

**THE SILENT FILMS OF 1923 SHOWN AT THE EMPRESS CINEMA SUTTON  
COLDFIELD**

*By Don McCollom*



Extract from the Sutton Coldfield News of January 1923:

**EMPIRESS CINEMA & CAFÉ: CIVIC OPENING OF THE CINEMA**

“The opening of the Empress Cinema at Sutton Coldfield took place on Monday afternoon the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1923 in the presence of a very large gathering. The Empress cinema and Cafe is situated at the entrance to the Lower Parade, and stands on the site of the old and noted Ashby House, a relic of bygone days, and is an excellent representation of how modern construction with efficient and economical design may overcome difficulties that at first appear insurmountable, and so manipulate them to form successful features in the building. The theatre, perfect throughout, is absolutely fireproof, the quality of the brickwork, steel and reinforced concrete being so combined as to ensure this most necessary characteristic. The design throughout being in the Grecian style gives a very pleasant result. The use of white Hollington stone in its construction in conjunction with the purple brick facing on the front elevation gives a most distinguished effect, as does the wide and imposing entrance which is supported on either side with granite columns covered by a large Ornamental Canopy.

“The Ornamental Canopy gives the whole building not only an attractive but a magnificent appearance. The arrangements internally are such as will give convenience and comfort to the patrons, special care being bestowed on the lines of projection to the screen so as to avoid as much as possible eye strain. As no seat is less than 24 feet from the screen a clear view is obtainable by everyone. Exit arrangements are in excess of those required by law and thus free

access is afforded to all the people attending. In the centre of the crush hall where the floor is of marble and mosaic, there is a design of the Royal Town Arms embedded and this together with the beautifully carved oak framed entrance to the auditorium gives a pleasing effect. The interior is brightly decorated, the work being done by Italian artists, and being well heated and properly ventilated adds charm to its appearance. All the doorways which are of oak and of a decorative character are heavily draped and the screens erected at the back of the seats obviate all chance of draughts. The seats carpets and draperies are of the fashionable petunia colour, and the three gangways make it an easy matter for visitors to reach the seats.

“The Large Hall dimensions are 65 feet wide and 92 feet long, and thus being one of the largest in the Midlands. The proscenium opening is 45 feet wide and is embellished with embroidered pelmet and side curtains all carrying out the Grecian design. The work was by Messrs Beck and Windibank of Clement Street Birmingham and reflects praise on their handiwork. The main fibrous decorations which are of the most pleasing character and charm have been executed by Messrs Bryans Adamanta Ltd. of Birmingham.

“Taken as a whole the decoration of The Large Hall is one of real beauty and in fact that of the buildings generally is such as to attract and to give pleasure to the most fastidious. The fittings throughout the Building are of the best and show great taste in arrangement, and the directors of the Company are deserving of commendation for providing such a commodious and ornamental building in the centre of the ancient and royal town. Messrs Satchwell and Roberts of Newhall Street Birmingham were the architects and the work has been carried through under their direction by Messrs W.H. James and Son builders of Sutton Coldfield in an entirely satisfactory manner.

“For the Opening Ceremony some 200 invitations were sent to the leading citizens of the Borough which included the whole of the members of the Town Council, the borough Justices, the clergy and ministers of the various denominations, and the representatives of other public bodies.

“After the company had assembled in front of the building Councillor W.H. James chairman of the directors of the Empress Cinema Ltd. presented the Mayoress Mrs W.T. Harrison with a pair of Silver Scissors suitably inscribed and asked her to open the building by severing the ribbon which held the gate. This she did and with the Mayor entered the Cinema followed by other dignitaries. After the speeches the Mayor and Mayoress with their friends proceeded to the balcony to witness the opening film *East is west* (a love story of two worlds) in which Constance Talmadge is seen in her Greatest Screen Triumph.”

Prior to the opening of the Empress Cinema, Suttons first Cinema was a makeshift room in the old Fire station.

The following is a list of the films shown at the Empress Cinema in 1923.

DATE SHOWN	FILM	RELEASE DATE	DIRECTOR	STARRING
01.01.1923	East is West	1922	Sidney Franklin	Constance Talmadge
08.01.1923	The Furnace	1920	William Desmond Taylor	Agnes Ayres
08.01.1923	Society Secrets	1921	Leo McCarey	Eva Novak
11.01.1923	Buried Treasure	1921	George D Baker	Marian Davis
11.01.1923	Ghost in the Garret	1921	F. Richard Jones	Dorothy Gish
13.01.1923	The Conquering Power	1921	Rex Ingram	Rudolf Valentino
13.01.1923	Passing Thru	1921	William A Seiter	Douglas Mclean
13.01.1923	There Are No Villains	1921	Bayard Veiller	Viola Dana
13.01.1923	The Invisible Power	1921	Frank Lloyd	House Peters
22.01.1921	The Three Musketeers	1921	Fred Niblo	Douglas Fairbanks
22.01.1922	The Great Moment	1921	Sam Wood	Gloria Swanson
22.01.1923	The Match Breaker	1921	Dallas M. Fitzgerald	Viola Dana
29.01.1923	Pay Day	1922	Charles Chaplin	Charles Chaplin
29.01.1923	Experience	1921	George Fitzmaurice	Richard Barthelmess
01.02.1923	Wealth	1921	William Desmond Taylor	Ethel Clayton
05.02.1923	The Man Unconquerable	1922	Joseph Henabery	Jack Holt
05.02.1923	Miss Hobbs	1920	Donald Crisp	Wanda Hawley
08.02.1923	The Last of the Mohicans	1920	Clarence Brown	Wallace Beery
08.02.1923	The Last of the Mohicans	1920	Maurice Tourneur	Wallace Beery
08.02.1923	Beyond	1921	William Desmond Taylor	Ethel Clayton
12.02.1923	The Sheik	1921	George Melford	Rudolf Valentino
12.02.1923	The Lilac Sunbonnett	1922	Sidney Morgan	Joan Morgan
15.02.1923	Enchantment	1921	Robert G. Vignola	Marian Davis
15.02.1923	The Off-Shore Pirate	1921	Dallas M. Fitzgerald	Viola Dana
19.02.1923	Lying Lips	1921	John Griffith Wray	House Peters
19.02.1923	After the Show	1921	William C. de Mille	Jack Holt
22.02.1923	Prince of Lovers	1922	Charles Calvert	Howard Gaye
22.02.1923	Black Panther's Cub	1921	Emile Chautard	Florence Reed
26.02.1923	Oliver Twist	1922	Frank Lloyd	Jackie Coogan
26.02.1923	Doubling for Romeo	1921	Clarence G. Badger	Will Rogers
01.03.1923	Three Live Ghosts	1922	George Fitzmaurice	Norman Kerry
01.03.1923	Dangerous Curve Ahead	1921	E. Mason Hopper	Helene Chadwick
05.03.1923	Fascination	1922	Robert Z. Leonard	Mae Murry
05.03.1923	Cappy Ricks	1921	Tom Foreman	Thomas Meighan
08.03.1923	Mord Em'ly	1922	George Pearson	Betty Balfour
08.03.1923	Ten Nights in a Bar Room	1903?	No Information	No Information
12.03.1923	Way Down East	1920	D.W. Griffith	Lillian Gish
19.03.1923	Flames of Passion	1922	Graham Cutts	Mae Marsh
19.03.1923	Exit the Vamp	1921	Frank Urson	Ethel Clayton
22.03.1923	The Good Provider	1922	Frank Borzage	Vera Gordon
22.03.1923	The Saphead	1920	Herbert Blache	Buster Keaton
22.03.1923	The Saphead	1920	Winchell Smith	Buster Keaton
26.03.1923	Bill of Divorcement	1922	Denison Clift	Fay Compton

DATE SHOWN	FILM	RELEASE DATE	DIRECTOR	STARRING
26.03.1923	Footlights	1921	John S Robertson	Elsie Ferguson
29.03.1923	The Storm	1922	Reginald Barker	House Peters
29.03.1923	Rent Free	1923?	Howard Higgin	Wallace Reid
02.04.1923	The Eternal Flame	1922	Frank Lloyd	Norma Talmadge
02.04.1923	Don't Tell Everything	1921	Sam Wood	Gloria Swanson
05.04.1923	Silk Hosiery	1920	Fred Niblo	Enid Bennett
09.04.1923	The Lane That Had No Turning	1922	Victor Fleming	Agnes Ayres
12.04.1923	Blood & Sand	1922	Fred Niblo	Rudolf Valentino
12.04.1923	Blood & Sand	1922	Dorothy Arzner	Rudolf Valentino
16.04.1923	Wedding Bells	1921	Chester Withey	Constance Talmadge
16.04.1923	Just Around The Corner	1921	Frances Marion	Margaret seddon
19.04.1923	Miss Lulu Bett	1921	William C. de Mille	Milton Sills
19.04.1923	The Leopard Woman	1920	Wesley Ruggles	Louise Glaum
23.04.1923	The Young Diana	1922	Albert Capellani	Marion Davies
23.04.1923	The Young Diana	1922	Robert G Vignola	Marion Davies
23.04.1923	Be My Wife	1921	Max Linder	Max Linder
26.04.1923	Bought And Paid For	1922	William C. de Mille	Agnes Ayres
26.04.1923	A Prince There Was	1921	Tom Forman	Thomas Meighan
30.04.1923	Paddy- The Next Best Thing	1923	Graham Cutts	Mae Marsh
04.05.1923	The Sin Flood	1922	Frank Lloyd	Helene Chadwick
04.05.1923	Burglar Proof	1920	Maurice Campbell	Bryant Washburn
07.05.1923	Tol'able David	1921	Henry King	Richard Barthelmess
10.05.1923	Moran of the Lady Letty	1922	George Melford	Rudolf Valentino
10.05.1923	The Education of Elizabeth	1921	Edward Dillon	Billie Burke
14.05.1923	Fool's Paradise	1921	Cecil B de Mille	Dorothy Dalton
17.05.1923	Little Miss Rebellion	1920	George Fawcett	Dorothy Gish
17.05.1923	Her Own Money	1922	Joseph Henabery	Ethel Clayton
21.05.1923	Orphans of the Storm	1921	D.W.Griffith	Lillian Gish
28.05.1923	Perpetua	No Information	No Information	Ann Forrest
28.05.1923	An Amateur Devil	1920	Maurice Campbell	Bryant Washburn
31.05.1923	The Romany	1923	F Martin Thornton	Victor MacLaglen
31.05.1923	The Chicken in the Case	1921	Victor Heerman	Owen Moore
04.06.1923	Peter Ibbetson ( also called Forever )	1921	George Fitzmaurice	Wallace Reid
04.06.1923	Forever ( also called Peter Ibbetson )	1921	George Fitzmaurice	Wallace Reid
04.06.1923	The Way of a Maid	1921	William P.S. Earle	Diana Allen
07.06.1923	The Ruling Passion	1922	F. Harman Weight	George Arliss
07.06.1923	Wireless	No Information	No Information	Buster Keaton
11.06.1923	Weavers of Fortune	1922	Arthur Rooke	Henry Vibart
11.06.1923	The Brides Play	1922	George Terwilliger	Marion Davies
14.06.1923	Back Pay	1922	Frank Borzage	Seena Owen
18.06.1923	A Woman's Place	1921	Victor Fleming	Constance Talmadge
18.06.1923	The Bronze Bell	No Information	No Information	No Information
21.06.1923	The Kentucky Derby	1922	King Baggot	Reginald Denny

DATE SHOWN	FILM	RELEASE DATE	DIRECTOR	STARRING
21.06.1923	The Law and the Woman	1922	Penrhyn Stanlaws	Betty Compson
<b>25.06.1923</b>	<b>The World's Champion</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>Phil Rosen</b>	<b>Wallace Reid</b>
25.06.1923	Goodheart	No Information	No Information	Milton Stills
28.06.1923	Under Two Flags	1922	Tod Browning	Priscilla Dean
28.06.1923	Under Two Flags	1922	Elliott J. Clawson	Priscilla Dean
02.07.1923	The Man from Home	1922	George Fitzmaurice	James Kirkwood
02.07.1923	Flying Pat	1920	F. Richard Jones	Dorothy Gish
05.07.1923	A Question of Honour	1922	Edwin Carewe	Anita Stewart
05.07.1923	A Perfect Crime	1921	Allan Dwan	Monte Blue
09.07.1923	Broadway Rose	1922	Robert Z. Leonard	Mae Murry
09.07.1923	The Cradle	1922	Paul Powell	Ethel Clayton
12.07.1923	Brothers under the Skin	1922	E. Mason Hopper	Helene Chadwick
12.07.1923	Boomerang Bill	1922	Tom Terriss	Lionel Barrymore
16.07.1923	Lorna Doone	1922	Maurice Tourneur	Madge Bellamy
16.07.1923	Rogues of the Turf	1923	Wilfred Noy	Fred Groves
19.07.1923	Fair Lady	1922	Kenneth Webb	Betty Blythe
19.07.1923	Tempting Luck	No Information	No Information	Gareth Hughes
23- 28.07.1923	Cinema Flooded	Cinema Flooded	Cinema Flooded	Cinema Flooded
30.07.1923	Sumurun	1920	Ernst Lubitsch	Pola Negri
30.07.1923	Is Matrimony a Failure	1922	James Cruze	T. Roy Barnes
02.08.1923	North of the Rio Grande	1922	Rollin S. Sturgeon	Jack Holt
02.08.1923	Watch Your Step	1922	William Beaudine	Cullen Landis
02.08.1923	Cops	1922	Edward F. Cline	Buster Keaton
02.08.1923	Cops	1922	Buster Keaton	Buster Keaton
06.08.1923	Hurricane's Gal	1922	Allen Holubar	Dorothy Phillips
09.08.1923	Beauty's Worth	1922	Robert G. Vignola	Marion Davies
09.08.1923	Evidence	1922	George Archainbaud	Elaine Hammerstein
13.08.1923	What's Wrong with the Women	1922	Roy William Neill	Montagu Love
13.08.1923	Skin Deep	1922	Lambert Hillyer	Florence Vidor
16.08.1923	Polly of the Follies	1922	John Emerson	Constance Talmadge
16.08.1923	The Crimson Challenge	1922	Paul Powell	Dorothy Dalton
20.08.1923	Salome	1923	Charles Bryant	Alla Nazimova
20.08.1923	Salome	1923	Alla Nazimova	Alla Nazimova
20.08.1923	The Green Temptation	1922	William Desmond Taylor	Betty Compson
23.08.1923	The Seventh Day	1922	Henry King	Richard Barthelmess
23.08.1923	Mr. Barnes of New York	1922	Victor Schertzinger	Tom Moore
27.08.1923	One Clear Call	1922	John M. Stahl	Henry B. Walthall
27.08.1923	The Duke of Chimney Butte	1921	Frank Borzage	Fred Stone
30.08.1923	A Sister to Assist' Er	1922	George Dewhurst	Mary Brough
30.08.1923	A Bachelor Daddy	1922	Alfred E. Green	Thomas Meighan
03.09.1923	Beyond The Rocks	1922	Sam Wood	Rudolph Valentino

DATE SHOWN	FILM	RELEASE DATE	DIRECTOR	STARRING
06.09.1923	Domestic Relations	1922	Chester Withey	Katherine MacDonald
06.09.1923	The Real Adventure	1922	King Vidor	Florence Vidor
10.09.1923	Find the Woman	1922	Tom Terriss	Alma Rubens
10.09.1923	Romance of the Rosary	1922	Jerome Stone	Jane Novak
13.09.1923	Frisky Mrs. Johnson	1920	Edward Dillon	Billie Burke
13.09.1923	Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight	1922	James P. Hogan	Cullen Laudis
13.09.1923	Where is my Wandering Boy Tonight	1922	Millard Webb	Cullen Laudis
17.19.1923	The Spanish Jade	1922	John S. Robertson	David Powell
17.19.1923	The Divorce Game	1917	Travers Vale	Alice Brady
20.09.1923	Shifting Sands	1922	Fred LeRoy Granville	Peggy Hyland
20.09.1923	The Girl in the Taxi	1921	Lloyd Ingraham	Carter De Haven
24.09.1923	Love	1920	Wesley Ruggles	Louise Glauum
27.09.1923	A Tailor Made Man	1922	Joseph De Grasse	Charles Ray
27.09.1923	The Blacksmith	1922	Buster Keaton	Buster Keaton
01.10.1923	Quincy Adams Sawyer	1922	Clarence G. Badger	John Bowers
01.10.1923	Doctor's Orders	No Information	No Information	Harold Lloyd
04.10.1923	Garrison's Finish	1923	Arthur Rosson	Jack Pickford
08.10.1923	Through Fire and Water	1923	Thomas Bentley	Flora le Breton
08.10.1923	Mamma's Affair	1921	Victor Fleming	Constance Talmadge
11.10.1923	A Woman's Woman	1922	Charles Giblyn	Mary Alden
11.10.1923	The Three Must Get There's	1922	Max Linder	Max Linder
15.10.1923	The Sign of Four	1923	Maurice Elvey	Eille Norwood
15.10.1923	The Old Oaken Bucket	No Information	No Information	No Information
18.10.1923	The Grass Orphan	1922	Frank Hall Crane	Margaret Bannerman
18.10.1923	The Silent Voice	No Information	No Information	George Arliss
22.10.1923	The Pilgrim	1923	Charlie Chaplin	Charlie Chaplin
22.10.1923	Rich Men's Wives	1922	Louis J. Gasnier	House Peters
25.10.1923	Peg O' My Heart	1922	King Vidor	Laurette Taylor
29.10.1923	When Knighthood Was In Flower	1922	Robert G. Vignola	Marion Davies
01.11.1923	The Wandering Jew	1923	Maurice Elvey	Matheson Lang
01.11.1923	Fortune's Mask	1922	Robert Ensminger	Earle Williams
05.11.1923	Trouble	1922	Albert Austin	Jackie Coogan
05.11.1923	Valley of Silent Men	1922	Frank Borzage	Alma Rubens
08.11.1923	Manslaughter	1922	Cecil B de Mille	Thomas Meighan
12.11.1923	On The High Seas	1922	Irvin Willat	Jack Holt
12.11.1923	No Trespassing	1922	Edwin L. Hollywood	Irene Castle
15.11.1923	Harbour Lights	1923	Tom Terriss	Tom Moore
15.11.1923	A Girl's Desire	1922	David Smith	Alice Calhoun
19.11.1923	Omar The Tent Maker	1922	James Young	Guy Bates Post
22.11.1923	Pink Gods	1922	Penrhyn Stanlaws	James Kirkwood
22.11.1923	The Truant Husband	1921	Thomas N. Heffron	Betty Blyth

DATE SHOWN	FILM	RELEASE DATE	DIRECTOR	STARRING
26.11.1923	Guy Fawkes	1923	Maurice Elvey	Matheson Lang
29.11.1923	The Blue Lagoon	1923	W.Bowden	Molly Adair
29.11.1923	Across the Continent	1922	Phil Rosen	Wallace Reid
03.12.1923	The Hottentot	1922	James W. Horne	Madge Bellamy
03.12.1923	The Hottentot	1922	James W. Horne	Madge Bellamy
03.12.1923	The Dangerous Age	1923	John M. Stahl	Lewis Stone
06.12.1923	Where The Pavement Ends	1923	Rex Ingram	Alice Terry
06.12.1923	Where The Pavement Ends	1923	Alice Terry	Alice Terry
06.12.1923	Bell Boy 13	1923	William A. Seiter	Douglas MacLean
10.12.1923	Within the Law	1923	Frank Lloyd	Norma Talmadge
13.12.1923	The Indian Love Lyrics	1923	Sinclair Hill	Owen Nares
13.12.1923	The Knock Out	1923	Alexander Butler	Lillian Hall Davis
17.12.1923	Circus Days	1923	Edward F. Cline	Jackie Coogan
17.12.1923	The Madonna ( Woman ) in Chains	1923	William P. Burt	Jean Acker
20.12.1923	Adam's Rib	1923	Cecil B de Mille	Milton Stills
20.12.1923	The Story of the Nightingale	No Information	No Information	No Information
24.12.1923	Samson and Delilah	1922	Alexander Korda	Marie Korda
24.12.1923	Over the Border	1922	Penrhyn Stanlaws	Betty Compson
27.12.1923	Safety Last	1923	Fred C. Newmeyer	Harold Lloyd
27.12.1923	Safety Last	1923	Sam Taylor	Harold Lloyd
27.12.1923	The School for Scandal	1923	Bertram Phillips	Queenie Thomas
31.12.1923	Ladies must Live	1921	George Loane Tucker	Betty Compson
31.12.1923	Look your Best	1923	Rupert Hughes	Colleen Moore

## Sources

Sutton Coldfield News, 1923

British Film Institute <http://www/bfi.org.uk>

American Film Institute <http://www/afi.com>

IMDb <http://www/imdb.com>

Hornsey, Brian. *A Cinema Miscellany: Midlands 1, dealing with Ashby de la Zouche - Atherstone - Bridgnorth - Creswell - Moreton in Marsh and Sutton Coldfield, Volume 1.*

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