shillings for the equivalent in the balcony. By 1951 he was charging an additional seven pence for the best seats at the back of the stalls and the equivalent in the balcony had risen to three shillings and eleven pence. At the same date he noted that a full house, including ninety-six standing in the stalls, could net him five pounds, thirteen shillings and six pence. One of the most striking entries is on 9 January 1941 at the State when he records a cost of four pounds, seventeen shillings and six pence to repair four holes in the theatre roof caused by bomb damage.

There was also a sense of camaraderie, and gentle competition, between cinema managers in the era of independence. Among Harry's possessions was a book entitled *Read This and Weep! (For Cinema Managers)* by W.L. Pember, 'one of them'. (13) This slender volume contains a series of comic anecdotes charting some of the wilder publicity stunts contrived by cinema managers in pursuit of the illusive audience. His job, with its unusual hours and daily pressure obviously involved an element of loneliness and publications like this, and in-house magazines published by chains like Granada, helped to foster a sense of community. Harry's efforts were often recognised with coverage in these publications and occasionally with more formal acknowledgement in the way of prizes. A letter from the European Motion Picture Co. Ltd. dated 11 January 1926, while Harry was manager at the Beehive, Bolton, commends him for his ability to exploit the potential of the 'wonderful serial' *Samson of the Circus* and rewards him with a cheque for £10. (14)



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THE CAMBRIAN NEWS . 5 JUNE 1981

HARRY SANDERS:

The heading to this last item may remind some people in the Penrhynedraeth and Porthmadog areas of events in their lives nearly 50 years ago, for Harry Sanders was indeed a remarkable character who brought much joy to so many people in the 1920's.

Harry Sanders retired in 1963 after serving the Cinema industry for exactly 50 years. In those early days the Cinema was, in fact emerging from the tents of the fairground and entering solid buildings.

In a Newsletter published by Granada in December 1963, Harry Sanders, described as 'Showman, publicist, exploiter and administrator in the Cinema' was wished a well earned retirement.

Over the years from 1926 until his retirement, Harry Sanders had gained the respect of the whole Cinema industry, having served the public in several parts of the country.

The coming of 'Talkies' in 1928 enabled Harry to open London's newest super Cinema, Lido Islington. He later went to Grantham where he managed the new State Grantham.

Space this week does not allow me to record Harry Sanders's links with this area, but I hope in a week or two to do this, quoting from two of his treasured diaries.

Yes, in 1922 Harry Sanders was Manager of the Cinema in Porthmadog and his diaries provide most interesting information of those 'good old days'.

One original letter which Mr Sanders has so kindly lent me is from Mr J. T. Davies, private secretary to the late David Lloyd George, which was sent to Mr Sanders on August 22, 1922 in response to an invitation to Mr Lloyd George to attend a Cinema performance at Criccieth Parish Hall.

MADOG

*Cambrian News
June 5th 1981*

In his later years in semi-retirement – Harry never seemed to really retire – he spent a good deal of time in nostalgic contemplation of the golden age of cinema-going, giving interviews to local radio and to the press about his exploits. He was never slow in talking to anyone who would listen about his career, always spurred on by his endless enthusiasm for the medium. In June 1981 he was contacted by the *Cambrian News*, a newspaper still operating to this day in West Wales, who wanted to commemorate his links with the area and to celebrate this 'showman, publicist, exploiter and administrator in the cinema'. (15)

He kept his press cuttings, carefully preserving the articles that recognised him as 'a man of the cinema' and 'master publicist'. (16) One diary entry records the number of times he had appeared in the letters page of the in-house publication of the Granada chain which totalled twenty-nine between July 1950 and September 1963. These press cuttings provide a rich panorama of changing audiences, as Harry charted his successes and recorded his various 'wheezes', as publicity stunts were known in the trade. *The Critic* on 8 January 1926 devoted an article to his exploits headlined 'Ambitious Harry Sanders'. It reported how he had established a 'wide renown through his enterprising publicity methods'. These included a ninety-six sheet poster for the serial Samson (1926) which was reported as the biggest ever for a serial. The trade paper *Kine Weekly* reported on 16 September 1926 how he had hired two men who he dressed in morning coats and top hats to walk the streets of Balham holding a card inscribed 'Ask me for a tonic!' When passers-by took them up on this offer they were told to go and see Harold Lloyd in *For Heaven's Sake* at Harry's cinema.

showman, businessman, Sanders, This n and his big er got round r. 30 years the n charge of Granada . . . State, now a 'for bingo. and gently he eyes that ouaned pic- tle. And the he mellow lit in Maesteg," y turning the pbook which rehensive as 'film Goers' s flip past. ith photos t and pin- persistent, ger. age of 13 l y at the local the projec ash he ury d work at yellers' Rest (tinerents, et DoE appe to wait. n't the cash ake on the ven District e and land as turned it from the l health 000, mainly s insulation facilities on site. ated to the hat once the e it would 00 per cent ant, but the ave to be ot be done.' chairman son.

Harry's screened it all

By Brian Martin



Harry... man of the cinema.

tionist joined the Royal Flying Corps. So I took over. His career ran the full spectrum of the screen . . . from scratchy silents to super Cinemascope. He retired in 1963 (Vince Eger made the presentation of a typewriter) after over 50 years in the business. To thousands of Grantham folk he was a Sanders of the River . . . a river of film over which he was the beneficent bailiff. "The best films I ever saw were *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (with Valentinol, *Broadway Melody*, and *The Robe* (Burton, Simmons, Mature). I remember *The Robe* in all the wonder of Cinemascope. It was like looking into a vast landscape, he recalled. Film titles come tumbling, savoured, from his lips with the relish of a gourmet chef describing a mammoth menu. "Now, *Pygmalion* . . . that was one I remember well." The 1938 movie starred Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller. Wendy it was who uttered the immortal words "Not bloody likely!" in her persona as Eliza Doolittle. Harry noted the effect of that fruity Cockney phrase at the film's first Grantham showing. "The audience roared with laughter, so I got our projectionist to increase the sound, when that particular line came up, for increased impact." Local film-goers got the message loud and clear . . . and loved it. Such subtle attention to detail was typical of King Harry. He still keeps scrupulous notes of the films of 60 years ago, complete with data on audience numbers, reaction, financial breakdown . . . even the weather for each day. He was a publicist surname. Encouraged by

Bernstein. But his life now is centred on his wife, his roses, and doing odd jobs around his spotless Grantham home. Cinema managers were the tip of an industrial iceberg. A prized photo from 1947 shows the Granada staff proudly lined up in four rows. An army of usherettes, projectionists, doormen (with suitably military bearing), restaurant staff and cleaners, they certainly spooled their resources. "Oh no, never." Harry Sanders, master publicist, looked shocked at the very thought.

A CENTRAL heating plan to bring warmth to South Kesteven council house tenants got the all clear from the authority housing committee, was hailed by tenants themselves, but has now fizzled out because of cash constraints. Coun Percy Wilson, chairman of the finance and land committee, has delivered a sharp rebuke to the committee that floated the plan, without first finding out if there was the cash to get it done. Councillors have been left embarrassed and council house tenants are fuming, after the heating scheme was launched in July, attracted 1,800 applicants and can now only be put on ice until the cash becomes available. At the latest meeting of the finance and land committee, Coun Wilson took the housing committee to task for a scheme that after it had been costed could have put 58p a week on council house rents. And that would be everyone's rent not just those who asked for modern heating. A full financial appraisal of the scheme, its probable costs and even a "leasing" idea was put before the finance and land committee. "There is no way we can go along with it," said Coun Wilson firmly. What can go ahead are schemes to bring central heating to old folks' bungalows, in a rolling programme. Some "ordinary" council tenants are lucky, 90 of them are in line for central heating, committed before the financial implication sank in. But for the rest, it is wait and see. And as the major central heating scheme is turned off at least for this financial year, Coun Wilson reminded his own group that financial facts and figures had only just been prepared. Even with a leasing scheme 1,800 central heating units would cost more than £4m in council capital, and £26,400 from the housing revenue account. "We will look at the scheme some time next year," said Coun Wilson. "This council can only do so much."

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He kept many of the handmade playbills that he produced throughout his career. He had a particular fondness for mildly suggestive teasing of his audience. His playbill for *Love Burglar* (1920) informed the 'young men of Penrhy in need of wives' that they should not miss the picture. When he screened Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) at the Kings in Bristol he commissioned a local artist to produce a poster depicting what the city's tramways centre might look like 100 years in the future. Little did he know that it wouldn't even exist and its place would be taken firstly by a notorious traffic island and then by a water feature. When the film *Canton Girl* (1928) arrived at his cinema in the Canton district of Cardiff he couldn't resist creating a poster that claimed loudly 'Should be seen by every Canton girl'. For *Czar of Broadway* (1930) he designed a poster that resembled a news announcement with the headline 'King of the Underworld Shot by Rival Gangsters'. He also produced his own monthly programme magazines for the State at Grantham with an editorial feature called 'Manager's Chat'. One notice in the magazine draws customers' attention to the cinema café which serves 'delightful dainty teas' which can be brought to your seat by an usherette, an innovation recently reintroduced in some cinemas.

Musical entertainments were another favourite and brought out Harry's strong sense of the place of cinema in the community. At the Kings in Bristol he introduced sing-alongs before each performance which proved immensely popular. The *Bristol Times and Reporter* recorded that the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress had attended so that they could join in on 13 April 1927. On 12 May 1927 he organised 'A Musical World Tour' which consisted of a slide show of images from exotic locations with musical accompaniment from the cinema orchestra; the tour started and ended in Bristol. Before screenings of *Spanish Passions* (1927) he designed an entertainment entitled 'Spanish Prologue' which consisted of a tableau, a dancer, and then songs – all with a Spanish theme. Harry always remained keen to supplement film programmes with other forms of entertainment or by star appearances. One of his greatest coups during the war period was to host Glen Miller and his orchestra. Gracie Fields made an appearance at his Grantham cinema on 31 February 1943. The auditorium was packed with 2000 factory workers who had been given the afternoon off from work and the streets were crammed with 8000 more spectators on St Peter's Hill. In the early 1960s he arranged for a succession of popular entertainers to appear at The State including many of the first wave of British rock and roll stars such as Tommy Steele, Billy Fury, Adam Faith and Cliff Richards. However, the only one who could fill the auditorium for both performances of his one-night stand was Max Bygraves. Another notable coup from early in his career was to feature the future child star Freddie Bartholomew as part of a variety bill at the Lido. Bartholomew, who gave a recitation, went onto to feature in the Hollywood version of *David Copperfield* (1935). Despite the fact that Bartholomew's star waned rapidly in adulthood, Harry never ceased to play on his distant association with him, sometimes billing himself as the man 'who gave boy star his chance' or as 'friend of Bartholomew'. He even wrote to him on 7 November 1978 during a period when he seems to have been revisiting his career by trying to contact people who had figured in its success; he never received a reply.

In the 1950s he started The Grenadiers as part of the national circuit of Saturday morning children's clubs that covered the UK and which were affiliated to the Children's Film Foundation (CFF). A diary entry for Saturday, 16 February 1952 lists a typical programme for a children's matinee with a Woody Woodpecker cartoon followed by a Laurel and Hardy short, then episode eight of a Batman and Robin serial, before a full screening of Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922); the fact that this feature was being shown to children thirty years after its release is unfortunate testament to the tendency of cinema managers to view children's screenings as requiring little thought, a trend that had led to the creation of the CFF. Harry's affection for the Grenadiers seems to have grown during the 1950s and he increasingly devoted his energies to their activities, perhaps frustrated by the fact that the cinema manager's role was being increasingly subsumed within the corporate structures of large organisations like Granada. He even created his own song for the club sung to the tune of 'The British Grenadiers'.

The core of his approach to marketing, however, always lay in the 'wheezes' which he executed. These filled him with delight and often combined the literal with the surreal, as when he advertised *The Cat and the Canary* (1927) by wheeling a giant cut-out of a canary in a cage on board a wagon around the streets of Bristol. For *Jailbirds* (1931) he had actors dressed as convicts marching up and down under guard outside the Lido Islington, while *Murders in the Rue Morgue* led inevitably to a man in a gorilla suit being walked by his keeper around Islington's streets. There were wax models in the foyer for *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933) and skeletons for *The House of Doom* (1934), while a paper-thin man was made from wooden battens for *The Thin Man* (1934). For Ealing's chilling *Dead of Night* (1946) he organised an 11pm screening which could be attended by written application only and which was followed by a discussion of dreams. Any occurrence in nearby streets could be turned into an advertising opportunity, so that the road works in Islington High Street soon had an improvised sign above them reading 'Paving the way for King Kong'. One of his most outrageous gags was to place an advert in the local Islington papers stating that 1000 shorthand typists were needed – applicants were asked to report to the Lido. When they arrived in their hordes they discovered that they had been conned into attending a screening of *After Office Hours* (1935); he didn't record their reaction. For *Five of a Kind* (1939) he even managed to find seventeen sets of twins who he invited to a tea party at The State, attracting huge press coverage. He made 500 hand-written postcards which were delivered to addresses around Grantham to promote *Summer Holiday* (1963) starring Cliff Richard; his diary records the week's takings as £1,681 net for six days. In his later career in Grantham he tended to focus on a more regular pattern of talent shows, beauty contests and fund raising charity events, often for the town's hospital.

In his own way Harry was a philosopher of cinema entertainment. At a talk for the Rotary Club in Grantham on 14 August 1950 he told them that cinema is *'the cheapest and most significant form of entertainment'*. Its accessibility to the masses was always a key feature in its importance for him, as it provided *'comfort and luxury at a such a reasonable rate'*. Technical innovations and improvements in facilities were to be welcomed, so he was delighted by the arrival of sound and then of colour and widescreen. Patrons should be rewarded for parting with their hard-earned money by a sumptuous environment in which they could forget their everyday boredom and frustration. The height of this for him was the Lido in London where *'it had all the luxury trimmings – sponge rubber upholstered seats, beautiful thick carpet in the foyer and gangways, the most up-to-date air conditioning plant, perfect projection equipment, smartly uniformed attendants'*. He saw cinema as a social leveller, lifting the aspirations of his poorest customers: *'the roughs and toughs started to dress up, put on collar and ties and their Sunday best suits'*.

He had his views on the kind of films which the public preferred as well. For him there had to be a point of identification rooted in their own experiences: *'the most successful are those with a strong factual background... reflections of reality, whatever the genre, it has to feel like a real life situation'*. Even a fantasy film or western had to contain this seed of reality if it was to succeed with audiences. At the same time, there needed to be heightened emotions to take the audience away from their lives: *'somewhere to go, to forget their worries for a couple of hours, to escape the daily gloom and to relax'*. It's interesting to speculate on what he would have made of the cinema-going decline of the 1970s and 1980s when fading British picture palaces were converted brutally into multiscreen venues with poor projection and sound. He might have been rather more impressed by the subsequent rise of the multiplex with its return to escapism, as well as those thick carpets and comfortable chairs. His irritation was reserved for critics who seemed more concerned for their own views rather than considering those of the audience: *'surely their job is to state whether the film is worth the individual one-and-ninepences which will be paid by millions of ordinary folk'*. His conception of cinema was based in an escape from everyday life for the common people. What this says about the quality of life he witnessed around him over those sixty years is a less cheerful consideration.

'Harry Sanders' career sounds like a history of the cinema'

Granada Newsletter (Christmas 1963)

'If the ghost of Barnum had been in the neighbourhood of Grantham last week, it would have doffed its spectral hat to a worthy disciple in Harry Sanders, who pulled off one of the most spectacular stunts of recent years'

Granada Newsletter (May 1952)

Harry Sanders' life at the pictures provides a narrative charting the growth of the twentieth century's most popular form of public entertainment. In his dedication to attracting audiences he was a pioneer of marketing and publicity that predates the activities of viral campaigners on today's Internet. In compiling his personal archives he charted six decades of social change, recording the night in 1940 when he had to stop a screening of Chaplin's The Great Dictator because of an air raid. At a talk for the King's School Film Society in Grantham, 9 September 1962, he recalled playing synchronised records in the auditorium during early experiments at establishing sound films, as well as the later introduction of colour and widescreen. He described his ideal cinema: '1600 seater with rising floor, heating and ventilation kit, huge screen, no fancy fittings to distract, a stage for occasional events'. By that stage cinema managers no longer booked their films or organised publicity. The golden age of film-going had ended and with it the careers of pioneers like Harry, men and women who had help make it a viable medium in the first place.

Sources

This essay is drawn entirely from primary materials held by the Science and Media Museum, Bradford in the Harry Sanders Archive. I would like to extend my thanks to them and in particular to their curator Toni Booth.

I'm also immensely grateful to Harry's son, Howard, whom I interviewed on 24 March 2017 and who provided additional materials used in compiling this essay and exhibition.

Very little work exists charting the careers of film managers like Harry Sanders; it remains a particularly neglected aspect of cinema history.

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