

The Projected Picture Trust

Preserving the Magic of Cinema

Registered Educational Charity No: 288 239



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Collecting cinema badges

Bob Mandry



Introduction

I have had an interest in the cinema since my grammar school days in Southend where I was part of the team running the Photographic and Film Society. Apart from regularly showing feature films booked through Ron Harris, I contacted the manager of the local Odeon in Southend, Arthur Levenson, and I arranged trips for school parties to see how the cinema worked. I eventually asked Arthur for a job and worked at both the Odeon and Ritz for about seven years part time, doing virtually every job in the cinema including a spell as a projectionist. I was training to be schoolteacher and while at college organised and ran the college Film Society. I had started acquiring a lot of cinema memorabilia during this time but with marriage, teaching and my church involvement the cinema activities were put on hold.

When I retired in 2013 I had more time on my hands and eventually joined the PPT. My home does not have the facilities to operate a full Kalee 21 projector but my office has all sorts of cinema related memorabilia including projector catalogues and manuals, projector plates plus various projector mechs and lenses etc. The cinema badges are one part of this accumulated material.

When you look around sites like Ebay, you see a plethora of material available. However 90% of these badges are ones specifically related to films and have no reference to the cinema apart from the title of the film. These badges are outside the parameters of my collection and I doubt I would have the space to display them. There must always be reference to some aspect of the cinema including distributors, cinema chains, equipment, kids clubs, trade unions and film festivals.

I have over 500 badges in my collection and have produced full colour plates illustrating the various categories. Because no collection is ever complete, I have included 15 other badges, as yet unobtained, that are representative of their category and are worthy of display.

On any one plate I have taken care to ensure that the badge sizes are relative to each other and, in the most part, it follows through from one plate to another. In terms of tin badges there are four basic sizes small, standard, standard plus and large.

The enamel badges vary between brooch pins and crescent studs, the original badge designation from the early 20th century being the crescent stud to fit in a man's jacket buttonhole and the brooch pin being for a ladies blouse or dress.

The Odeon Southend was originally the Astoria opening in 1935. It was taken over by Odeon in 1939. It closed in 1997 with the opening of an Odeon eight screen multiplex. The Ritz was opened by County Cinemas in 1935 and taken over by Odeon in 1939 but retaining the Ritz name. It closed in 1972.



Plate 1

ABC Minors badges (plates 1-5)

The ABC circuit produced a prolific number of badges to keep their young patrons coming back week after week to fill their cinemas. They realised the attraction of a “freebie” to a child and the idea of building a complete set of items was almost innate amongst youngsters. There are fourteen variations of their basic logo surrounded by a different coloured ring. The white backgrounds of these badges were luminous. The basic logo badge varied between fat and thin logos. Obviously when ABC changed their logo from the A and B being joined to three separate letters, this was reflected in the design. The basic logo in later years was also produced with two strap lines around it ‘The Good Companions’ and ‘More fun for less money’ With the children having so many of these badges on their blazers and jumpers it is obvious they had to produce a giant ‘Monitors’ badge so that it would stand out from all the rest. It is interesting therefore to note that monitors who received their ‘MERIT’ badge found it to be the tiniest in the range of ABC badges.

For Coronation year ABC excelled themselves with the specially designed patriotic badge. The only other designs of some merit are the Coco the Clown and the Lassie badge.

One set of badges that are worthy of their own plate are the trade card badges. Over the years ABC produced sets of cards encompassing a wide range of subjects. There were ten cards in each set and you could also purchase albums in which to hold them. On production of a full album of cards you were presented with a badge specifically linked to that set of cards. The quality of artwork on the card varied from quite crude coloured drawings to good colour photos.

The last set of badges to be issued by ABC before they became part of EMI were the multi-coloured letter badges. They first appeared around 1963 with the arrival of the block letter logo that replaced the triangular design. This set has nine badges each bearing one letter to spell out ABC MINORS. Once you had accumulated the full set you were eligible to receive a much larger ABC Minors badge which had a strip for you to write your name. Knowing the difficulty of writing anything on a plastic-coated tin badge it is not surprising that I have yet to find an example bearing a child’s name. This set persisted for some years as at least four different batches were produced, each having different clips on the back. Thus for the avid collector the ultimate set would be 36 letter badges plus the name badge.

When EMI acquired ABC only one set was issued, slightly larger in size, entitled ‘EMI SATURDAY SHOW MINORS MATINEE’. All badges shared the same design and were offered in five colours.

Two large “smiley face” badges were also produced under the EMI banner.



Plate 2



Plate 3

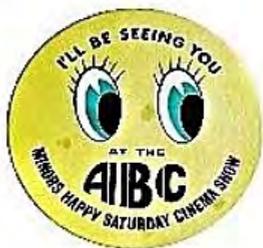


Plate 4

**HEY
MINORS!**

COLLECT A SET
OF THESE
FABULOUS NEW

**ABC MULTI-COLOUR
BADGES**



AND YOU WILL
RECEIVE YOUR OWN
PERSONAL NAME
BADGE **FREE**

Plate 5

Other children's clubs (plates 6-7)

Virtually every cinema chain or individual cinema realised that it was advantageous to get their future patrons “hooked” at a very early age. Up and down the country parents knew here was a good chance to have a little bit of freedom while their offspring were entertained at the local picture house.

Even the independents were happy to produce their own little badge to get their name spread around the local area. A lot of these smaller badges illustrated (plate 7) are not in my collection, but they are all part of the story and, therefore, should be included.

The star cinema chain was probably the second biggest producer of badges for their patrons, both children and adults. The children's badges were slightly larger than the standard size tin button and their main badge was originally produced in metal and enamel later to be replaced by a tin button, This was presumably as the cost of metal badges had become prohibitive.

There are several interesting badges in this section, the first being the Canadian badge for the Odeon Movie Club. Secondly the two Australian Hoyts Suburban Theatres both having a cinema projector showing their cinema club initials on an outline of Australia. Inevitably the modern badges adopt the “big is beautiful” approach to try to get their name abroad.

The Odeon chain produced some very attractive children's club badges in the early days in metal and enamel. With the amount of piercing required these must have been quite expensive to produce. Inevitably in later years they resorted to the traditional tin button. The small but very attractive Gaumont British Kiddies Club badge reinforces my belief that big is not beautiful and that a small quality item has far more impact than big brash creations.

Gaumont British was absorbed into the Rank Organisation in 1941 but the two cinema chains, Odeon and Gaumont, continued to function under their respective names. However items such as Saturday Club badges shared a common appearance but the wording was altered to reflect the particular cinema. Thus, the two very different versions of the ‘There's lots of fun at the ***** Saturday Club’ badges can be found with either Odeon or Gaumont on the front. The Gaumont versions of the two badges are much harder to find. Interestingly the final tin button version has been very crudely altered to read ‘at the Saturday Club’ and was probably produced in the late 60s or early 70s as the Gaumont theatres were either closed or changed to the Odeon name.

Granada, Empire, Ritz and UCI all drew on children's' attraction for cartoon type figures with UCI departing from the standard tin button approach and producing elaborately shaped boy and girl film figures.



Plate 6

Cinema chains (plates 8-9)

Naturally cinema chains were very eager to promote themselves above their rivals and considerable work was put into designing an eye catching and distinctive logo, often with an outstanding corporate lettering. The ODEON name springs instantly to mind along with the WB of Warner Brothers.

Initially cloth versions of the logos were worn on usherettes' uniforms, as with the ABC circuit, but these were later replaced by very high-quality nickel silver badges. Two versions of the ABC usherettes badge are available as the circuit altered its logo design in the 1950s so that all three letters were separate. When the block letter logo replaced the triangular design in 1963 the badges were designed to reflect this change.

In this modern age most chains have adopted the big brash approach with large tin button badges for the staff to wear. They are cheap to produce and bold enough to get the message across. Three examples in my collection defy this approach. Positively, the first is the soft enamel, unique shaped 'Virgin Cinemas' badge. This achieves an acceptable size and the message is easily readable and incorporates the corporate Virgin logo. Negatively, the other two badges are the 'UA Escape to the Movies' and the Odeon website name badge. Both have distinctive shapes making them stand out but the wording is so small that it is almost indecipherable. A member of staff would find it quite disconcerting for a patron to scrutinise it on their uniform. I appreciate these were handed out as freebies when going in the cinema but they would likely be dropped into a pocket never to see the light of day again.

The Rank Gong man is a classic small badge design. There are no words as the corporate image has been emblazoned on people's minds over the years and with a stick pin or butterfly clip fastening is likely to be easily popped into a lapel.

Because of their shape, the larger oval 'Cineplex Odeon Theatres' and the 'UGC Cinemas' badges enable them to stand out without being too obtrusive.



Plate 9

Distributors (plate 10)

This group, too, relies on a strong corporate image to get the message across. The 20th Century Fox wall, the WB shield for Warner Brothers and the MGM lion are classic examples of strong company logos. The badges in this plate largely speak for themselves but it is interesting to see the two examples of the original 20th Century Fox logo. Also two national distribution firms are included amongst the international giants.



Plate 10

Projection equipment (plate 11)

Indispensable to the cinema is obviously the projection equipment. Most people will be familiar with the famous makers names such as Kalee, Philips, BTH and Cinemeccanica. The name Philisonor may not be so well known and also the kite shaped logo of AGA.

Philips, obviously incorporating Norelco, produced a proliferation of badges nearly all of the stick pin variety. I have around thirty different designs in my collection but because of the wide range of products that Philips produced it is very difficult to assign any one item to a cinema projector. It is only the Maltese cross design that can definitely be attributed to the cinema.

The Kalee badges illustrated are three genuine pre-war enamel badges and one “Cinderella” version which is an epoxy resin disc in a metal holder. This was almost certainly produced in the late 20th Century/early 21st Century. Defunct brand and company names are proving popular with current badge collectors.

It is disappointing to see that digital equipment also must adopt the large size badge to make people notice.



Plate 11

Sound equipment (plate 12)

Alongside the visual aspects of the cinema runs the equally indispensable sound equipment. The pre-war versions sparkle with quality and craftsmanship. There were several versions of Westrex badges and also RCA badges in various sizes and designs. It is interesting to note that virtually all the pre-war badges have crescent studs on the back – projection was obviously considered to be a man's world. The Klangfilm badge is interesting and extremely rare – alas I cannot justify the price being asked for it on Ebay!

The two AGA badges are specifically sound related having the words 'Ljud System' on them. However this could refer Aga-Baltic radio system that they produced.

The British Acoustic badge comes in two sizes one very small and one a little above standard but the design and wording are identical.

Dolby are very keen to put their name in the forefront of the digital sound world. It is refreshing to see modern sound companies producing good quality badges to advertise their products and nearly all are metal and enamel examples. The Dolby thirty year badge was a particularly attractive design.

Cinema Digital Sound was a short-lived process developed by Eastman Kodak and the Optical Radiation Corporation but it was quickly superseded by DTS and Dolby Digital.



Plate 12

Service badges (plate 13)

Next in importance to the equipment is naturally the cinema staff. Many cinema chains had reward systems for long serving staff but Odeon, Gaumont (Rank) and the ABC circuits led the way with tangible souvenirs to mark different periods of service.

Before Rank merged Odeon and Gaumont together they produced similar style badges in both shape and colour for different periods of service. These went in multiples of five (5, 10, 15, 20 and 25) culminating in the 20 year badge being silver in colour and finally the 25 year badge was gold in colour. They are well-designed badges with a 'screen shaped' centre and are all brooch fittings. Again the Gaumont ones are the hardest to find and you will notice my set needs the Odeon 25 version – a little frustrating!!

These badges were superseded by the inception of the Rank 25 club around 1957. The first version issued was solid silver inlaid with black and yellow enamel. The background later changed from black to green with the badge still being solid silver. Later the badge was redesigned to a square format probably to minimise the cost of tooling in producing the badge. This also removed the necessity for a different ladies version with a bar brooch. The badge remained solid silver throughout its life.

I have no information on the butterfly clip gong man version.

Rank also issued star shaped Courtesy and Service badges alongside the long service awards. These were not silver in origin but nickel or copper and were of a brooch construction.

ABC also rewarded staff with a Long Service badge of solid silver and engraved on the back with their name and the year they began service with ABC. Its inception appears to be around 1950 at the time the ABC lettering was revised as there are no known examples with the A and B joined.



Plate 13

Particular cinemas (plate 14)

Most of these badges act as a souvenir of a particular visit to the named cinema. Also they have been created for an appeal to keep a cinema open. The Clifton Cinemas Spitfire badge was created as a result of a fund-raising effort during WW2 by the Clifton Cinema to raise enough money for the construction of a Spitfire fighter. £5000 was raised and the plane built and named Clifton Cinemas Spitfire. There was also a tin button version of the badge.



Plate 14

Circuit film promotions (plate 15)

Odeon has led the way in the 21st Century in promoting several of their attractions, with 'Hook' being given the greatest attention. The Gaumont Ghostbuster must have been the last badge produced for the Gaumont circuit.

During the 1950s and 60s Star produced badges to promote their films. Rank produced badges for films at this time and these bore both the Odeon and Gaumont names thus saving the cost of producing badges for both circuits.

The Trackless Train badge is not, as one would suspect, promoting an MGM film of the same title but was rather a custom-built steam-locomotive-shaped truck made in 1924. It was used by MGM in 1925 for a worldwide promotional tour for its films, most notably the 1925 silent film Ben Hur. It travelled across North America, Europe and Australia.

The horseshoe shaped badge is for a 1938 film 'Kentucky' starring Walter Brennan, Loretta Young and Richard Greene. It was a Gaumont promotion.



Plate 15



Plate 16

Product advertising (plate 16)

Where would we be without cinema staff blatantly offering the cinema's latest range of refreshments or it's latest promotion? The Americans are past masters at this as can be seen from the extensive range of badges. In Great Britain it is more common to promote the particular circuit.

(plate 16a)

These were a special set of teaser badges issued at the time Odeon adopted the strap line 'Fanatical About Film' in 1998. This was a major rebranding of the Odeon chain. There were four different slogans used on the badges and four different colours for each slogan making 16 badges in all to collect.



Name badges (plate 17)

This plate really speaks for itself. Since the 1998 rebrand for Odeon it has been interesting to see that management now ask the particular employee to nominate their favourite film and have it listed on their badge. Michael Ford made a very appropriate choice on his BFI badge. In my humble opinion the pre 1998 ODEON logo is a superior design as opposed to the revamped lettering.

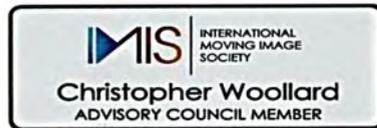
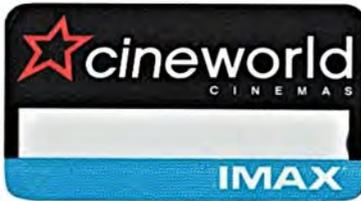
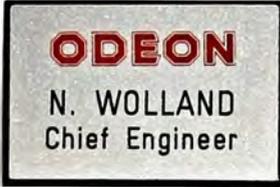


Plate 17

Conference badges (plate18)

The Cinema Exhibitors Association was the forerunner of today's UK Cinema Association. They still hold an annual two day conference at different venues every year. Formerly the CEA conferences could last a week. I believe the medallion style badges were for officials and committee members.

Back in the 1950s the Cinema Managers' Association held annual conferences around the country, a northern venue and a southern venue taking place simultaneously.



Plate 18

Support organisations (plate 19)

From studios to hardware and then to providing film entertainment in the home there are many organisations that are required to keep the cinema industry alive and prospering.



Plate 19

Trade associations (plate 20)

NATE	National Association of Theatrical Employees
NATKE	National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees
NATTKE	National Association of Theatrical Television and Kine Employees
KPES	Kinema Projection Engineers Society
KPEA	Kinema Projection Engineers Association
ACW	Association of Cinema Workers
CTU	Cine Theatre Union
UNICA	Union Internationale du Cinema d'Amateur
BKSTS	British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society
ACTT	Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians
BECTU	Broadcasting Entertainment Communications and Theatre Union
BETA	Broadcasting and Entertainments Trade Alliance
SMPTE	Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers
MIFED	International Film TV Film and Documentary Market
CTBF	Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund

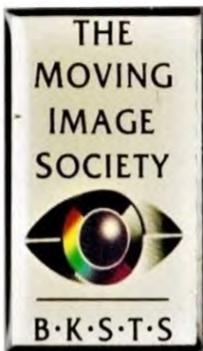


Plate 20

Preservation groups (plate 21)

The British Cinema and Television Veterans was inaugurated in 1924 to support long-serving members of the film industry. This was as a result of the death in poverty of William Friese-Green in 1921.

It was originally called the Cinema Veterans 1903 as it was considered that anyone who had been in the industry in or before 1903 could be called a 'Cinema Veteran'.

The name changed in 1978 to the 'Cinema and Television Veterans' to include those who had worked many years in the television industry

In 2001 it adopted its present title of 'British Cinema & Television Veterans'.

The other groups illustrated on this plate are all concerned in preserving various aspects of the cinema industry ranging from buildings, equipment and film itself.



Plate 21

Film festivals (plate 22)

These festivals come in many forms, both large and small, with either specific or general themes, but all celebrate the glory and the skill of the film industry.



Plate 22

Car badges (plate 23)

These uncommon items although completely different in size and use to the rest of my collection, nevertheless fulfil all the conditions for being included and are a great way of promoting the corporate image. They were produced in relatively small quantities but were a quality product often having a serial number engraved on the reverse giving some idea of the number produced.



Plate 23

Mysteries (plate 24)

It is inevitable that some badges will turn up without any explanation as to their creation. These two badges are impossible to determine their source and use. One is clearly pre-WW2 and the other is very modern with a butterfly clip fitting. The fact that it featured a 35mm projector made it an essential for my collection but it remains an enigma. Any help in solving these two conundrums would be greatly appreciated!



Plate 24

