

KINGS THEATRE, STRATFORD CHRONOLOGY

1916

27 June

A meeting is held with the object of forming a moving picture company. A proposal is put forward that His Majesty's Theatre be purchased from Mrs Diamond (S P & A Minute Books).

26 August

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd is Incorporated as a Private Company under "The Companies Act 1908" in New Plymouth (CO-NP 1 274, NA Wn.).

3 October

The first general meeting of Stratford Pictures & Amusement Ltd is held. Plans for a new building are discussed (S P & A Minute Books)

16 December

An invitation for builders' tenders is placed in a Wellington newspaper. (*Dominion* 16/12/1916:29).

The tender is awarded to Johns & Sons for £6834, but is subsequently altered to £7134 (S P & A Minute Books).

1917

16 April

The name of "King's" is approved for the new theatre (S P & A Minute Books).

27 April

Transfer of section 318 from Thomas Cracroft Fookes and an Easement*** on section 317 from Mary St George King to Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd. (LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95).

3 July

It is decided that the gross proceeds from the opening should go to the Wounded Soldiers Fund (S P & A Minute Books).

31 December

The King's Picture Theatre, designed by Auckland architects Messrs Grierson and Aimer is opened featuring the film "Madcap Madge". The theatre manager is Mr F. Foley (SEP: 29/12/1917:5; 31/12/1917:7; 2/1/1918:8).

1918

10 January

The Stratford Marble Bar at the King's Cinema opens
(*SEP* 10/1/1918:8)

5 November

Concerns about the influenza epidemic prompt theatre management to announce a twice-daily fumigation programme
(*SEP* 5/11/1918:1).

11 November

The theatre is closed until further notice.
(*SEP* 11/11/1918:1).

12 December

The King's reopens with a showing of "Paradise Garden" and a Keystone comedy "His Busted Trust"
(*SEP* 12/12/1918:1).

1920

January

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd move their office to the King's Theatre to be jointly shared with the office of the Stratford Marble Bar Ltd.
(CO-NP 1 274, NA Wn.).

1925

16 January, 23 January, 2 February, 16 February

Demonstrations of the De Forest Phonofilms at King's Theatre, Stratford
(Clive Sowry Pers Comm.).

Although the New Zealand and Australian rights to the system have been secured by Mr W. P. Kirkwood for fourteen years, "preliminary commercial arrangements" yet to be completed mean that it will be "some time" before the general public will be able to view the system
(*SEP* 24/1/1925: 5).

1926

24 March

The first New Plymouth demonstration of the De Forest Phonofilm takes place in the Opera House
(Film Archives Wn. *DN* 25/3/1926).

Mr C. Wards is replaced by Mr L.N. Wilson as theatre manager. Wilson is manager until 1930
(S P & A Minute Books; SIC 2).

1926/27

The first public demonstration/s of the De Forest Phonofilms at King's Theatre
(Luke Wilson scrapbook, n.d.)

1927

5-10 September

Paramount Week is celebrated in Stratford with the showing of "We're in the Navy Now"

(SEP 3/9/1927:8)

Luke Wilson, manager of the King's Theatre secures third place in the Paramount Exploitation Shield

(Luke Wilson scrapbook, n.d.)

1929

8 March

The Paramount Theatre in Wellington screens "the first sound films in New Zealand" using the De Forest installation

(*Evening Post* 9/3/1929: in Centennial Edition 1865 - 1965:36).

21 October

Lease with Western Electrical Co. (NZ) Ltd for talking motion picture equipment (S P & A Minute Books)

9 November

Speaking pictures are ~~shown to a general audience for the first time in~~ Stratford. ^{installed}

Changes to the theatre include: extensive felt padding and curtaining on certain walls; a new perforated "talkie" screen; the erection of a sound tower behind the screen and an enlarged operating box to accommodate the two projecting machines.

Manager : Mr E. Norden.

(SEP 7/11/1929:2;11/11/1929:2)

1934

2 April

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd lease theatre to Stratford Theatres Ltd for a period of 5 years

(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95).

1936

18 October

The Taranaki Projectionist Union Meeting is held in Stratford

(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material).

1939

2 April

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd renew lease of theatre to Stratford Theatres Ltd for a period of 7 years

(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95).

1940

Cedric Brittenden - manager

(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material)

1944

Arnold Kilmister - manager of both King's and Plaza
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material)

1946

Wilf Garrett - manager
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material)

2 April

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd renew lease of theatre to Stratford Theatres Ltd (under directorship of R.J. Kerridge) for a period of 10 years.
(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95; S P & A Minute Books)

1948

Tom Walsh - manager, until 1961.
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material)

1950-51

Major repairs are carried out on the ceiling of the auditorium. The domes and corbels are replaced with solid plaster.
(S P & A Minute Books).

The ceiling is lowered and the plaster scrolling on the wall panels removed
(*Stratford Press* 16/12/1992 in SIC 2)

1956

1. 1. 1956
Kerridge - Odeon leases the building for 10 years
(S P & A Minute Books).

2 April

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd renews lease of theatre to Stratford Theatres Ltd (Kerridge-Odeon) for a further 10 years.
(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95; S P & A Minute Books)

1961

24 January

Transfer of section 318 and part of section 317 from Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd to Fullers Theatre Corporation Ltd (Kerridge-Odeon) at Auckland
(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95).

5 October

A "Special Resolution Re. Voluntary Winding up" of Stratford Pictures & Amusement Ltd is passed
(CO-NP 1 274, NA Wn.).

1963

18 March

Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd is officially dissolved

(CO-NP 1 274, NA Wn.).

Late 1960s

The theatre is re-roofed, the balcony is removed in the auditorium
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material).

Major refurbishment including removal of the balcony. Kevin Saville manager
(Bruce Cook pers. comm.).

Wilkinsons upgraded the auditorium
(Murray Herbert pers. comm.)

The ornate balustrades are covered up
(*Stratford Press* 16/12/1992 in SIC 2)

1969

9 November

The remodelled and renovated theatre now renamed the Regent is officially opened by
the Mayor of Stratford, Mr G.J.W.Boon
(*Taranaki Herald* 10/11/1969).

1972

27 March

Transfer of section 318 and part of section 317 to Kerridge Odeon Corporation Ltd
*** (presumably this is a change in name only)
(LINZ: CT 31/140; CT 90/95).

1974

Gwelfa Burgess - manager, until 1986
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material).

1986

Merv Thayer - manager, until 1988
(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material).

August

The September closure of the theatre is confirmed by Kerridge-Odeon
(*Taranaki Herald* 6/8/1986).

1987

Two blockbusters, "Crocodile Dundee" in February and "Labyrinth" in May are shown
and pull in record crowds, however attendances continue to decline thereafter
(*Stratford Press* 27/1/1988).

1988

The Regent theatre closes and the projection equipment is moved to Whakatane
(*Stratford Press* 27/1/1988).

1990

September

The Stratford Shakespeare Society is incorporated, having been formed following a successful month long festival in May
(SSS 1994)

November

The Stratford Theatre group was reformed bringing a resurgence in performing arts in the town (SSS 1994).

1991

The Stratford District Community Trust is formed and a fundraising committee sets a target of \$130,000 for the revival and renovation of the King's Theatre
(SDTT 1996)

“Worzel Gummidge” is performed by the Stratford Theatre Group as a fund raiser on the old stage. It is the first live performance to be staged in the theatre since its closure as a movie venue

(SDTT 1996; Murray Herbert pers. comm.)

A new screen is installed in front of the stage. When the latter is in use, the screen winches up to the ceiling
(Murray Herbert pers. comm.)

December

The Stratford District Council agrees to grant the Stratford Theatre Trust \$30,000 towards the upgrading of the theatre
(SIC 1).

The large projectors which have been on loan to a Pacer Kerridge cinema in Whakatane arrive and are installed in the theatre
(DN 19/12/1991 in SIC 1).

Susan Meek - manager

(Theatre collection: Miscellaneous material)

1992

31 January

The theatre is officially re-opened with the screening of “Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves”

(SDTT 1996).

May

“Oliver” is performed on the new stage
(Murray Herbert pers. comm.)

June

Petrocorp announces a \$50,000 sponsorship deal. The theatre is renamed “The Petrocorp King’s” Plans for the money include: reconstruction of the stage, the

orchestral pit and the theatre's dressing room, to be ready for the 1992 Shakespeare Festival

(DN 26/11/1992; SDTT 1996; *Stratford Press* 11/11/1992 in SIC 2).

6 August

Transfer of section 318 and part of section 317 to Stratford District Theatre Trust

(LINZ: CT J2/1086; CT J2 1087)

August

TSB Community Trust awards a grant of \$30,000. The foyer is named TSB Foyer (SIC 1).

November

A new \$13,000 heating system sponsored by Taranaki Electricity in association with ECNZ is installed

(SIC 2).

The Shakespeare Festival: The theatre hosts the New Zealand Drama School production of William Shakespeare's "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"

(DN 26/11/1992).

The New Zealand Lotteries Board allocates a \$66,000 grant to Stratford District Theatre Trust for the renovation of Petrocorp King's Theatre

(DN 26/11/1992).

Refurbishment already completed: A new stage, dressing rooms, fire exits and fold away movie screen. Facade painted

(DN 26/11/1992).

27 November

Dame Malvina Major and the Ars Nova Choir perform in the auditorium

(SDTT 1996)

1993

The theatre foyer is refurbished and the balustrades are returned to their former glory

(SIC 2)

Labour Weekend

A reunion is held for theatre staff

(SIC 2).

1994

Toilets, handbasins and a second wardrobe for performers are installed

(SIC 3).

April

As part of the 1994 Shakespeare Festival, the Hamilton-based Electra Theatre Company stages *Macbeth* at the theatre

(DN 22/4/1994:7)

December

Petrocorp announces its second major sponsorship package of \$35,000 for the theatre. The money is to go towards "...redecorating the auditorium... finishing the toilet facility, [and] upgrading, carpeting and tidying up the entrance of the theatre" (SDTT 1996)

1995

6 January

The theatre is closed while renovations are carried out. These include washing, painting and plastering of the auditorium and the installation of new chandeliers (SIC 3).

A \$20,500 Dolby stereo surround sound system is installed. "Forest Gump" is the first film screened using this system (Murray Herbert pers. comm.; SIC 4.)

1996

March

As part of Stratford's 1996 Shakespeare Festival, the theatre lands the rights to screen the New Zealand premiere of Othello (Taranaki Museum - Stratford Cuttings file)

3 June

The internationally renowned flautist, Elena Duran performs at the theatre (SDTT 1996).

1997

A \$60,000 sponsorship from Fletcher Challenge Energy Taranaki (formerly Petrocorp) is presented to the Theatre Trust. The cinema's name is changed to "Energy King's" (SIC 5).

Barry Milner - manager
(B.Milner pers comm)

1998

The theatre receives a \$100,000 grant from the Stratford District Council, part of the \$1.4 million development levy the district received from the construction of the Stratford Power Station. Part of the grant is used for the installation of new projectors (SIC 5)

ABBREVIATIONS.

DN = *Daily News*, New Plymouth

LINZ = Land Information New Zealand.

SDTT 1996 = Stratford District Theatre Trust, *Sponsorship Proposal to Fletcher Challenge Energy Taranaki*

SEP = *Stratford Evening Post*.

SIC = Stratford Information Centre Scrapbooks, Theatre Trust

S P & A Minute Books = Stratford Pictures & Amusement Ltd Minute Books

SSS 1994 = Stratford Shakespeare Society, *1994 Shakespeare Festival Sponsorship Proposal*

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