

Glasgow is an exhibitionist city; a city of shows, events, spectacles, and celebrations. Only a few years after the city was founded in the 12th century, fairs and other celebratory gatherings had already become embedded as a fixture of Glasgow life. It is an attractive city, in many senses, as well as a city of attractions.

This has continued into the modern era where the recent history of the city has been characterised by a number of spectacular events intended to showcase Glasgow to the world and vice versa. The International Exhibition of Science, Art, and Industry was the first of these great showpieces taking place in Kelvingrove Park in 1888.¹ **(SLIDE 2)** Then at the turn of the century, in 1901, came the Glasgow International Exhibition, again held in Kelvingrove Park. In 1938 another spectacular event, the Empire Exhibition, was held in Bellahouston Park on the south side of the city, then – one hundred years after that initial exhibition – came the Glasgow Garden Festival of 1988 which regenerated a large part of the city's former Clydeside docklands. Each of these events attracted spectators in their hundreds of thousands and each of them encouraged a sense of civic pride.

More recently the city's international reputation for spectacle and exhibition has been enhanced by the opening of the SSE Hydro at Finnieston in 2013 and the hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 2014. **(SLIDE 3)** The Hydro is one of the busiest and most popular entertainment venues in the world; in 2015 it sold 1,021, 038 tickets making it the third biggest in the world behind the O2

¹ <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/image/?inum=TGSA00341>

arena in London, and the Manchester Arena, but ahead of the renowned Madison Square Gardens in New York.²

So where does my research fit into this landscape of attraction?

My research investigates the development of the audience for early cinema in Glasgow, by early cinema I mean up until 1914. The First World War makes a neat demarcation line given the changes it wrought on UK society. It takes a social-historical approach considering established scholarship on the development of early cinema audiences, and overlays this with my own original archival research to provide examples which are specific to Glasgow. By using a variety of local sources, for example, newspaper archives, local authority minutes, and audience recollections, I have been able to show that although there were commonalities between Glasgow and various other centres such as Aberdeen, Manhattan, or London, there were also conditions which were specific and unique to Glasgow. This therefore is a local insight into a national argument.

Although Glasgow is not Scotland's capital, as a city it has an acute sense of its place not only in the United Kingdom but also in the world as a whole. We might argue that it has a civic chip on its shoulder which has encouraged the drive to style itself as a modern, dynamic, industrial metropolis; those first two great exhibitions mentioned above, for example, were designed as celebrations of modernity and technology and the way in which Glasgow was prepared to embody these two concepts. As part of that process, the city

2

<http://www.pollstarpro.com/files/charts2015/2015YearEndWorldwideTicketSalesTop200ArenaVenues.pdf> last accessed, July 9, 2016

developed an early relationship with the moving image which it often held up as being emblematic of its modernity.

I have been able to show that cinema embedded itself quickly, enthusiastically, and in audience terms pan-demographically in Glasgow. The extent of the city's love affair with cinema can be seen in its self-generated celebratory appellation as 'Cinema City', a term applied in both a historic and contemporary context. It has not been possible, so far, to locate the first use of the phrase but regardless of its origins it has slipped into common usage in describing Glasgow to the extent that an ongoing social history project run as part of the Glasgow Film Festival is called 'Cinema City'.³

By 1929 Glasgow had 127 cinemas which is 'more for its size than any city outside America' and by 1937 the city had 137,000 cinema seats.⁴ On this basis the Cinema City label seems historically credible, but recent statistical evidence also supports the description. In 2003, the UGC site in Renfrew Street – now run by Cineworld – was officially the UK's busiest cinema with 1.8 million admissions in the calendar year.⁵

My research is the first city-level study of the cinema audience in Glasgow. In doing so it considers the various factors that combined to construct that audience in ways that did not apply in other metropolitan areas. Cinema is considered one of the totemic symbols of modernity and this drive towards the new and the novel plays a large part in the popularity of the medium.

³ <http://cc.glasgowfilm.org/>

⁴ A. McIntosh Gray & W. Moffat W, *A History of Scotland: Modern Times- Book 5*, Oxford University Press, 1989 p.75

⁵ BFI Statistical Yearbook 2010, p.69

This is also a social history of cinema in Glasgow and by focusing on archival research and using local newspapers such as the *Evening Times* and the *Glasgow Herald* I have been able to highlight some previously unexplored aspects of cinema in Glasgow, such as the relationship between the expanding 20th century retail culture and film exhibition, of which more later. Also considered will be the importance of a new, young audience as cinema targeted and then established itself as a prime entertainment choice for children.

Finally by way of context my work is situated in what has become referred to as New Cinema History which prioritises the cinema going experience above any intellectual analysis of the texts. The work considers the sense of civic pride which cinema brought to the city, as well as considering the rise of a new generation of fans. These 'cinema natives' as I term them grew up with the moving image and as such had an enduring connection with the movies. This is a connection that is very much still present in the 21st century.

Annette Kuhn has argued that in London, the working class took an almost proprietary interest in the new medium.⁶ The cinema space gave them an area where they had the freedom to be themselves, a space in which they had agency in their own lives, and where they were allowed simply to be at ease. However this took some time to spread beyond the working class and it wasn't until the growth of the Film Society movement in the 1920s that the middle classes seriously engaged with cinema. In Glasgow my research has shown there is a much broader, quicker, pan-demographic appeal. This research also challenges accepted theories about early moving image screenings in Glasgow and offers fresh insights into hitherto unrecognised pioneers. It also, obliquely,

⁶ Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2002

acknowledges the part that the Athenaeum - the forerunner of the RCS – plays in the city's early screen life.

So, to the growth of cinema city.

The lack of a definitive account of the development of cinema in Glasgow means that over the years a number of historical inaccuracies have developed about which was the first screening of moving pictures in Glasgow. A more credible timeline has been laid out in this research but regardless of the order of the screenings, there is little doubt that moving pictures established themselves in the city very quickly. A number of key events in a relatively short space of time highlighted the impact of this new scientific marvel and at the same time caught the imagination of the public in such a way that within twelve months of the first screening the future of cinema in Glasgow seemed assured. This embedding of cinema in a local popular culture seems to have occurred more quickly in Glasgow than in other widely quoted examples such as Manhattan or London where large-scale cinema-going does not appear to have taken hold, in some cases, until almost ten years after the introduction of moving pictures.⁷

The first screening of motion pictures in the UK was at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London by the Lumière brothers in February 1896, barely two months after their first public performance of this new technological miracle in Paris at the end of December, 1895. Some weeks later H.E. Moss presented the first cinema screening in Scotland, at the Empire in Nicolson Street in Edinburgh on April 13, 1896. The performance was not received as well as Moss expected with *The Scotsman* newspaper write up claiming the performance

⁷ See Allen, 'Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan 1906 - 1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon', *Cinema Journal* 18 (1979) pp. 4-7 and Burrows, 'Penny Pleasures: Film Exhibition in London during the Nickelodeon Era, 1906 - 1914', *Film History*, Vol. 16, pp. 60-63.

had 'missed fire'.⁸ The issue seems to have been that the projector was powered by limelight which threw a less powerful beam than other sources so the image seemed at times indistinct. Although the Edinburgh screening had used the Lumière terminology – 'Cinematographe' – in its advertising the actual show was given using Edison's equipment. Once a more efficient power supply was sourced the response in Edinburgh was much more positive.

The first theatrical performance of moving pictures in Glasgow took place at the Ice Skating Palace on May 26, 1896. **(SLIDE 4)** The Ice Skating Palace was located at the west end of Sauchiehall Street at its junction with Scott Street and was a well-known entertainment venue; it had previously hosted popular Diorama presentations with some success. The Ice Skating Palace was at that time managed by Arthur Hubner who would become an important figure in Glasgow's cinema history. The Glasgow event however did use the Lumière Cinematographe itself and included several films that we know were also shown at the Lumière event held at the Regent Street Polytechnic in February 1896, the first moving picture screening in the United Kingdom. The screening at the Ice Skating Palace in Glasgow featured seven films:

. . . one being a lady performing the 'Skirt Dance'. A London street scene followed; buses, carriages, pedestrians are fully portrayed. You see a carriage or a 'bus come dashing up, horses prancing, and people skipping across the street. A bridge with the people and traffic crossing proved highly entertaining, especially the gentleman with the light overcoat, and a lady by his side. A blacksmith's shop with the men all hard at work; the steam rising from the water when the hot iron was plunged in, proved very effective; the train arriving at the station, passengers alighting and the lady rushing along the platform to meet her friend, was very amusing; the sea shore, with the waves breaking

⁸ *Scotsman*, April 14, 1896 p.4

on the beach, brought the exhibition to a close, amid the loud applause of the audience.⁹

From this enthusiastic description, it is possible at least to attempt to identify some of these films from what we know of the work of the Lumières. The 'Skirt Dance' may have been *Danse Serpentine* from 1896, **(SLIDE 5)** while the railway footage could have been the notorious *L'Arrivee d'un train a La Ciotat* from January 1896 or the later *L'Arrivee d'un train a Perrache* from March, 1896. Significantly the response to the screening in Glasgow, in particular the train films, seems radically different from the accepted narrative of how these films had previously been received by audiences elsewhere. The Russian writer Maxim Gorky, in an often-cited reference, famously captured the response of the audience when it saw the film of the train:

It speeds straight at you – watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones and crushing into dust and broken fragments this hall and this building...¹⁰

This story of audiences screaming at the sight of a train appearing to burst through the wall has become something of a foundation myth of early cinema and had been told before Gorky mentions it; possibly he was drawing on some of these accounts. The reality of the Glasgow screening, however, appears to have been quite different. *Quiz* magazine, in which the account of the Skating Palace screening appears, was a popular publication and had there been scenes of near riot they would surely have been reported. Given that Queen Street railway station had been open since 1842 and Glasgow Central since 1879 it

⁹ *Quiz*, May 28 1896, p.166

¹⁰ Maxim Gorky, *Nizhegorodski listok*, July 4, 1896 in Harding and Popple (ed) *In the Kingdom of Shadows* (Cygnus Arts, 1996) p.5

seems reasonable to assume that Glasgow audiences were fairly inured to the sight of steam trains arriving and departing.

Perhaps as a hedge against the sort of lukewarm response that Moss had received in Edinburgh, Arthur Hubner showed the films in Glasgow as part of an exhibition of figure skating being given by world figure-skating champion George A. Meagher and *Quiz* reports a very large crowd in attendance. Despite the presence of such a celebrity, the magazine suggests that the 'fame that has preceded this latest wonder' had been enough to attract an exceptionally large audience to see moving pictures. There are no reports of any technical hitches and, describing the event as a decided success which was sure to attract large crowds, *Quiz* says the audience were well repaid for their attendance.

In terms of reception the Glasgow screening seems to have been much more successful than the performance at the Edinburgh Empire. This appears to have been a result of the Lumière system being technically superior to the Edison system.¹¹ Additional factors may also have played a part; Glasgow audiences could simply have been more receptive to the excitement of this new novelty. In any event Arthur Hubner immediately realised the potential of the new entertainment and by the autumn of 1896 moving pictures were a regular feature of the programme at the Ice Skating Palace. In that sense Hubner is a genuine pioneer in establishing moving pictures on the Glasgow entertainment landscape. Also, while still connected to the Skating Palace, Hubner bought another Lumière projector and began to show films at the Britannia Panopticon in Trongate on August 25, 1896.¹² The following year he took over the management of the venue itself. **(SLIDE 6)**

¹¹ Oakley, *Fifty Years at the Pictures* p.2

¹² Paul Maloney, *The Britannia Panopticon Music Hall and Cosmopolitan Entertainment Structure* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 64 -66

The Panopticon was in a less fashionable part of town and, Hubner was unable to compete in terms of the attractions he could offer. However, he was able to compete in terms of an aggressive promotion strategy which pitched his venue as a plucky underdog, and also in terms of greatly reduced prices.¹³ In a newspaper profile his reduced prices were spun as a way of standing up for the working man against what the newspaper characterised as West End prices that no working man can afford:

Mr Hubner stepped into the breach and taking the Britannia Theatre in hand – always a favourite with the working class – took the tide at the flood and led on to fortune. It was a good thing for the working class, and a good thing for him; and today the Britannia stands as the only working-class music hall in Glasgow.¹⁴

The article pointed out that these low prices were good for the audience but also good for Hubner since it allowed his venue to thrive in the face of stiff competition

Perhaps the most significant aspect of my research was the investigation of possibly the most unusual and ultimately influential sites for early cinema exhibition in Glasgow - a department store. Walter Wilson's Colosseum Warehouse at the corner of Jamaica Street and the Broomielaw, close to the river at the southern end of the city centre, had become something of a Glasgow landmark.

Walter Wilson, who had begun his career in the Gorbals as a hat maker, had opened the Colosseum in 1878. **(SLIDE 7)** He had a knack for publicity and promotion, which he used to drive customers to his warehouse where his

¹³ Ibid, p.66

¹⁴ ibid

specialty was in selling retail goods at wholesale prices. Wilson was an innovator in the style of the great retailing showmen such as Harry Gordon Selfridge; he was one of the first major retailers in the city to use newspaper advertising, for example. Wilson was also a pioneer of the internal combustion engine and brought some of the first cars to Glasgow which he used to deliver customer orders.

Wilson's store itself was what might now be termed a retail destination and is described in contemporary accounts in lavish terms:

... it is never lacking in some novel addition to the long array of attractions which have made it one of the most popular of the giant warehouses of Glasgow. The appointments, fittings, decorations, and general plan and arrangement of all the magnificent showrooms are of the most perfect character in every detail. ¹⁵

This description of the Colosseum is presented in terms that seem more familiar to a theatrical experience; the account of the layout of the store 'perfect in every detail' makes it sound almost like an exhibition and in one sense this is the case because Wilson can be considered as something of a showman. Shopping had hitherto been regarded as a chore performed for necessities, the lack of domestic refrigeration or anything but the most basic kind of food preservation meant that food shopping in particular was a daily task. By the end of the 19th century the notion of shopping as a leisure pursuit begins to emerge; it was acceptable to stroll around shops just as people had promenaded a few years previously. In a crowded urban environment, stores such as Wilson's, with an airy atrium and colonnades, provided a much-desired public arena to see and be seen which was light and reasonably spacious, while

¹⁵ *Index of Glasgow Firms (1888)* located at http://glasgowwestaddress.co.uk/1888_Book/Wilson_Walter_&_Co.htm last accessed July 11, 2016

also affording protection from the elements. **(SLIDE 8)** Even the name Colosseum, harking back to classical Rome, evokes notions of space and grandeur suggesting that Wilson wanted a visit to his store to be a memorable experience.

It was inevitable that with his flair for showmanship and his passion for novelty Wilson would take an interest in moving pictures. One of the highlights of the Glasgow calendar, especially for children, was the annual Christmas World's Fair at Wilson's Jamaica Street store. This was a lavish display of toys amid fountains, grottos and dioramas which provided free entertainment for many of the city's children while at the same time luring their parents into a retail environment. The highlights of his Christmas Carnival in 1896 were a reproduction of a street in an old German town and a 'cinematograph entertainment' which Wilson's son Arthur, in a self-published memoir of his father, claims as the first in Glasgow:

...we turn into one of the latest innovations as far as these exhibitions are concerned, namely the cinematograph, and an excellent entertainment is here provided for young and old alike. The views are excellent. They include a street scene in Paris; Boulevard des Italiens, Paris; Czar passing down the Champs Elysee, Paris; a view entitled 'Two Strings to Her Bow', a street fight, a steamer leaving Dover Pier for Calais, a Cavalry scene, and others.¹⁶

The *Glasgow Herald*, would later repeat Arthur Wilson's apparently erroneous claim that these were 'the first motion pictures ever seen in Glasgow'.¹⁷ First or not, the event proved to be an instant success:

¹⁶ Arthur Wilson, *Walter Wilson, Merchant* (Glasgow: 1920) pp. 146, 147

¹⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, August 30, 1937 p.10

The show, as may be imagined, was a great curiosity in which interest was whetted by news of the excitement it was causing in London. The animated pictures had definitely arrived in London, Paris and New York in the previous year.¹⁸

Although the *Herald* feature was written in 1937 to mark the 40th anniversary of films in Glasgow we see, especially with the benefit of 40 years of hindsight, that an establishment newspaper such as the *Glasgow Herald* still equates cinema with concepts of progress and modernity that elevates Glasgow and confirms its status as a thoroughly contemporary metropolis. Wilson's Colosseum is the fusion of two of the late 19th century's talismans of modernity – the cinema and the department store. Cinema, in short, is viewed as a valuable addition to the city's civic profile, which its citizens could admire and in which they could participate. In addition Wilson's in-store cinema appears to have been the first in Britain, a title later mistakenly claimed by Selfridges in London when it announced plans for an in-store cinema in 2014.¹⁹

The *Herald* article of 1937 is incorrect in describing the Colosseum event as the first screening of motion pictures in Glasgow however. Wilson, along with George Green and his roughly contemporaneous screening in the East End, as well as Arthur Hubner at the Ice Skating Palace, can however genuinely be described as pioneers of cinema exhibition in Glasgow. Charles Oakley claims that the initial confusion over who was actually first comes from the extravagant claims of rival exhibitors and 'the sponsors of the rival systems . . . having been inclined to ignore the achievements of their competitors'.²⁰

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2743561/Watch-till-drop-Selfridges-department-store-opens-world-s-store-cinema-showcasing-classic-new-releases.html>

²⁰ Oakley, *Fifty Years at the Pictures*, p.1

What is still lacking is a sense of a permanent locus where one could expect to see the moving image exclusively, at this stage the moving picture phenomenon can be viewed in a number of loci, each with its own specific audience. While this situation proved beneficial for embedding cinema across a wide demographic it does mean that, at least at this stage, there is no unique, defined, 'home' for the moving image, nor is there any defined sense of cinema architecture that might evoke the cinematic experience.

Kember talks of the popularity of early cinema or pre-cinema being predicated on the nature of the relationship between the showman and his potential audience.²¹ It was, Kember suggests, often the showman's discourse rather than the film itself that drew the crowd and generated revenue. In the case of the Glasgow Colosseum, the retailer Wilson was in his own way a showman; an impresario with a department store as his theatre. His reputation for quality, innovation and cutting-edge attractions framed the discourse that lured his audience, in this case his customers.

That audience came mostly from the middle classes or those who aspired to that demographic; his warehouse, or exhibition space, with its fine china tea services and genteel orchestras was designed to deliberately attract these people who at the end of the 19th century found themselves with disposable income and the leisure time to decide how they might spend it. Film, according to Kember, was an integral part of the 'expanded expressive repertoire' of late 19th century life, and a culture which was becoming increasingly consumerist.²² Walter Wilson's Colosseum in December of 1896 provides a crucial nexus, and perhaps equally importantly, a space, for this fusion of entertainment and

²¹ Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity* (Exeter: 2009) p. 120

²² *Ibid* p.6

commerce. Film became an established part of the Colosseum offer to the public to the point where Wilson had a 500-seat theatre installed in the store.

The man who is frequently, and as I have been able to show, erroneously described as the father of cinema in Glasgow is George Green, a fairground showman who screened films at the Winter Carnival in the East End of the city in December 1896. Green was born in Preston into a fairground family. He had learned the trade and the arts of showmanship from his father who operated a roundabout. Green and his wife and children toured the country with their own attraction, a carousel of horses. By 1894 Green had settled in the Glasgow district of Vinegar Hill in the east end of the city with his family and this had become the base of his operations which were centred on the Winter Carnival. In the autumn of 1896 George Green went to London to search for new attractions and novelties for the winter event and, according to his son Herbert, returned with two things:

...samples of a new toffee for his children, as he said, "Like lead paint with nuts in it" – It was French Nougat; and a machine that projected moving photographs on to a screen, like moving magic lantern slides. He bought it from Robt. W. Paul who was an electrical and scientific instrument maker, whose workshop was in Hatton Gardens.²³

Since Herbert dated the acquisition as 'autumn of 1896' we may also conclude that his father must have been aware of the success Arthur Hubner was already enjoying with moving pictures at the Skating Palace.

The equipment was brought home, along with some films, and carefully locked in a box for safe keeping. A few weeks later they would be taken out for the

²³ Letter from Herbert Green to Henry Simpson, January 8, 1945 Moving Image Archive
5/8/42, p.3

Christmas Carnival of 1896.²⁴ The event that year took place in one of the circus buildings at the fairground and according to Herbert Green:

The Screen was across the ring with the machine behind to help the illusion. Part of the show was the squirting of the screen with water to make it transparent. There were no titles, but a pianist and an announcer...Two big nails sufficed for the spools for rewinding. The films ran into one half of those old-fashioned luggage baskets that are held together with a strap carrier. In addition to the films already mentioned we had *Freddy's First Smoke*, *A Chimney Stalk* [sic] *Falling*, and *Leonard and Cushion*, a French boxing film.

The Winter Carnival had opened on Boxing Day, 1896 and the advertisements had appeared in *The Evening Times* the day before. The advertising copy itself announced the grand re-opening of the Old Barracks Winter Carnival 'after extensive alterations have been made'. It also highlights some of the attractions which include 'a large lion house' as well as 'fireworks displays and outdoor spectacles', while promising that the grounds are lit by 'changing electric lights'. What is curious with hindsight is the lack of any mention of moving pictures in any of the advertisements in the two-week run, especially considering the effort and expense Green had gone to in acquiring the necessary apparatus. The advertisements reveal that admission price for the Winter Carnival was only 1d, although after 6.00 pm and on weekends the price rose to 2d. Again, this suggests the event was aimed at a working-class audience. **(SLIDE 9)**

²⁴ Oakley in *Fifty Years at the Pictures* (p.1) suggests that the Carnival screening took place at Christmas 1895 but since this would have preceded the Lumière screening in Paris he is obviously mistaken.

Green's screening was not by any means the first in the city but, thanks to his son's correspondence, it is the one for which there is most detail and this may be one reason for its undue prominence up till now. Rather than the picture of the bold speculator that has previously been offered, Green was moving into an established market in which the Skating Palace had been screening films nightly for six months and charging an eye-watering two shillings for admission.

In economic terms however George Green's entry into the market created a genuinely competitive environment for moving picture exhibition in Glasgow. One of the key factors associated with generating habitual behaviour is a fixed network of loci at which that behaviour can be indulged on a regular basis. In Glasgow, for the first two weeks of 1897, moving pictures could be seen at specific times in three separate venues; the Skating Palace, the Colosseum, and the Winter Carnival. In these settings Hubner, Wilson, and Green were now in competition for an audience on a regular basis and marketing soon reflected that.

Among the most popular items on a motion picture screening in this period were the 'topicals', filmed records of major events which enabled audiences who had been hundreds or even thousands of miles away to share some of the experience of those who were there. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in June 1897 was one such topical that became a landmark event in the development of cinema in the United Kingdom.

The success of the filming of the Derby the previous year which was shown in the London Alhambra only hours after the race had been run at Epsom had created a demand for topical events and the national celebration of the Queen's sixty years as monarch attracted many of the country's film pioneers. R. W. Paul's 1898 catalogue lists 12 forty-foot films covering the event and makes specific mention of those which can be joined together to make longer sequences. These films were screened by showmen and exhibitors around the

country including Glasgow where the screening appears to have taken place very soon after the London celebrations.

The Diamond Jubilee film was ‘the first film to really excite Scotland’ according to Oakley.²⁵ The Glasgow event was organised by Glasgow and West of Scotland Amateur Photographic Association, a well-established group which had been founded some years earlier in 1885. The then president of the Association John Chalmers had decided that their annual show would be the perfect venue to screen the film of the Royal Procession. The choice of a moving image for the annual show is less surprising than it might seem, especially in the absence of an obvious home for the moving image at this stage. The discourse surrounding film in these early days, especially that surrounding topical film, is still couched in terms more familiarly used in discussing still images. Catalogues of early film refer to them as ‘this picture’ or ‘this photograph’ with the word ‘film’ being used only infrequently. In addition, aesthetic discussions seem to concentrate on sharpness and clarity of reproduction and definition, as one might expect in a discussion of a still photograph.²⁶ **(SLIDE 10)**

The Association hired the Fine Art Institute midway along Sauchiehall Street for the event; this was a much bigger venue than usual for their annual show. The Royal Jubilee film was to be shown as the finale of an evening of magic lantern entertainment and many of the best-known lanternists in the city had been invited to present lectures, possibly to guard against the moving pictures failing to capture the imagination of the audience. The event was later recalled for

²⁵ Oakley, *Fifty Years at the Pictures* p.3

²⁶ Turvey, G. 'Panoramas, parades and the picturesque; the aesthetics of British actuality films, 1895 - 1901', *Film History*, Vol. 16, pp. 10,11

the *Glasgow Herald* by James Baillie, who would later become President of the Association, and was in the audience as a young man:

So far as I remember it lasted about half an hour. In spite of some flickering we gazed on it not only with delight but with amazement. It seemed too marvellous to be true. The projector had to be worked by hand, and after the audience had dispersed the film was rewound in the same way. This was a difficult job and one night it broke. Mr Priestly gave me a bit to take home. I still have two squares in my possession. ²⁷

James Baillie's comments are early evidence of the transcendent nature of the early cinema experience, something we can gauge from the fact that these two frames of film have almost totemic significance, to the point where he not only kept them for forty years, but was proud to have done so.

Others may have felt similarly enthralled because although the charge for admission was relatively expensive at one shilling – twice the price of a seat at a theatre or variety performance - the hall was packed every night and after paying all their expenses, the Association made a profit of £500. The event ran for a fortnight and despite playing to full houses it was unable to meet demand. At the end of the run in the Fine Art Institute, in an early indication of the portability and transferability of the medium, the enterprising John Chalmers booked the film in for several weeks more at the nearby Athenaeum in Buchanan Street – which is of course the forerunner of the RCS - where it continued to play to enthusiastic audiences even though Chalmers had increased the admission to three shillings.

One factor which has been consistent throughout my research is the centrality of the audience to the development of cinema. Two sectors of that audience

²⁷ Ibid

in particular were key to the emergence of fixed-site exhibition as a dominant force in Glasgow's entertainment landscape – women and children.

At a time when respectable women could not go into licensed premises and would rarely be seen in variety halls, especially unaccompanied, cinema provided an alternative destination for their leisure time, especially when they were able to afford it. Unlike the jute girls of Dundee or the fish wives of Aberdeen, Glasgow had no industry in which women dominated leaving them with restricted economic opportunities. However in a perfect demonstration of cinema's price elasticity, as the sector expanded prices came down and it could now be afforded from the weekly housekeeping.

My research showed that cinema owners started to stress cleanliness and comfort in their advertisements, deliberately targeting women. When the main rival was the pub it was argued that if you could get women into the cinema their husbands would follow. In short cinema became a place where families could go. The introduction of the Cinematograph Act of 1909, in the face of the ever-present risk of fire, laid down national safety standards and ensured that the whole family could go along without fear of harm or injury. This notion of officially-endorsed respectability therefore provides a halo effect for repeat business.

As well as women, the other important regular attendees at early cinema shows were children. The provision of special Saturday morning or afternoon screenings for children, from around 1910, quickly became a staple of the exhibition scene. As demonstrated by some of the vivid recollections I uncovered in my research, Saturday at the cinema provided a welcome release for children to indulge themselves without parental restriction and, by extension, provided some respite for hard-pressed parents. The accounts of how, even in financially straitened circumstances, the price of admission to the Saturday pictures could usually be found is an indication of the parental approbation that extended to the new medium. **(SLIDE 11)**

I have coined the term 'cinema natives' to describe these young people who grew up with cinema and could scarcely imagine life without it. The vividness of their memories, even some sixty years after the event, is an indication of the impact cinema had on their subsequent lives. The recorded memory of the film they saw and when they saw it may not always be specific but the fact that they remember it at all, and at such a distance, speaks eloquently of the hold cinema had on their lives. These were the children who would grow up with cinema and it is their life-long habits that contribute to the popularity of cinema in Glasgow. Their familiarity with the moving image, as Glasgow's first cinema generation meant that they could comfortably cope with the changes in film form in the first decade of the 20th century. This was an audience that matured along with the medium and as such developed a lifelong habit of cinema attendance.

To conclude, when I started out the aim of this work was, though original research, to take some of the grander historical narratives and apply them to Glasgow and also to qualify some of the canonical knowledge developed by that scholarship, for instance a more credible timeline for the chronology of early screenings. The result is a detailed account of how cinema developed in the city and this knowledge, through its commonalities and differences, may act as a corrective to, for example, 'Londoncentrism' i.e. that cinema developed everywhere in the UK as it did in London. Most important, I think, is the demonstration of the relationship between film and its audience as well as relationships within the audience itself. Finally, in bringing together a range of sources, it encompassed a number of themes which show not only what cinema in Glasgow was, but also what it was about to become in the years ahead as the foundations were laid for what would become Cinema City. **(SLIDE 12 – if time)**

ends