“Quick, Clean, Smart & Bright”: An Investigation into the Role of the Broadhead
Family and their Popular Entertainment Circuit in the Theatre of North-West
England, with Particular Reference to the Manchester Region

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"Quick, Clean, Smart and Bright" was the motto of the Broadhead theatre circuit. Developed by William Henry Broadhead (1848-1931) and his sons William Birch (1873-1907) and Percy (1878-1955), the circuit was constructed between 1896 and 1913, and consisted of seventeen venues in the North-West of England. These included theatres, music halls, cinemas, and large-scale entertainment complexes, such as the Morecambe Winter Gardens, all of which made a significant contribution to working class amusements in both little-known, and more popular areas.

Since the death of Broadhead in 1931, the circuit fragmented, with none of the handful of buildings that remain today under the control of the family, or functioning as theatres or cinemas. Therefore, as Broadhead and his houses disappear from community memories, this thesis is an act of reclamation. As well as providing a biographical overview of the family itself, it is also concerned with situating their work against a wider context of late Victorian and Edwardian theatre, through a theoretical framework comprising amongst others, Jacky Bratton, Marvin Carlson and Henri Lefebvre. Concentrating on key areas such as the influence of family, the role of the social entrepreneur, and space, place and repertoire allows for a thematic study of greater depth than has previously been attempted, even at the level of major circuit owners such as Edward Moss (1852-1912) and Oswald Stoll (1866-1942), who will be used comparatively throughout, and also provides an interdisciplinary perspective.
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Fig. 1. The Royal Osborne Theatre. 17 October 1896
Introduction

In the photograph that opens this thesis, it is evening. In the background, the sky is dark. There are no surrounding details, the camera has been focussed exclusively on the Royal Osborne Theatre, Miles Platting, Manchester, and the people who teem from two exits (those of the circle and stalls) at the front of the building. In itself, this is an indication that the picture was taken for William Henry Broadhead (1848-1931), who believed strongly in the power of pictorial advertising. The Manchester Local Image Collection credits Exmouth Entertainments as the photographer and provides a date of 17 October 1896, six months after the Osborne had opened. However, Broadhead’s grandson, Alfred Burt-Briggs (1912-2004) tells that Broadhead’s youngest son William Birch (1873-1907) was responsible for the image:

Four separate magnesium flashes were simultaneously ignited with apparatus improvised by Willie on the roof of the factory opposite the theatre and with a synchronised camera set up on the first floor window of the building. This is a plausible explanation. One of the hallmarks of the Broadhead houses was that they embraced new technology. Whether or not the image of the Osborne was “the first known use of flash photography,” as Burt-Briggs claims, is debatable. It is more likely that the photograph was the first of its kind in relation to the circuit. 

2 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Osborne Theatre: Miles Platting, Manchester. Private collection. There is no pagination in any of the documents written by Major Burt-Briggs.
3 Ibid.
In its local image collection, Manchester Central Library holds a number of photographs of the Broadhead theatre circuit, built between 1896 and 1913, eventually comprising seventeen venues. The circuit was the creation of William Henry Broadhead, a joiner and builder from Smethwick, West Midlands, and his eldest son William Birch. During its early days, it was a family run business, with Broadhead’s wife, Mary Ann (1846-1928) and their daughters; Alice (b.1875) and Annie (Nan) (b.1876) helping behind the scenes, whilst younger son, Percy Baynham (1878-1955) learned the ropes as an acting manager.4

This, the most striking photograph, is of the audience leaving Broadhead’s first venue, The Royal Osborne. It differs from the others in the group as it is not a two-dimensional photograph of a building, or an architect’s drawing, inviting the viewer to construct the theatre from words and diagrams. Instead, as the crowd surges forward, it forms an energetic evocation of a scene in the Broadhead history, peopled by a cast of thousands. Although the photograph only depicts a moment in one element of the circuit, it nonetheless embodies and refers to many of the topics that I shall develop in this study and is thus an ideal place to begin. The image itself can be viewed as a micro-representation of the circuit, just as in turn, the life and work of William Henry Broadhead forms a micro-history against a much larger background of Victorian and Edwardian theatre studies. Whilst the family was documented in the memoirs of Alfred Burt-Briggs, his material was, sadly, never published. Therefore, this study can be described as an act of reclamation.

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4 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. *Theatre Monarch*. Private Collection. No pagination. Broadhead and Mary Ann had two more daughters: Katherine (b.1880) and Hilda (b.1886), but I have not yet found evidence of their involvement in the circuit.
Using the family papers alongside my own research allows for a biographical approach, speaking of the central characters of the Broadhead family.

**Methodology**

The thesis, however, stands as much more than a chronicle. In his piece “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It,” Carlo Ginzburg reveals that this particular concept is subject to many definitions and gradations, making it comparable to the conceit of social entrepreneurism, a key argument that underpins this thesis. Returning to Ginzburg’s explorations, on one level, my work on Broadhead represents “the minute analysis of a circumscribed documentation, tied to a person who was otherwise unknown.” Yet, in its documentation of small theatre circuits and large-scale entertainment complexes, it also addresses the commercial thinking behind the development of working class entertainments, comprising location, architecture and overall repertoire, thus reconciling micro and macro-history in the form of “a constant back and forth between close-ups and extreme long-shots,” providing a fully-rounded whole.

As the thesis progresses, it will become clear that the areas listed above contain elements that overlap and blend with one another, resulting in an infused style rather than a strict linear trajectory. For example, each chapter, opening with the examination of a relevant artefact, contains spatial analysis, be it of the seaside

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6 A definition of social entrepreneurship in relation to this thesis follows shortly.
7 Ibid., Ginzburg. P.22.
8 Ibid., P.27.
resort, the city or urban sub-district, or both the interior and exterior of
Broadhead’s venues. Therefore the theories of Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), French
Marxist philosopher and urban geographer, form a useful framework in which to
examine them. It should be mentioned here, however, that this is not primarily a
spatial reading. The work of other theorists such as Marvin Carlson on theatre
architecture and Jacky Bratton on exploring theatre history through such media as
anecdote and family history will also be taken into account, to provide a more
original and three dimensional structure, which will stand as a model for future
research, as well as offering an interdisciplinary methodology.

Nonetheless, the ideas of Lefebvre allow for such an interpretation. As well as
his theory on the production of space (that it is a social construct, shaped by people
and prevailing ideologies), his other works on “time... the city and everyday life” are
also pertinent in the study of the Broadhead Circuit.9 Additionally, his writing is full
of rhetorical questions, prompted by the realisation that spatio-temporality is a
fluid concept. It is this aspect of his work that complements the model of social
entrepreneurship mentioned earlier.

It is possible to situate Broadhead firmly within a framework of
entrepreneurship. The term is synonymous with both the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries, with the entrepreneur “the person who devised a new
product, who saw the potential of a new market, who realized that finance could be

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assembled in a new way.” By the time Broadhead returned his attention to Manchester, some of the biggest entrepreneurs of the Victorian era were gaining prominence, such as William Lever, founder of Lever Brothers and John Mackintosh, the toffee maker. Although Broadhead never achieved countrywide recognition as a household name, he did have similar characteristics to both Lever and Mackintosh. All three men improved on the lot of a parent, employed family members and were Liberal Non-Conformists (common hallmarks of the entrepreneur) and all had a philanthropic interest in their customers and workers. Whilst Lever’s Port Sunlight Village dominates the list of achievements of the three men (Mackintosh did not have either the desire or the resources for an ideal community), it also has strong elements of control, something that Broadhead preferred to administer far more moderately, as will be demonstrated throughout the thesis.

In his choice of locations, styles of building and repertoire, however, it is possible to define Broadhead’s level of entrepreneurship even further. In the overview of social entrepreneurship undertaken by Ana Maria Peredo and Murdith McLean, he fits within the category of the social entrepreneur, as someone who simultaneously aided society whilst making a profit for himself. He thus differs from fellow theatre circuit owners in that his venues provide use value, a Lefebvorean term denoting social motivation. Moss and Stoll and Barrasford and MacNaghten, it will be revealed, were primarily profit-driven, choosing city-centre sites and pursuing

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personal rivalries rather than improving the lives of their audience members.

Therefore the concepts of the Victorian entrepreneur, the theatre magnate and the social entrepreneur will be addressed within the following chapters.

As a result of the areas of consideration listed above, it will be possible to situate this thesis as part of an academic approach proposed by Jacky Bratton in her most recent monographs *New Readings in Theatre History* and *The Making of the West End Stage*.\(^\text{13}\) My work makes use of many of the documents that Bratton reclaims, including family papers, anecdotal and biographical material, contemporary maps, and playbills and programs. However, I also propose an alternative evidential source, that of local history publications for the perspective of those who comprised Broadhead’s theatre audiences. These readings help narrow the focus of the study to a relatively small geographical area; the North-West of England, which provides similarities to Jim Davies & Victor Emeljanow’s text on London audiences.\(^\text{14}\) Here, though, only one family and their circuit are being examined, which means that I can concentrate further on the specifics of location, repertoire and both interior and exterior style, thus addressing Marvin Carlson’s concern for recent lacunae in the history of theatre buildings where “the auditorium received less attention [than the stage], the lobbies and other public areas less still, the external appearance and physical surroundings of the theatre practically none at all.”\(^\text{15}\) As a final point, using the theories of Lefebvre and the overview provided by

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Peredo and MacLean allows the work to fit in with recent trends in social and geographical history, as well as that of business studies, reflecting a truly interdisciplinary approach.

Analysis of Fig.1:

The photograph of the Osborne is one of two halves, with the crowd forming the lower section. Although some faces look towards the camera, it is unlikely that they are aware of its presence – they are making their way across Oldham Road, one of the main routes into the city centre, well served by public transport or, within walking distance of the maze of back-street houses that form the sub-district of Ancoats. A head count can only be approximate; the amount of people is too great, an indication that there were other exits on the sides of the theatre. As the photographic technology is not as sophisticated as that of today, it is difficult to differentiate between male and female faces; there is only the odd moustache, or collar and tie, or a straw boater, as found in the top left hand section of the crowd. The Osborne was not a theatre where evening dress was required; there are no discernible top hats, nor are there carriages waiting at the door or in an exterior plaza. By this time, many middle class traders or businessmen had begun to vacate the city centre to newly built suburbs or seaside retreats, meaning that the spaces inhabited by Broadhead’s houses were often in poor areas on the fringes of the city’s industrial and mercantile zones.
Indeed, the *melee* caused by the emptying of the building illustrates that it was not an upper class establishment. Instead, it catered for a predominantly neighbourhood audience. Burt-Briggs tells how “the crowds were so vast during the between houses changeover that the whole of Oldham Road was blocked by the audiences coming out and going in.”\(^\text{16}\) Despite this knowledge, this photograph always has the power to fascinate me. Although I remember it as a whole and have looked at it and used it many times, each time, unfailingly, there are more people than I remember.

The top half of the image is dominated by the theatre itself. It is an imposing structure, the bricks that comprise it are clearly visible, even from the vantage point of the photographer, across the street. A white hoarding almost covers the bottom level of both the left and right sides of the building. This would have provided advertising space for productions at the theatre, and simultaneously formed a barrier from the street for people queuing for performances. In front of the hoarding is a central awning of iron and glass, on which the name ‘Royal Osborne Theatre’ is written, each word given its own pane, doubtlessly the work of the glass-writing and engraving business that Broadhead had established in Manchester during the 1870s. The awning was a Broadhead trademark; there were similar at his theatres in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Preston and Morecambe. Although the photograph does not display a fly-tower, the awning stands as an indication that Broadhead was familiar with contemporary theatre architecture; the Princes, the Queens, the Theatre Royal and the Tivoli, all in Manchester’s entertainment heartland of Oxford

Street, Bridge Street and Peter Street, each had canopies of varying design.  

Further exposition into existing Manchester theatres and Broadhead’s own locations will be provided in Chapter 2.

The photograph also depicts the Osborne as being well-lit. There is a lamp at each side of the awning, supplementing the gas lamp on the pavement outside the theatre, and four other lamps at the level of the third storey windows. Not only would these announce the function of the building, they would also highlight Broadhead’s interest in progress and new technology (the theatres were powered by electricity) as well as implicitly inferring security and respectability, encapsulating the family motto “quick, clean, smart and bright.” All of these features had originated from Broadhead’s first place of entertainment, the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool, a redundant swimming pool that he transformed into an aquatic theatre. The significance of Broadhead’s time in Blackpool will be highlighted in Chapter 1 and discussed throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Immediately above the awning is a large rectangular board that displays the title of the current production, *The Orphan Heiress*. This was a relatively new play, receiving its first performance four months before the opening of the Osborne. As with the majority of the plays produced on the circuit (some of which were written by William Birch Broadhead) this was a melodrama with elements of sensation. (Broadhead’s repertoire will be examined in Chapter 4.) This particular play, written by Arthur Jefferson, father of Stan Laurel, was renowned for its infamous

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17 The photographs of these theatres mentioned in the introduction are taken from Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. *Manchester Theatres*. (Manchester: Bibliography of North-West England, 1994)

'cage of death' scene, where the heroine was forced into captivity between a panther and a bear.\textsuperscript{19} Although the writing on the board is ornate, and like that on the canopy, produced by Broadhead’s Manchester firm which included a sign and ticket writing department, there is a slightly home-made quality to it, compared to the signs for the city centre theatres described earlier, which were far more elaborate, often featuring illustrations. From the plainness of Broadhead’s sign, it is evident that there are no famous cast members in \textit{The Orphan Heiress}. The same lack of embellishment can also be said of the design of the building. Family papers tell how William Birch’s designs were influenced by his travels in South Africa, and by Frank Matcham (1854-1920), whom he would have encountered in Blackpool, as architect of multiple venues including Thomas Sergenson’s Grand Theatre,\textsuperscript{20} and the Tower Ballroom both of which had opened in 1894.\textsuperscript{21} Analysis of these inspirations, along with the construction of the Broadhead houses will take place in the third chapter. The structure of the Osborne is not that of a traditional city theatre. It is a wide-fronted edifice, accommodating fourteen windows. On the top storey, the windows on the far left and right appear to be open, allowing extra ventilation into the gallery. The three central windows are arched, giving the appearance of an austere Non-Conformist chapel. This is reinforced by the roof rising to a central apex; a clear span that suits the width of the building, making supporting beams unlikely. There are no Ionic columns as found on Manchester’s Opera House, or portico like

\textsuperscript{20} I have been unable to trace dates for Sergenson.
that of the Theatre Royal. However, a partial explanation for the style of the Osborne can be put down to spatial dynamics. It is comparable to a facade theatre, constructed to fit in with the surrounding buildings. Part of the intrigue of this particular photograph is what it does not show. Oldham Road was home to a combination of private dwellings, municipal buildings, shops and public houses, with the railway running parallel, at the rear of the theatre. The site at Miles Platting was less than a mile from Manchester city centre, and only a five minute walk from the huge tenement block at Victoria Square, Ancoats, which had opened in 1894. The theatre’s neighbouring buildings were also built in red Accrington brick, meaning that the Osborne was not intimidating or overly ornate, illustrating Broadhead’s skill in reading his audiences, as well as the business landscape of late Victorian Manchester. His was the only theatre in an overtly working class space.

During his time in Blackpool, Broadhead would have seen how the excursionists that poured in from the Lancashire mill towns preferred to stay in places that reminded them of home, where “there was no fear of being patronised or humiliated,” as many of the resort’s landladies originated from Northern mill towns. The Osborne offered a respite from the dreariness of daily life, yet in a familiar setting. At 2d, standing tickets cost less than a pint of beer, and in most cases, home would be within walking distance. The unadorned sign naming the production at the Osborne was an exercise in keeping down costs so prices could remain low, whilst the billboard just visible on the right side of the building would

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23 Broadhead’s use of his theatres for recreational and social change will be discussed throughout the thesis.
also bring in income, or advertise future productions. If the venture failed, the Osborne had a prime location, and was sufficiently utilitarian to render it usable as a warehouse. The three arched windows were large enough to act as doors (and were possibly used as such to install large pieces of scenery etc) whilst the small circular window under the apex of the roof could be removed to accommodate a crane or pulley, as in contemporary Co-operative premises.

The only touch of ostentation depicted on the exterior of the structure is provided by its name, the Royal Osborne, which is picked out in individual letters above the sign for the current production. Not only does the Royal Osborne not resemble a theatre, it does not bear any similarities to Osborne House, the seaside home of Queen Victoria. However, possibly after seeing the success of the Prince of Wales Baths, regal names were a feature that Broadhead would continue to use throughout his career, keeping abreast of current trends. Both Thomas Barrasford (1859-1910) and Frank MacNaghten (1870-1938), contemporaries of Broadhead, followed the same pattern, with several Palaces, Royal Hippodromes and Regents between them. Such names conferred a sense of decency, a quality that both Broadhead and William Birch represented in their work on the councils of Blackpool and Manchester respectively. Neither, however, were averse to the advantages of such a position, including perhaps the turning of a blind eye by the authorities to the use of the word ‘Royal’ in the naming of the Osborne and subsequent theatres.

Broadhead was also adept at answering difficult questions, and would doubtlessly have said that his venues presented acts that genuinely bore the epithet. His eldest daughter Annie (Nan) had married Percy Honri, formerly part of
the Royal Thompson Trio.\footnote{Honri, Peter. \textit{Working the Halls: the Honris in One Hundred Years of British Music Hall.} (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1973.) P. 64.} Whilst Peter Honri attributes the match to his grandfather's long-standing attachment to Nan, it is likely that both families understood the benefits that would come from the marriage. For Honri, the Broadhead financial backing and the reinforcement of his place within the theatrical world, whilst for Broadhead the union was akin to the entrepreneur safeguarding his firm against the future. The eldest daughter marrying someone involved in the profession was often a requisite.\footnote{Mathias, Peter. Op cit., p. 13.}

Although the Royal Osborne survived over one hundred years in various incarnations from a cinema, to a bingo hall, to a rave venue, eventually the vitality displayed in the photograph left it. Oldham Road, though still the main thoroughfare for the commuter belt, now has vast expanses of derelict land, plagued by both fly tipping and fly posting. It was a shock to find that the white plasterboarded building, with buddleia pluming from the roof and a clock that had not worked for many years had once been a place that gave pleasure to so many. On my daily journeys to and from the city, I passed the Osborne and its sister-site the Empress. During the course of my research, both were demolished. Little survives of the circuit which entertained hundreds of thousands of people in its time.

The Osborne Theatre, however, was not the first business venture of William Henry Broadhead. Alfred Burt-Briggs tells how from 1871, Broadhead had successfully built a thriving enterprise in Manchester, initially as a joiner and
From here he had diversified into painting and decorating, sign and ticket writing and glass embossing, with premises in the areas of the city centre devoted to such trades, further indication of a familiarity with the business topography of Manchester. Additionally, the site at Miles Platting was not his first place of entertainment. From 1883 to 1897 he was the lessee of the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool (1881), a once luxurious development at North Shore that had never recouped its initial costs. Broadhead and William Birch re-introduced previously successful elements such as swimming galas, and created a bill of fare that included invention, comedy, melodrama and acrobatics – a formula that they would maintain to the end of the circuit. With the imminent closure of the building for redevelopment by its landlords, the family turned their attention back to their home city, and with locations earmarked by the mid 1890s, a blueprint for the circuit arose. Its success is all the more remarkable as Broadhead was not from a theatrical background, different to his contemporaries, Edward Moss (1852-1912) or Oswald Stoll (1866-1942). Alongside tracing Broadhead’s alternative route into the profession, by way of his time in Blackpool, I shall argue that part of the accomplishment of himself, William Birch and younger brother Percy (1878-1955), founder of the Broadhead Repertory Company, was due to the fact that they thought as builders and entrepreneurs rather than theatre proprietors.

Nowhere was this type of thinking better demonstrated than in the location of the Broadhead sites. Two years after the opening of the Osborne, the Metropole theatre opened in Openshaw, another working class district on the opposite side of

Ancoats. When in 1901 and 1902 respectively the Grand Junction and Hulme Hippodrome opened adjacent to each other, a spatial pattern emerged. Broadhead and William Birch chose areas that were home to heavy industry or large-scale mills and factories. Ancoats housed a multitude of cotton mills, whilst Hulme was home to an ironworks and also the Rolls Royce car manufacturing plant. Maps from the period (which will be examined during the course of the thesis) serve to elucidate the spatial topography of areas where Broadhead placed theatres by illustrating the enormous concentration of working class housing, supplemented by businesses that facilitated everyday living: butchers shops and bakeries, post offices, tradesmen’s workshops and the ubiquitous pubs and beerhouses.\textsuperscript{29} All these areas can be described by the Foucauldian term ‘heterotopias’, “juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations...”\textsuperscript{30} spaces where workers lived their lives, yet, simultaneously, areas that to middle class reformers were danger zones. As Emiljanow and Davis comment of the East End of London, places that were ‘other.’\textsuperscript{31}

The theatres were built on main roads in and out of the city centre, such as Oldham Road, Miles Platting and Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, or on central thoroughfares through townships, (Preston Street in Hulme). In later years such areas would give homes to the many cinemas that proliferated in Manchester and its surrounding districts. During Broadhead’s time, with only limited exceptions, theatres clustered around Oxford Street and Peter Street in the city centre.

\textsuperscript{29} The information for the types of business surrounding the premises is taken from Slater’s Directories of Manchester and Salford from 1851 to 1925.
\textsuperscript{31} Davis, Jim & Victor Emeljanow. Op cit., pp. 41-54.
proper. The unusual decision to place centres of entertainment outside of these boundaries provides key areas for discussion. First, Broadhead felt that it was worthwhile to invest in the working class, and to provide them with a self-reflecting space, which will be considered in the theme of each chapter of this thesis. His experiences of spending and leisure patterns had been firmly shaped in Blackpool, along with the recognition that a blend of fun and entertainment suitable for the whole family went some way to managing class tension, and reducing trouble in the resort. Secondly, by such actions, and their burgeoning careers in town and city politics, it is possible to identify Broadhead and William Birch as purveyors of an alternative approach to rational recreation, as well as exponents of temperance – a liquor license was not sought for the majority of the Broadhead premises.

Nevertheless, the family’s ingenuity worked. 1904 saw a boom year for the circuit, with variety theatres, styled by the company as Hippodromes, opening in Salford, Queen’s Park (part of Harpurhey, Manchester) as well as Bury and Ashton-Under-Lyne, the first out-of-town sites. Building carried on apace in 1905 with another (Royal) Hippodrome appearing in Preston, and the King’s Theatre opening in Longsight, Manchester, a place that may have had sentimental value for Broadhead; it had been the home of his wife, Mary Ann. However, it too fitted the requirements of location: the venues may have been beneficial to the community,

but they also had to make money. Both Broadhead and William Birch had large families to support.

The death of William Birch in February 1907 paused further construction. From this point it is possible to detect Broadhead once again taking the reins of the company. Later that year, he and, Percy bought their first venue, the Lyceum in Eccles, previously owned by Richard Flanagan, a well-established name in Manchester theatre. The building was re-named the Crown, and functional within a week of purchase. By the following year, momentum was regained on the circuit with the opening of two Pavilion theatres in Liverpool and Ashton-Under-Lyne respectively. 1909 saw the acquisition of the Morecambe Winter Gardens and the construction of the Empress Skating Rink (later the Palais-de-Danse), which formed part of Broadhead’s Ashton Amusements. In Ashton-Under-Lyne’s town centre, the Hippodrome, Pavilion and Empress comprised three sides of a large block of land.

The additions to the circuit of 1909 illustrate the considerable influence that Broadhead’s years in Blackpool gave to his career. The Winter Gardens at Blackpool had been a huge success under the aegis of William Holland (1837-1895), impresario and self-styled people’s showman. Holland is epitomised by Peter Bailey as a “Big Man,” meaning that he was a highly public figure “whose personal presence did much to define the style and ideology” of his halls. The concept of

35 I have so far been unable to trace dates for Richard Flanagan.
36 Bailey, Peter. “Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall,” in Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England. Ed. Robert Storch. (London and Canberra; New York: Croom Helm; St Martin’s Press, 1982) p. 187-188. This is not a technical term per se, but was created by Peter Bailey, the leading scholar on British Music Hall, delineating a particular kind of entertainment industry entrepreneur.
37 Ibid. P. 187.
the “Big Man” and Broadhead’s inclusion under that heading in various incarnations will be discussed throughout the thesis. Holland was a conspicuously successful entertainment promoter, spending excessively and living an extravagant lifestyle, traits that were passed down to his son, William Holland junior who, in turn, became a director of the Morecambe Winter Gardens which were purchased by Broadhead and Percy, during 1909, at a knockdown price.

The Morecambe site echoed the Prince of Wales complex, where Broadhead began his career as a theatre proprietor, which comprised a theatre, market, shopping arcade and hotel all bearing the same name, albeit with different lessees. However, it was noticeable that the energy of William Birch had gone from the circuit, in terms of ambition and place. Of the two final houses, the 1912 Empress Electric cinema and the King’s Palace, the first was a stone’s throw from the Royal Osborne on Oldham Road, whilst the second, built in 1913, was in the trusted location of Preston.

Even though the circuit had lost its prime mover, further building in areas where the family had already established venues served to strengthen their presence in the community. Although the locations were unremarkable, they formed a backdrop to the lives of hundreds of people. A multitude of local history books about Manchester and Liverpool offer oral testimony of Saturday matinees, courtship rituals, and the almost clichéd respite from a stifling everyday routine.\(^{38}\) However there is no literature dedicated exclusively to Broadhead, although he is mentioned in many accounts of the North-West stage, those of the development of

\(^{38}\) Peter Bailey notes the overuse of the conceit that music hall formed an escape from everyday reality. Bailey, Peter. Ibid. p. 201.
entertainment in Blackpool, and in family memoirs and papers. Accordingly, the handful of theatres that remain are falling into dilapidation. A long-standing mural on Oldham Road depicting the Osborne and the Empress has recently been painted over, just as Broadhead himself is no longer clearly visible to the theatre history community.

There is no absolute reason for his obscurity. With the exception of the Stoll/Moss collaboration, part of which still exists today as the Really Useful Group, the remainder of the Broadhead Circuit’s contemporaries, including the houses of Thomas Barrasford and Frank MacNaghten, have also crumbled. There is little differentiation between the metropolis and the provinces, or the North and South of England. Whilst this thesis does not purport to explain in detail the cause for the decline in the Broadhead empire (or indeed, any other), factors such as economic depression during the 1920s, the development of radio and, subsequently, television, and the shadow of the Second World War all contribute, as does the balance of power within the family itself.

Although Percy Broadhead had been at the forefront of the business for a number of years before his father’s death in 1931, he lacked the dynamism of Broadhead and William Birch, preferring to concentrate on the finances of the company. Several theatres were sold to avoid death duties, meaning that the circuit was fractured irrevocably from this time, losing its strength and position in the North-West of England. The involvement of Percy’s son, known as Sonny, resulted in the installation of nude revues, which, as Geoff Mellor comments, “killed the
family show and the family show died because the novelty had gone from it.”

Friction between Sonny and his sister Avril continued after their father’s death in 1955, by which time, music hall and variety were both in decline. The passing of the circuit through successive generations also provides a good example of a changing spatio-temporal perspective. Although Sonny maintained the established connotation of the site as a place of entertainment, the nature of the entertainment became contradictory to his grandfather’s ideals due to the prevailing zeitgeist.

Perhaps to deal with the radical changes throughout his life, Broadhead became adept at self-reinvention (although this too is an entrepreneurial trait) editing facts about his early life and carefully monitoring what became common knowledge about himself. He was not afraid to use the media, eventually becoming a director of the Blackpool Times, and in the meantime speaking to journalists about his background, local government role and his theatre circuit. He was also a keen exponent of self-promotion, both through word of mouth – Alfred Burt Briggs tells how Broadhead “felt sorry, genuinely sorry for anyone who had not seen the greatest swimming show in the universe,” - and through the medium of advertising. During the 1905 speech for his first term of office as Mayor of Blackpool he exhorted local company-house keepers to have on their stationery “printed views of our grand and spacious promenade. Illustrations or pictures do

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41 Ibid.
more to attract ... than by any other method.”43 This was a shrewd comment on
more than one level; Illustrations would allow the recipient of the correspondence
a glimpse of a place different to their own, and enhance the reputation of
Blackpool, whilst simultaneously remembering that Broadhead was the owner of a
thriving print business in Manchester.

In some respects, Broadhead’s career changes and media deceptions can be
compared to a series of costumes or roles that he played throughout the course of
his life. There are clear elements of performance in the position of Mayor and also
that of theatre proprietor. This is all the more interesting as Broadhead was not
from a theatrical background, although his alternative route into the profession
contained comparative parallels to that of the “theatre child” described in Jacky
Bratton’s essay on genealogy.44 The move into theatre provided a new identity for
the whole family. William Birch Broadhead wrote and acted in many of the aqua
shows at the Prince of Wales Baths, and in later years wrote plays for the circuit. If
Broadhead’s eldest child was stage struck, there was little wonder; the whole family
had been involved with the early days of the Baths, with Broadhead’s wife, Mary
Ann manning the paybox and his young daughters responsible for carrying the
takings home. The younger Broadhead son, Percy spent his life as manager of the
circuit after the death of William Birch, and gave jobs to his children, Percy (Sonny),
and Avril, in turn. In her marriage to accordion artiste, Percy Honri, Nan Broadhead
became head of another branch in a theatrical dynasty, their relationship

which is incorporated Manchester Faces and Places and Lancashire Faces and Places Vol IV new
series; Vol XVI old series (12) p. 384. Broadhead was also Mayor of Blackpool from 1910-1911.
44 Bratton, Jacky. Op cit., p.175. These parallels will be discussed in Chapter 1.
cementing the family “above the level of supernumerary into one network.”45 Both the couple’s children, Baynham and Mary, went on to be entertainers, as did Baynham’s son, Peter Honri. In this case, however, the network included builders and promoters as well as performers.

**Literature Review**

Family is particularly resonant in the study of William Henry Broadhead as the main source of information on his life and work lies in family archives. Alfred Burt-Briggs, eldest child of Broadhead’s youngest daughter, Hilda, spent a number of years researching his grandfather and produced a detailed and kaleidoscopic body of material.46 The archive includes genealogical records, newspaper clippings, photographs and letters as well as family recollections and anecdotes (a theme I shall return to shortly). In his own right, Burt-Briggs represents the many interlinked aspects of the life of his grandfather. As he notes, his wife, Isobel Fielding was the granddaughter of the man who built the first of Broadhead’s homes in Blackpool, 63 Park Road.47 More importantly though in this context, Burt-Briggs is renowned for leading the successful campaign to save the Blackpool Grand Theatre, the original proprietor of which was Thomas Sergenson, Broadhead’s fellow councillor and lessee of the theatre that adjoined the Prince of Wales Baths.48

46 The archive is currently held by family members after being removed from the Grand Theatre, Blackpool.
Broadhead also features in the writing of great-grandson, Peter Honri, particularly in his books *Peter Honri Presents - Working the Halls: the Honris in one hundred years of British Music Hall* and *Music Hall Warriors: A history of the Variety Artistes’ Federation 1906-1907*. Memories of Broadhead, his wife and children are scattered throughout the pages of *Working the Halls*, and although they form an interesting (and intimate) introduction to the family, the focus of the text, as the title suggests, is on the Honris, their lives and livelihoods as performers. In *Music Hall Warriors*, both Broadhead and William Birch are mentioned in the context of representatives of a theatre circuit, with more information on Percy as manager during the years after the First World War. The book also provides a thought-provoking insight into the “era of the ‘circuit’ and interlocking ‘syndicates,’” simultaneously illustrating the family’s recognition of contemporary events in provincial theatre and highlighting an area that could be developed after completion of the thesis.

A telling feature of the papers of Alfred Burt-Briggs and the works of Peter Honri are the differences between the two men in the recollections of Broadhead. Whilst this may be due to the stage management of Broadhead himself, it also allows for analysis, as promoted, again by Jacky Bratton, into the value of anecdote, important for “its representative truth.” (As is Broadhead’s capacity for self-reinvention.) In this instance the material is doubly interesting as the men work from different spatial perspectives. Honri writes as a theatre biographer and raconteur, whilst

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50 Ibid., *Music Hall Warriors* p.6.

Burt-Briggs works mainly from oral testimony passed down through the family (itself a revisioning of the theatrical gene) and with the information put forward by Broadhead himself – for instance, newspaper and periodical articles. Their spatial proximity to the Broadhead story may be from different standpoints (elucidated in Chapter 1), but they both add “layers of meaning”\textsuperscript{52} to the understanding of the material from “terms of authority, ownership and familiarity.”\textsuperscript{53}

The only times that Broadhead is encountered in published form are as part of the narrative of someone or something else. There are no printed sources other than newspaper articles from the Blackpool and Manchester presses and theatre periodicals such as \textit{The Era} or \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure} dedicated exclusively to him. That there is no biography or definitive record of his achievements is something this thesis seeks to redress. He is not invisible however to contemporary research. During the course of my work I have encountered other theatre scholars who told me they had contemplated Broadhead for their own research, one of whom, Ellen Loudon, based a significant part of her thesis on the family’s Liverpool Pavilion.\textsuperscript{54} This is the only Broadhead house to be studied in any detail, and is set against a background of investigating music hall through aspects of performativity, and thus forms a different approach to the one taken here.

In published academic writing, Broadhead is little more than a footnote. He is mentioned as an underdeveloped resource in Dagmar Hoher’s chapter on theatre

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p247.
audiences within Peter Bailey’s *Music Hall: the Business of Pleasure*.\(^{55}\) That there is the opportunity for new research into the Broadhead circuit is echoed by Terry Wyke, co-author of *Manchester Theatres*.\(^{56}\) The volume features an article on Broadhead, and his Manchester sub-district venues are listed in the theatre history section. Wyke also documents any archive material on the circuit in the city’s holdings. An earlier text on Manchester’s theatre history by Joyce Knowlson also gives space to Broadhead, but here the information is set apart from the main focus of the text, which is Manchester’s theatrical land – Peter Street, Oxford Street and Mosley Street.\(^{57}\) It should also be noted at this point that the work of Knowlson is more a piece of collaborative local history rather than an academic work *per se*, and as such the level of presentation and acknowledgement to other sources is not as rigorous as an academic work would demand. Nevertheless, it is one of only two published works on Manchester theatre (the other being Wyke & Rudyard) and has been more than useful in providing a different, local, perspective to Wyke.

Regional theatre, music hall and cinema memoirs are another place where William Henry Broadhead is mentioned. Notable amongst these is GJ Mellor’s *Northern Music Hall*,\(^{58}\) although Broadhead is not afforded the luxury of a full chapter, as are fellow small-scale circuit managers Thomas Barrasford and Frank MacNaghten. He does however cover the transformation of some of the Broadhead

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\(^{58}\) Mellor, GJ. *Op cit.*, pp. 194-196.
houses in his book *Picture Pioneers: the Story of Northern Cinema 1896-1971*.\(^{59}\)

Written in a style hybrid of Mellor and Walter Macqueen-Pope, Clarkson Rose’s *Red Plush and Greasepaint* stands representative of the many books of theatrical anecdote where Broadhead is accorded a line or two.\(^{60}\)

Returning to regional writing, David Hindle has produced two books; *Twice Nightly: an illustrated history of entertainment in Preston* and *From a Gin-Palace to a Kings Palace: Provincial Music Hall in Preston*.\(^{61}\) Whilst both texts provide a detailed and useful insight into the theatre history of the town, with considerable parts of each volume given to discussion on Broadhead, again he is not the sole focus. However, by the nature of the latter book specifically, Hindle addresses Broadhead’s adoption of temperance more than anyone else. Less positively, both books were written with the co-operation of Alfred Burt-Briggs, and areas that consider the family sometimes include blocks of text lifted verbatim from the writing of the latter. There are also discrepancies in the dating of the theatres. As a result, the emphasis in my own work is on originality and accuracy, but the books are referred to within the thesis in the same vein as that of Knowlson, and the local studies publications referred to below, for their specific and detailed neighbourhood knowledge.

A final area for concentration of information on Broadhead is that of local history. Although this material invites debate over the value of ‘popular’ or non-

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academic sources, the sheer volume of it of which Broadhead is a part makes it
difficult to ignore. I choose to include it here as it has added enormously to my
knowledge of the family and circuit, and also disseminates information to a large
and varied audience. These books have provoked conversations with staff in local
studies libraries who actually remembered going to Broadhead’s theatres, or their
place in everyday life. In some respects they may be all that stand between him and
obscurity in his former neighbourhoods as younger generations mature.
Furthermore, the inclusion of local history allows the interweaving of two well-
established fields – North-West theatre history and working class entertainment
practices.

As with the Wyke text mentioned earlier, most local studies libraries produce or
endorse publications that cover entertainment in their locations. There are a
multitude of books and pamphlets, for example by the North-West publisher Neil
Richardson that incorporate text and photographs on a specific area, such as
Salford or Miles Platting. This type of book allows the focus of the thesis to narrow
to a minute level; individual venues, the productions that were remembered and
potential audiences. The resulting data can be then viewed alongside established
academic works such as Emeljanow & Davis’s *Reflecting the Audience*,62 exploring
national and almost sub-provincial connections, which could extend to other areas
examined in recent literature on theatre of the period: stagecraft, melodrama and
theatre building.63 It is this type of connection that Joanna Robinson talks of in
relation to developing a global perspective on theatre history, “to look not at that

63 These are all topics discussed in Powell, Kerry. *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and
individual object itself, but at the connections between it and other moments, other objects, other locals.  

Synopsis

The first chapter of the thesis will begin with the importance of Broadhead’s formative years and early businesses in Manchester, prior to his removal to Blackpool in 1883. The seaside town was pivotal to Broadhead’s career, acting as a conduit, not only for spatial relocation, but also a turning point from being ‘in trade’ to life as a theatre proprietor. It has already been demonstrated that Broadhead had displayed a strong work ethic from an early age, making his apprenticeship and subsequent improvement on the career of his father comparable to the working through the ranks of children of theatrical families, as described by Jacky Bratton.  

Coupled with an emerging social conscience, represented by his seconding of a Non-Conformist candidate for the Manchester School Board, the move to Blackpool can be seen as a logical progression for an ambitious, enterprising young man with a growing family to support.  

The coast, and Blackpool in particular had long been recognised for its health-giving properties. A new rail link between Manchester and the town reduced the distance between the two spaces, facilitating both business and recuperation needs for Broadhead. As with the city that he had chosen to make his home, Blackpool in 1883 was undergoing rapid social change. It was now an established place for rail

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excursion traffic, with a huge amount of working class holidaymakers arriving
during the summer. To accommodate their requirements, developments in
entertainment had been extensive; alongside traditional theatres such as the Prince
of Wales, which adjoined Broadhead’s aquatic extravaganza, there were much
larger-scale features, culminating in Blackpool Tower, which was completed in
1894.

To build such creations took money, time, and ingenuity. Whilst Broadhead was
recovering from illness, time was not at a premium. He had money, amassed from
his Manchester firm. Whilst he may also have had ideas of his own, ingenuity was
amply represented in Blackpool by such men as John Bickerstaffe (1848-1930),
Mayor of the town and promoter of the World’s Fair- modelled attractions, and in
later years, arch impresario, William Holland, who transformed the Winter Gardens.
Neither man was from a theatrical background, but each had the audacity and the
connections to forge ahead with their ideas, realising that Blackpool could easily be
eclipsed by rival resorts if it failed to move with the times. In enrolling William Birch
at the Blackpool Grammar school, Broadhead gave himself and his eldest son
valuable networking opportunities. The role of William Birch also highlights his
commitment to a younger generation and to the town’s motto of ‘progress.’ With
youth on his side, Broadhead’s ideas were fresh. Therefore, the essence of this
chapter is to discuss how the lessons learned in Blackpool, a town that lived by its
entertainments, equipped Broadhead and William Birch for their forthcoming
circuit.
As nowhere is this clearer than in the sites of the Broadhead venues, the second chapter of the thesis will concentrate on location and spatial analysis. As a member of Blackpool town council, Broadhead would have seen that Manchester suffered similar social problems to the resort. Both places were home to a large itinerant workforce, which due to the inconsistent nature of local employment were forced to live in extreme poverty, resulting in slum areas and trouble with drunkenness. This formed a contrast to the working class excursionists who had disposable income to spend on leisure. Although Broadhead did not site his theatres and music halls (known as Hippodromes) in the worst areas of Manchester, he did build in close proximity to them, indicating that his target audience were not those who would frequent Manchester’s Theatreland, an overview of which will open the chapter. This was not to say that the working class were not represented in the city – amongst others, the People’s Concert Hall on Moseley Street, or the Cass, as it was better known, was the haunt of the Scuttler gangs. However, there was no plan to match the ambition fired by Blackpool that Broadhead and William Birch exhibited in the construction of their circuit, an area particularly open to a Lefebvrean reading. The buildings were large and utilitarian, the sites chosen for their position on arterial roads, the main routes for commuter traffic, and their proximity to scores of back to back houses. Even the proliferation of public houses and beershops around the theatre locations could be viewed positively – they allowed Broadhead to bypass licensing regulations and expedite the process of building, opening and operating his venues.

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Chapter Three will concentrate on the actual buildings of the Broadhead circuit. In the opening pages of this introduction, there was discussion how the style of the Osborne Theatre set it apart from existing theatre buildings in Manchester. Its lack of adornment, dearth of billing of big stars and its austere frontage gave the impression of a warehouse, giving credence to Burt-Briggs’ assertion that William Henry Broadhead intended a reserve plan for the sites as business centres should they fail in their initial purpose.

The chapter will look at the designs of Broadhead’s buildings, allegedly the collaboration of William Birch Broadhead, based on his travels in South Africa, and John Joseph Alley, fellow businessman from Broadhead’s old area, London Road, Manchester. There will be exposition into the role of Alley as architect, as a necessity to circumvent building regulations that may have proved problematic if William Birch had been accredited with the designs. The capabilities of the pairing of William Birch and Alley will also be examined with the help of the plans of the structures. Burt-Briggs writes that William Birch was influenced by Frank Matcham, who he may have come across during the latter’s designs for the Blackpool Grand Theatre, Tower Ballroom and Opera House, which opened between 1889 and 1894, years when the Broadhead family were active in the resort. The recognition of this information allows for comparison, particularly of the interiors, answering Carlson’s plea (mentioned earlier) for greater study in this area.

The latter part of the chapter will hark back to its predecessor, location. Once confident in their designs, father and son began to buy sites with existing buildings,

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67 I have been unable to trace any dates for Alley.
demolish these and replace with their own structures. There will be discussion on
the creation of social space, and the implications of this on local entertainment. As
a final point, there will be analysis into the place of large scale seaside-style
entertainments in the circuit and whether this was a reaction to the unexpected
death of William Birch in 1907, leaving his father, at the age of fifty-nine, to once
more take over the reins of the Broadhead empire.

The material in Chapter Four will form a logical extension from Chapter Three.
Broadhead’s places of amusement included theatres, music halls, cinemas and
dance halls as well as an assortment of other activities at Morecambe Winter
Gardens. This meant a different style of entertainment for each type of venue,
although with some overlap. For example, programmes and playbills illustrate that
melodrama was often shown once a month in the music halls (Hippodromes) and
that films were shown in the theatres. This allows a greater depth of study into
Broadhead’s purchasing of individual shows and companies, and the spatial logistics
of productions travelling between around the circuit.

Whilst there is insufficient room to discuss individual performances, data
collected from the *Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure* allows
for a greater depth of study into the Broadhead repertoire than has previously been
attempted. Although there are no audience figures available, the fact that all
Broadhead’s locations continued as going concerns until his death in 1931 serves as
indication that his entertainments went a considerable way to satisfying the public.
By 1896, the year the Osborne opened, Manchester had an established policy of
slum reform. One of the key areas for this was Ancoats, a district that was regarded
in much the same vein as the East End areas of London described by Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow: “another country, foreign and even terrifying territory to those who lived in the more comfortable districts...”69 In spite of the Manchester University Settlement amongst other schemes, making the area their home,70 both contemporary and modern writers have discussed how the recreation on offer at such enterprises (including lads’ clubs) often deterred potential audiences due to its worthy nature.71 Broadhead had learned with the Prince of Wales Baths that people needed a respite from their surroundings; that to draw them in with the offer of fun might well do more good in the community than activities that judged the participants, or by their very invention, labelled them as a commodity that needed improving.

That the performers on the circuit were not of the highest quality (one act from the Morecambe Winter Gardens lamented the fact that the big names went to a rival theatre),72 may be viewed here positively. As well as tying in with established debates of whether traditional music hall of the people was being damaged by the new variety theatre conglomerates of Oswald Stoll and his contemporaries,73 with Broadhead it echoes the lack of pretension in the actual buildings. Viewing the music hall elite would have meant a rise in prices, alienating a working class

69 Davis, J & Emeljanow, V. Op cit., p. 44.
70 Stocks, Mary. Fifty Years in Every Street: the Story of the Manchester University Settlement. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956)
71 This has been noted amongst others, by both Peter Bailey in Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885. 1978 (London; New York: Routledge, 2010) and William Williams in The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century. (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1971)
72 Bracken, H. Playing the Gardens. Cuttings collection, Morecambe Local History Library.
audience, who also may have purposely eschewed a grander style of entertainment. Their current leisure pursuits, including the night markets of Shudehill and Salford, and the Oldham Road Monkey Run, the primary objective of which was to capture the attention of the opposite sex, all served a purpose. They were low-cost, or free of charge, contained an element of spectacle and provided a setting, both to see others or to be seen in return, thus echoing the diminishing fairs and festivals of the pre-industrial era. The audience, as with established theatre, was part of the performance. Adopting elements of these amusements gave Broadhead an unusually strong advantage. His venues kept people from the streets for at least some portion of every night, all the more strikingly, without alcohol.

In promoting low-cost entertainment in what Dave Haslam refers to as city “inner-ring” areas, the chapter will explain how Broadhead can also be seen as a forerunner of cinema entrepreneurs. Although reputedly not enamoured with film and not opening his first purpose-built cinema until 1907, Broadhead used bioscopes within his venues from the turn of the twentieth century, ensuring he kept up to date with developments in Manchester, now a centre for film suppliers and menders. As these early films were often only of a few minutes duration, they could be accommodated in a standard variety bill. In addition, as they were often made locally, and of local events, his audiences had the attraction of possibly seeing themselves on screen, a feature that Broadhead would have been keen to

76 Ibid., p.58.
77 Ibid.
exploit. Thus, the role of cinema in the circuit, against a background of Edwardian working class life in general will be discussed here.

Broadhead then provided the type of amusement that Blackpool offered its holidaymakers. However, the respectability of the circuit was emphasised not just by the reading of space and the audience, or its repertoire, but also by the political careers and charitable deeds of Broadhead and William Birch, allowing them to be situated firmly into Anna Maria Peredo and Murdith McLean’s definition of the social entrepreneur. ⁷⁸ Whether this was the norm or not will occupy the remainder of the chapter, looking at other smaller-scale circuit managers such as the aforementioned Thomas Barrasford and Frank MacNaghten.

The thesis will conclude with the fate of the buildings after the death of William Henry Broadhead. With the tremendous loss of life (and the fabled Edwardian innocence) following World War One, the theatre landscape changed radically. The breaking of the circuit to pay death duties meant that some venues were sold whilst others remained in the hands of the family, such as the Queens Park Hippodrome and the Hulme Hippodrome, the head office of the Broadhead empire. However, ensuring the survival of the buildings as places of entertainment meant a complete reversal in the programmes from the days of Broadhead and William Birch. By the time Percy’s son, Sonny Broadhead, was at the helm, the euphemistically described “afternoon shows,” ⁷⁹ or striptease acts topped the bill, with radio and television

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⁷⁹ Euphemism for striptease bills, as recounted to me by a librarian in Manchester Central Reference Library, 2007.
widely available in the home, marking an end to variety theatre as a community space where a man could take his wife and family.

To summarise: this thesis will bring together the existing threads on William Henry Broadhead. In one respect it will stand as a work of critical biography, recounting the significant moments in his life and career. However, using and interdisciplinary critical perspective, it will also situate Broadhead and his circuit against the relevant background of regional and national theatre history and establish the areas where he was typical and where he was unusual, if not unique.
Chapter 1

Beginnings

“I feel a difficulty in finding words to acknowledge properly the very great honour you have conferred on me this day. We as a council have been fortunate in the past in being able to secure gentlemen for the Mayoral chair who have ungrudgingly given their time, experience, and means for the welfare of Blackpool, and knowing and feeling this great responsibility, I shall spare no efforts in trying to emulate the good example of my worthy predecessors. No one can love the town more than I do or have gained better health from residing here, or can have greater faith in its continuous growth in face of any and all opposition. It is necessary to keep the town well to the fore and make better known its wonderful life-giving properties. I hesitated to accept office through the knowledge that we as a council are so frequently treated to, I think, very unkind and unfair criticism. During the time I have had an opportunity of watching the services rendered by the council I have not seen or come across any of the self-seeking or selfishness so readily imputed to us. It is the kindness I have always received, coupled with expressions of continued goodwill and assistance in the proper discussion of the town’s work, that has cleared away from my mind the fears that assailed me, and in accepting this honourable position I am determined with your generous help, to try and place before the residents of other towns and cities a true knowledge of our town...

For the young our schools and educational advantages are great. The Musical Festivals have done much to make the town known far and wide... We have the record for sunshine, freedom from fog, westerly breezes, good sanitation, well lighted streets, splendid sailing, beautiful sands and safe bathing. Three very large and handsome piers for promenading with grand bands and halls for entertainments, a splendid tram service also a good service of express trains from all parts of the kingdom. We have some of the finest medical men in the world, a grand promenade just completed at the cost of half a million pounds, high class concerts, and the most up-to-date palaces of pleasure and entertainment in Europe. Yes, I may safely say in the world.

When we add to this that the religious life of the town is well cared for by earnest and capable ministers of every denomination, we can well understand that all who have once paid a visit to our town are anxious to come again... I would like to think that the company-house keepers can aid the Advertising Committee very materially, and themselves at the same time by having on their notepaper and business circulars printed views of our grand and spacious promenade. Illustrations do more to attract by showing the town as it really is... Blackpool owes much to the
press... although we cannot at all times agree with all they write; they do good if only in showing us ourselves as others see us.”¹

The above speech was made by William Henry Broadhead in the Council Chamber of Blackpool Town Hall, in December 1905, thanking his fellow councillors for his election to the Mayoralty for the following year.² Although he would be elected Mayor again in 1910-11, and nominated for 1912-1913, it is this first term that is most documented, with both Alfred Burt-Briggs and Peter Honri using the occasion in their work.³ It is a fitting way to open this study as it contains themes germane to its entirety: entertainment, education and religion, as well as personal and civic beliefs, all things that characterise Broadhead’s journey to becoming Mayor of Blackpool, hence my title “Beginnings.” Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to use family reminiscences, newspaper articles and genealogical research alongside published texts to relate how Broadhead’s early years shaped his attitude to both work and home life. It will simultaneously introduce three generations of the family: William Henry Broadhead senior, William Henry Broadhead (on whom this thesis is based) and William Birch Broadhead.

To establish a sense of the changes taking place in both the city and the seaside town, areas synonymous with Broadhead, the term ‘beginnings’ also refers to his Manchester building career, and the development of Blackpool as a resort. This is also a suitable point to introduce the theories of Henri Lefebvre, as the

² Honri, Peter. Working the Halls: the Honris in One Hundred Years of British Music Hall. (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1973.) P. 41.
seaside, like Lefebvre’s urban environment “reveals contradictions of society.” I will argue that Broadhead’s move to Blackpool was pivotal for all that followed, for without the influences of the progressive town council, and fellow entertainment entrepreneurs, his theatre circuit would have taken a very different (and probably less successful) form. The chapter will also provide extensive detail on the first Broadhead venue, the Prince of Wales Baths and include an introductory analysis of the venue as a space for performance produced by Broadhead according to the needs of a working-class audience.

The Mayoral speech marks Broadhead’s apotheosis as a “Big Man.” Although Peter Bailey’s term is grounded in a context of theatre and music hall management (in which Broadhead was also carving a sturdy reputation) here it is also applicable to the reciprocally advantageous relationships formed by the men of Blackpool council, where, like the halls, “the language of friendship was the language of business.” Blackpool’s business was entertainment, with fellow council members including Sir John Bickerstaffe renowned for their financial interest in recreation in the town, whilst not having made their initial fortunes in such. This information illustrates that Blackpool operated as a portal into theatre for Broadhead as someone outside the profession. Whilst his route into the business was not traditional, I shall argue later that the learning curve propounded by his home environment, education and early business career are comparable to the

6 Ibid.
learning of the craft by someone possessing, by blood, the theatrical gene. In light of this information, the speech also marks the transition from successful building contractor to successful entertainment promoter. By the winter of 1905, Broadhead was the owner of ten theatres and music halls in the North-West of England.

Although both Burt-Briggs and Honri use a combination of factual and anecdotal evidence, their accounts tell different stories with different emphases, one of the hazards of using this type of material. Burt-Briggs is meticulous with detail, situating Broadhead’s reply as part of a larger sequence of events, starting with his appointment as a Justice of the Peace for Blackpool two years previously, and culminating with the Mayoral banquet at the aptly named Palatine Hotel, Blackpool. Immediately before he gives the entirety of the acceptance speech Burt-Briggs quotes Sir John Bickerstaffe and Joseph Heap, who proposed and seconded Broadhead for the Mayoralty, both of whom had held the position in previous years – Bickerstaffe in 1890-91 and Heap in 1898-1899. In return, Broadhead himself would have been expected to give thanks, refer to the town’s achievements in his speech and also to wear ceremonial apparel including the Mayoral chain. Although the procedure involved “much patting on the backs” it illustrates that a strong sense of public performance was present in Broadhead’s life

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9 I have been unable to trace dates for Heap.
and that he was aware that certain spaces had appropriate ceremonies and patterns of behaviour.

The inclusion of Bickerstaffe and Heap in Burt-Briggs’ work also highlights that Broadhead was recognised by the men who ran the town, one of the key elements that will be developed later in this chapter. This is emphasised by Burt-Briggs’ account of Bickerstaffe commenting “Coun (sic) Broadhead was unanimously invited by his colleagues... to accept the Mayoralty”. Heap’s words are used to reinforce the point, speaking of “the popularity of the Mayor for the coming year” to account for the “large attendance” of townspeople at the council meeting, demonstrating that Broadhead was known and respected in Blackpool, as he would later strive to be, through his theatres, elsewhere in the North-West. That William Birch Broadhead was also on the way to becoming a fellow luminary (albeit in an urban setting rather than at the seaside) is suggested by his own speech closing the Mayoral Banquet for his father, observing that,

If the fathers and mothers of Lancashire would adopt Blackpool’s motto of “progress” he was sure they would never fear for the prosperity of Blackpool. The town stood unequalled and if the population was kept up to the right mark, Blackpool was a certainty.

Thus, the reader of Burt-Briggs’ work is provided with a glimpse of the spectacle surrounding the new Mayor. Both the procedure and its recounting are, as Jacky Bratton recognises with the memoirs of Fanny Kemble, a “kind of dramatisation”12 with their own exposition, deroulement and denouement: the forwarding and seconding of a candidate, the election and eventual selection, and restoration of order with the new leader established. However, this particular quotation also

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illustrates another theme paramount to this chapter, that of progress on both a personal and regional level. As Burt-Briggs himself was from the Fylde, the establishment of his grandfather’s position in the area speaks of his own identity and authority as a writer.  

Peter Honri takes a different course. He too uses the mayoral acceptance speech of 1905 as the opening to the fourth chapter of his book, *Working the Halls: the Honris in one hundred years of British Music Hall*. The chapter, which is the largest part of the book dealing with the Broadhead family, forms part of a narrative in which Honri, in accordance with Bratton’s theory of belonging in a theatrical lineage, situates himself among “an unbroken line of performers for over a century.” However, in the same paragraph he makes an important differentiation; “The Thompson family, later the Honri family, are performers, whilst the Broadhead family were builders and music hall proprietors.” Whilst each gives credence to Honri’s authority, it also gives the reader insight into the social group that he prefers to be identified with – the family of established artistes, whose son, Percy Thompson, married Broadhead’s eldest daughter, Annie, in 1902. In this respect he is unlike artistes such as Sarah Siddons, who Bratton says, played down their own importance as a performer, and more comparable to Stanley Lupino,

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13 Burt-Briggs produced a detailed draft of a biography about his grandfather which he had prepared to submit to a publisher. Unfortunately, he died before any agreement or professional editing was made. Although thoroughly researched, its personal reminiscences and anecdotes make the archive is the single most useful resource for this thesis.


17 Ibid.

who described his own family as “kings of comedy for over two centuries.” Honri views himself as part of a pattern (that of a family of performers) without Broadhead, who contributes to his pedigree, but is not the originator.

Although Honri only uses portions of the speech - the opening paragraph, Broadhead’s declaration of love for Blackpool and the mention of pictorial advertising to boost tourist figures, these sections sit comfortably in an anecdotal framework. His description of how “The sea winds howl around the Council Chamber, and the icy December rain beats a constant tattoo on the window-panes,” gives an almost legendary dimension to his chapter; Honri has performance in his blood and this is a tale to be passed down through generations. Blackpool is a wild and inhospitable frontier, and the Broadhead of his description, “no native... the son of a Mansfield farmer” has conquered the dichotomy of space between the two by making good in the town. The lines hint at the later transition from Manchester businessman to Blackpool entertainment manager, a process that will be documented as the chapter develops.

Both Burt-Briggs and Honri use the inaugural Mayoral speech to speak of their own place within the Broadhead theatre history. For my own purpose, it serves as an introduction to the main points of this initial chapter, which will establish how the traits nurtured by Broadhead’s 1883 removal to Blackpool were present in his nature. Working alongside the men who ran the town has already been mentioned, as has the movement from one field of work into another and the

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20 Ibid., p.41.
21 Ibid. Broadhead’s father was in fact a joiner.
public stage of local government. I will also look at other significant points raised in the speech: education and religion, which tie into the emergence of social entrepreneurship, the construction of large scale “palaces of pleasure”, and the audiences these entertainments attracted, as well as the role of the media and Broadhead’s interpretation of the words “they do good if only showing us ourselves as others see us.” As public representation was something stage managed by Broadhead from early in his career, a suitable starting point is to establish how his formative years shaped the person he would become.

Early Years

According to Peter Honri, his great-grandfather was “born the son of a Mansfield farmer in 1848.”22 This is reinforced by Manchester Faces & Places in a piece commemorating Broadhead’s first term as Mayor of Blackpool, dubbing him a “son of the soil.”23 Burt-Briggs however finds inconsistency in this interpretation which he ascribes to “information given by a local newspaper in Blackpool.”24 Broadhead was born on 21 September 1848, at New Street, Smethwick, West Midlands. Using birth and marriage records, Burt-Briggs proves that William Henry Broadhead was the third generation to bear the name, and would eventually become the third in a line of joiners. The occupation of his maternal grandfather, a

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22 Honri, Peter. Op cit., p.41.
24 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Broadhead Family. Private Collection. No pagination. All subsequent information in this paragraph is from this source.
‘horse-keeper’, gives a plausible reason for accounts of Broadhead descending from farming stock.

As Jacky Bratton has noted, both genealogy and anecdote have recently proved valuable tools for the theatre historian. As existing work on Broadhead falls between the two, inconsistencies may not be as problematic as they first seem. Lefebvre notes that his own theories are often ambiguous, resisting a single and fixed definition, whilst Bratton argues what each account represents is often as significant as one based on fact, offering insight into the upbringing and motivation of the individual. In the case of Honri and Manchester Faces & Places the use of the word ‘farmers’ suggests “that condition of life which is the oldest and the simplest of them all.” This gives Broadhead a wholesome and unpretentious quality, doubtless the image that Honri wished to convey. Burt-Briggs recounts that Broadhead had become estranged from his own father “because the father had wasted his substance on litigation.” As a result of this, Burt-Briggs concludes that Broadhead “gave incorrect information to the local press.” Such misinformation may have been the result of a genuine lack of knowledge on the part of Broadhead of his beginnings, due to the breach with his family. Alternatively, it could have been a conscious act of reinvention, to distance himself from the trade, and reputation of Broadhead senior (a theme I shall return to later).

26 Lefebvre, Henri. Op cit., p.84.
27 Ibid., p. 103.
30 Ibid.
As Bratton’s theory suggests, the truth is less important than what is represented here. Although not from a background in entertainment, as were contemporaries Edward Moss and Oswald Stoll, it renders Broadhead comparable to established members of theatre families, such as Fanny Kemble, and indeed Honri himself, writing their histories as they wished to be remembered. As such, it also exhibits one of the key characteristics of the social entrepreneur as defined by Ana Maria Peredo and Murdith McLean; the blurring of boundaries between the public and private.31

Re-invention continued with Broadhead’s education. According to Burt-Briggs he attended the school of Mr Whiteside followed by Mr Baddiley-Lorriman’s Academy.32 The *Blackpool Gazette* describes Broadhead’s education as being at “one of the principal Midlands schools” conferring status on the family that may not have been there.33 In taking the name of the proprietor rather than that of a certain district or religious denomination it seems likely that these were day schools. John Beckett points out that the 1851 census for Nottingham and its surrounding districts lists over one hundred such small establishments, registered under the name of the tutor, who charged a small fee for each child. Beckett tells how these were more popular with working class parents, who eschewed the teachings of schools with religious affiliation, believing that a purchased education was superior.34

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There is no indication of times or dates for either school, but census returns for 1861 list Broadhead as a “scholar.”\(^{35}\) This document places the family at 29 Sherwood Street, Nottingham, with only William Broadhead senior, his wife Ann and William Henry (aged twelve at this time) in residence. There is no mention of any servant living on the premises, but the document does not account for domestic help coming into the family home on a regular basis. Under occupation, Broadhead senior is listed as a “builder employing 9 (sic) men.”\(^{36}\) This evidence has financial implications; there was sufficient money for William Henry to have a thorough education (he is later described as being “well-read” and having “shrewd and interesting” points of view),\(^{37}\) rather than contributing to the household by working in the hosiery or lace industries for which the city of Nottingham was renowned, or the colliery at Mansfield, where Burt-Briggs posits that the family moved to during the 1850s.\(^{38}\) However such an education may only have been possible due to the fact that Broadhead was an only child – no siblings are listed on the census return, nor mentioned in any family papers.

As there are no details of Broadhead’s school achievements, it is difficult to identify any of his early goals in life. Burt-Briggs indicates that he “qualified in something or other” but it is unclear whether this was as the result of his education, or if he studied for a professional qualification, possibly a forerunner of

\(^{36}\) Ibid.
the City and Guilds which was established in 1878.\textsuperscript{39} There is general agreement between family writings and the press that at the age of either fifteen or sixteen he gained employment with a building firm in Liverpool, which Burt-Briggs feels may have been theatre builders,\textsuperscript{40} providing a stimulus for his later career. Although I have not been able to trace the company, it is possible to infer that it was more than a small local concern and with high-quality workmanship. According to Burt-Briggs, it allowed Broadhead to travel to many major English cities (and subsequently note the developments in urban spaces), including the capital,\textsuperscript{41} whilst the \textit{West Lancashire Evening Gazette} confirms that he “secured a thorough training by working on large contracts.”\textsuperscript{42} It was here, according to the \textit{Manchester Evening News}, that “he became an expert in all branches of the business – building, painting and decorating” as well as joinery.\textsuperscript{43} These remarks develop an impression of Broadhead, suggesting that he was a talented and versatile man. They also serve to enhance the empire he created with the inference that his theatres and music halls were carefully and expertly constructed. Also, the listing of Broadhead’s skills as a tradesman is reminiscent of Bratton’s description of the manual given to children of the Lupino family which illustrated the many aspects necessary to learning their theatrical craft.\textsuperscript{44} Although Broadhead was not brought up in the theatre, his business apprenticeship was, in many respects, a comparable model.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Anon. “Death of Blackpool Freeman and Ex-Mayor.” \textit{West Lancashire Evening Gazette}, Monday 13 April 1931, p.3.
\textsuperscript{44} Bratton, Jacky. Op cit., p. 175.
The swift growth of the Broadhead business empire in Manchester is evidence to the claims that William Henry was a more than average tradesman, and was certainly an astute businessman, traits that would stand him in good stead in later years. Census returns for 1871 list Broadhead and his wife Mary Ann, whom he had married the previous year, as living at 53 Letterman Street, West Derby, Liverpool. Broadhead is described as a “general joiner,” indicating that he is not tied to a specific branch of joinery – shop-fitting, roofing etc. Burt-Briggs places him as leaving school at the age of fifteen – c. 1864, meaning that 1871 would have been his last year of indentures if he was apprenticed. From here though, his career escalated rapidly. Burt-Briggs documents that in 1871-2 the couple were recorded as living at Patricroft, a village in Eccles, close to Manchester. Such a move would have returned Mary Ann to her family, who lived in Longsight, a southern district of the city, and Broadhead to the place where his father had worked as a joiner during the period 1848-1850.

By 1873 William Henry Broadhead junior had realised the value of investing in both personal and business property, an interest that he would maintain all his life, and one that would equip him with the necessary capital and reputation to mingle successfully with the founding fathers of modern Blackpool. Burt-Briggs describes the twenty-five year old as holding deeds for business premises in Stevenson Square, Tib Street, Spear Street and China Lane, Manchester. In addition to the residential property at Eccles, there was also an address at 116 London Road,

47 Slater’s Alphabetical and Classified Directory of Manchester and Salford, and their vicinities. (Manchester, 1851)
Manchester. 48 In the same year, Broadhead had also submitted plans to build houses alongside the railway at Hampden Grove, Eccles. From such information it is clear that Broadhead showed elements of an entrepreneurial spirit from an early age, buying properties and land over a range of different spaces and recognising their potential, taking advantage of opportunities even though a greater than usual element of risk was involved. 49 1873 was the year of the birth of couple’s first child, William Birch.

The family’s domestic circumstances continued to change with the births of Alice in 1875, Annie in 1876, and Percy Baynham in 1878. By this time Broadhead was no longer promoting himself as a joiner or builder, diversifying into engraving, ticket-writing and copper plate printing. Whether he, personally, still worked as a joiner or builder at this time is not known, but his building firm was responsible for the construction of the majority of his theatre circuit. It is likely that Broadhead promoted the aspects of his trades that he thought would attract most custom at the time. His business addresses illustrate a sound knowledge of the topography of local trade, a feature that continued throughout his life. 50 Tib Street was listed in Slater’s Manchester Directory as early as 1851 as home to two carvers and gilders, a print glazier and an engraver. Burt-Briggs provides an advertisement from The Free Lance which describes Broadhead’s firm as “Sign and Glass Writers” and “Manufacturers of Gilded Glass Tablets for Advertising Purposes.” 51 Although it is

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48 All information in this paragraph is from Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., Theatre Magnate. No pagination.
50 See Chapter 2: Location.
51 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., Theatre Magnate. No pagination. There is no date other than 1878 for the advertisement.
possible to account for this change in direction to Broadhead’s training in multiple fields as an apprentice, it is also likely that he moved with the direction of work available in the city centre. Alan Kidd reveals that “jobs in the building trade were casual and notorious for fluctuating with the seasons.”52 The advertisement also provides a good example of Broadhead’s capacity for re-working his past, in mentioning that the business was established in 1848. This was the year of Broadhead’s birth, so must refer to the time that his father was working in Manchester. Thus, Broadhead used the information for his own ends. A company established for thirty years denotes longevity, trustworthiness and success in the marketplace. These, however, were very different characteristics from those of William Broadhead senior.

At first glimpse Broadhead’s father seems a reliable parent. By virtue of employing a number of workers, according to David Jeremy’s definition of the Victorian entrepreneur, he was pushed into the ranks of the new middle class.53 He provided a solid education for his son, and moved his family to keep pace with working patterns of the mid-Victorian period, the era of the growth of cities. Genealogical research however provides a different picture; one of the dissolution of family life. In August 1856 The Bristol Mercury, in accordance with other provincial newspapers, listed a series of countrywide bankruptcies including that of William Henry Broadhead and William Hudson, builders from Nottingham, offering an alternative reason for the family’s move to Mansfield.54 It was not until three

54 “Latest Intelligence: by Electronic Telegraph”. The Bristol Mercury, Saturday 30 August 1856.
years later that the first dividend (the amount the debtor could actually pay, rather than the full debt itself) from this bankruptcy were made.\textsuperscript{55} Unfortunately, this was not a solitary occurrence. In 1873 he was again listed as insolvent, this time in Manchester,\textsuperscript{56} working as a builder, paying his first dividends three months later under the occupation of joiner.\textsuperscript{57}

Such failures were not unusual, and post 1850, as imprisonment for debt was less common, the moral stigma associated with it also began to recede.\textsuperscript{58} However, both incidents illustrate that Broadhead senior did not possess a sophisticated understanding of the needs of the urban landscape, as did his son, who was a product of the \textit{Self-Help} generation.\textsuperscript{59} Introducing the work, Samuel Smiles tells, “‘how not to do it’ is of all things the easiest learnt,” before continuing that readers do not want to hear of “the merchant who could not keep out of the Gazette.”\textsuperscript{60} An unwillingness to be tarred with the same brush as his father, or to avoid confusion with creditors may also account for the lack of entries in Manchester street directories for Broadhead, listed under builders and joiners, the trades he had trained for. Whilst to a certain extent this speculation is an example of Tracy C. Davis’s contextual \textit{rigatino}, the filling in of gaps in information,\textsuperscript{61} it is no less plausible than the giving of manufactured information to newspapers. Indeed, Broadhead made his differences from his father, the willingness to work hard and well, a firm grasp of the business landscape and intelligent speculation his

\textsuperscript{55} The London Gazette of Friday, January 7”. \textit{The Morning Chronicle}, Saturday 8 January 1859.
\textsuperscript{56} “Adjudications in Bankruptcy”. \textit{The Morning Post}, Saturday 22 November 1873.
\textsuperscript{57} “Adjudications in Bankruptcy”. \textit{The Morning Post}, Saturday 25 March 1874.
\textsuperscript{58} I am grateful to Philip Handler for this information. Personal interview 17 January 2013.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p.4.
hallmarks. In this instance he embodies another characteristic of Victorian entrepreneurism, improving on the both the actual and metaphorical fortunes of a parent.\(^{62}\)

Hard work and its rewards, however, did not make Broadhead what Alan Kidd calls the ‘Manchester Man,’ the self-made northern industrialist “excited only by the jingle of the cash box.”\(^{63}\) In fact, setting an example for the next generation had begun to be a concern for him. At the age of thirty-four Broadhead began to take an interest in local affairs, a concern that would eventually define his career in Blackpool. In November 1882 the *Manchester Times* records that Broadhead had seconded the nomination for an Independent candidate on the Manchester school board, indicating that he was in a position of respect in the neighbourhood.\(^{64}\) Although there are no other records of political activity or the religious habits of Broadhead at this time, the fact that his wife, Mary Ann was also described as “a woman of deep religious convictions”\(^{65}\) makes it likely that the couple attended church in the city, a practice that they maintained in Blackpool, placing them in the midst of yet another social network.

Broadhead’s life, though, was already full. In the previous year, he had opened additional works in Pump Street, Manchester and at 31 Green Street, Ardwick Green. 1881 had also seen the birth of his fifth child, Katherine Elizabeth, whilst the family were recorded as living at 102 London Road, indicating a move

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\(^{62}\) Jeremy, David. Op cit., p. 118

\(^{63}\) Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.68.


since the birth of the first four children.\textsuperscript{66} London Road, backing onto the railway station of the same name, had a reputation for unsanitary conditions, despite a mix of classes living and working there. In 1849, nearby Granby Row, where Broadhead would later work with architect Joseph John Alley, had been identified as the site of an outbreak of cholera.\textsuperscript{67} Burt-Briggs reveals that things had still not changed for the better in the district by the late 1920s.\textsuperscript{68} It is little wonder given the pace of Broadhead’s life, coupled with his new place of residence that his health began to break down.

**Blackpool**

Both family papers and media reports agree that Broadhead’s move to Blackpool was to improve his physical condition. This was a common perception at the time, with Manchester Watch Committee records showing that “a change of air” was often prescribed to senior police officers “in a weak state of health.”\textsuperscript{69} Although there is little information on the actual nature of Broadhead’s infirmity, in an interesting parallel, both of his sons developed serious illnesses around a similar age. Although Percy survived, William Birch died from pleurisy and pneumonia at the age of thirty-four, only a year younger than his father would have been at the time of the move to Blackpool, a possible indication of an inherited weakness.

\textsuperscript{67} Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.42.
The move suited Broadhead; as the *West Lancashire Evening Gazette* reports “he frequently declared that Blackpool saved his life.” The town’s original tourist industry was based on its status as a health resort. John Walton notes that sea-bathing had begun to increase in popularity during the early eighteen hundreds, when, amongst workers “a quasi magical belief was current that contact with sea-water would cleanse, purify and protect against misfortune for the coming year.” Whilst this theory was rooted in folklore, the image of Blackpool as a place beneficial to health endured, and with developments such as the Hydropathic Imperial Hotel at North Shore in 1867, and the formation of the Fylde Sea Water Company in 1872, the town eventually became known locally as “the lung of Lancashire.” Around the time of Broadhead’s arrival, the Barrett Directory of Preston and the Fylde Districts boasted

> It has been said, and said truly that “Health is the daughter of Exercise, who begot her by Temperance – their sons inhabit the sea-side that stretches along the salubrious coast of Blackpool.”

At the time of Broadhead’s first term as Mayor, such overblown rhetoric was replaced with an ostensibly more scientific approach detailing how “the saline, bromine, iodine, ozone, phosphorous and other ‘visualising elements’” were suitable for treating a variety of illnesses, including “nervous diseases” and “chest complaints.” However, the point illustrates that the town still capitalised on the image that had brought its original fortune (and simultaneously provides an

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73 Barrett Directory of Preston & the Fylde districts. (Barretts, 1885.) P. 582
74 Shaw, Denis JB. *Selling an Urban Image: Blackpool at the Turn of the Century*. (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, School of Geography, 1990.) P. 12.
example of Lefebvre’s theory on the manipulation of social space\textsuperscript{75}) in much the same way that Broadhead’s trade career would always underpin that of his entertainments.

It is Broadhead’s entrepreneurial acumen that gives a double meaning to his statement that Blackpool saved his life. As well as sustained good health, the new location led to an increase in business contacts and a new direction that was to prove highly successful. As seen with the placement and rapid expansion of his Manchester business properties and interest in local affairs, Broadhead kept abreast of neighbourhood developments. From this we can infer that he would have been aware that much Manchester capital was being invested in the growth of Blackpool, thus taking away some of the danger of the relocation. As early as 1862 there was ‘a considerable Manchester presence’ in the shareholders of North Pier. Money from the city also went into the Blackpool Land, Building and Hotel Company, who were responsible for developing much of the North Shore area. Even the Prince of Wales Baths, of which Broadhead would become lessee, was the recipient of urban investment. Additionally, there was the perception that Blackpool offered “the illusion of quick money and social mobility,” that would have appealed to many. \textsuperscript{76} Whilst the financial aspect cannot be discounted, it is more likely that Broadhead followed the direction in which Manchester trade and capital was moving.

\textsuperscript{75} Lefebvre, Henri. \textit{The Production of Space}. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) p. 70-71. Lefebvre argues that nature is manipulated by man for his own ends, and thus becomes a space of production.

\textsuperscript{76} Walton, John K. Op cit., P. 102.
Whilst living at London Road, the area adjoining what is now Manchester’s Piccadilly Station, Broadhead would have been aware of how the development of the railways allowed people to commute to and from Blackpool, as well as to make excursions. Walton notes how new housing developments at South Shore were being purchased by commuters, reinforcing Alan Kidd’s point that “from Manchester the diaspora could be far and wide,” and indicating how Northern businessmen often relocated away from their centres of industry to reflect their elevated social position. With the solid assets of his city centre businesses, there were many reasons why progress could be made, both economically and socially in moving to the coast. However, there is evidence that this was a calculated risk since although Broadhead himself left Manchester in 1883 he did not repeat his own childhood experiences by uprooting his family immediately. His youngest daughter, Hilda, was born in 1886 at London Road, and there is no record of him purchasing a house in Blackpool until 1888.

Unlike nearby Lytham, or purpose built Llandudno, there was no central estate controlling a unified design as to how Blackpool would develop. This resulted in a chaotic layout of back streets and enclaves of substandard and ill-maintained accommodation, which sat cheek by jowl with more prosperous parts of the town. However, this was still an auspicious time for the family to relocate. With the formation of the Borough Council in 1876, a series of by-laws were introduced which tightened the grip on building regulations, as well as curbing the activities of itinerant street hawkers who gravitated to the slum areas. Yet, it was done,

77 Ibid., P. 61.
according to Walton with a “light touch,” according to Walton with a “light touch,” a description discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to Broadhead’s adaptation of rational recreation. Entertainment was also a promising area for a willing entrepreneur, due to the interests in various amusement businesses by members of the newly formed council. Thus, by the time of Broadhead’s appearance in 1883, “daylight was showing between Blackpool and its nearest rivals.” The concept of ‘progress’, the eventual axiom of the town, had come into its own, and served as a flourishing example of all that Broadhead believed in. It is interesting to note here that Manchester at this time had begun to settle, losing its reputation as the ‘shock city,’ indicating a shift in movement from the urban centres to outlying districts.

That Broadhead accepted the concept of progress is evident, not only from his entrepreneurial activities in Manchester, and his improvement on the career path of William Broadhead senior, but his rise to theatre proprietor and Councillor once established in Blackpool. As will be recalled, it was the focal point of William Birch’s closing address at his father’s first Mayoral banquet. Progress is synonymous with the Victorian era, reflected in the extraordinary number of social and economic changes that took place in Britain during that time, such as the introduction of the railways and developments in electricity, all of which would be displayed on a broader stage with the advent of World’s Fairs, where countries could simultaneously encourage and compete. Innovation in general was seen in a positive light, reinforced by historians and governments such as Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) who helped cement the view that “industrial progress had

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80 Walton, Op cit., P. 69
81 Ibid., P. 3.
created a more advanced state of society.” It was also an overriding ideology of
the Whig, later to become Liberal, governments of the nineteenth century, the
party that Broadhead would represent at a local level, with the belief that “freedom
of thought and of commercial enterprise were the foundations of Britain’s
power.”

It is not difficult to see how Blackpool’s transformation from a place rooted
in superstition about the efficacy of fresh air to an industrialised leader of the
holiday market (whilst still maintaining standing as a health resort) mirrored the
changes taking place in mid-Victorian Europe. From 1879, twopence in the rateable
pound was given to promote the town’s attractions, and from 1881, the year the
Prince of Wales Baths opened, this marketing campaign was advanced by posters at
railway stations in the surrounding industrial towns, a practice that would
eventually spread across Great Britain and to the Continent. During the 1870s,
increased disposable income for working class day trippers and holidaymakers, and
the opening of the Preston-Lytham branch line, meant that the town was inundated
during the summer months, as the population of individual mill towns celebrated
their Wakes holidays by travelling en masse to the coast. To avoid inter-class
tension, specific amusements were targeted at specific social groups. In 1863 North
Pier, situated at Central Beach was opened and, due to its location, became
favoured by middle-class tourists. Five years later, the South Jetty, or the “People’s
Pier” (now known as Central Pier) was built, with heavy emphasis on dancing and

83 Bowler, Peter J. *The Invention of Progress: the Victorians and the Past.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,

84 Ibid., p.5.

85 Walton, JK. “Residential Amenity, Respectable Morality & the Rise of the Entertainment Industry:
The Case of Blackpool.” *Literature & History* 1 (March 1975) p 65.
boat trips, pastimes that appealed more to working-class visitors. Blackpool became adept at managing its divergent crowds, and John Walton recounts that social zoning allowed different classes to co-exist in relative peace. As such, the ethos of the town was comparable to Broadhead’s personal creed – it was an accurate judge of the times and moved with what was needed.

Achievement, however was also important to Blackpool in its bid to retain its customers. This was neither a time nor a market where resort development could afford to remain static. In the popular “Darwinian” rhetoric of the late nineteenth century, based on the theory of natural selection, “struggle was the driving force of progress…. There should be no pity for those who failed to contribute.” Developments in public transport meant that despite Blackpool being renowned as a holiday location for specific mill towns, such as Oldham, tourists could turn their attention elsewhere if they felt that their money was not being well spent, or that they were being patronised. Walton relates that part of the allure of the Blackpool holiday was the very homeliness of it. In this instance, the council recognised that the vast majority of its commerce came from the huge spending power of its working-class visitors, and whilst giving them accommodation that satisfied their need for spatial familiarity, it cultivated a progressive entertainment showcase based on the biggest and best of the attractions displayed at contemporary World’s Fairs.

89 Walton, JK. Op cit., Blackpool. P. 68.
The emulation of successful large-scale entertainments was something that had proved lucrative for the town as early as 1871, with the opening of Raikes Hall pleasure gardens, based on London’s Vauxhall, and the closer model of Manchester’s Belle Vue. However, the Blackpool Tower (1894), modelled on Gustave Eiffel’s version from the 1889 Exposition Universelle, Paris, and the 1896 Big Wheel at the Winter Gardens, based on the 1893 Ferris Wheel of the World’s Columbian Exhibition, provided a fascination that other resorts failed to offer. The structures were a glimpse of the glamorous and cosmopolitan, but in a safe setting, amongst the everyday faces and recognisable landscapes: terraced houses and red-bricks. That Broadhead found inspiration in such locations and materials for his theatres will be discussed in further chapters.

In the expansion of its entertainments, Blackpool and its leading individuals epitomised the characteristics of the social entrepreneur as defined by Peredo and McLean. These were as follows: aiming exclusively or in a prominent way to create social value, recognizing and exploiting opportunities to create this value, employing innovation, tolerating risk, and declining to accept limitations in available resources. The town’s council aimed to create social value with their World’s Fair imitations, and they were willing to exploit opportunities to create this value, for example, by the selling of shares in their projects, and to employ innovative new technology in the construction and daily running of them. Each venture contained an element of risk, but this was tolerated, and limitations that threatened the development of the town were not accepted. Nowhere is this

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91 Ibid.
embodied more clearly than in the story of the planning and construction of the Tower. Both Walton and Darren Webb recount how the Mayor of the town, John Bickerstaffe had enough doggedness and belief in the project (as well as suitable connections) to allow him to overcome near disaster when the fraudulent Standard Contract and Debenture Corporation reneged on a promise to underwrite unsold shares. A concurrent scheme at Douglas, Isle of Man, left the town with a financial loss and no tower. Bickerstaffe however successfully negotiated a lower price for the building site and encouraged the buying of shares in the re-formed Tower Company. Here was a culture of successful re-invention within which Broadhead could integrate himself almost seamlessly. Burt-Briggs writes that by 1885 his great-grandfather attended a sporting event at Raikes Hall Gardens, to which “he had been invited as the lessee of the Prince of Wales Baths,” indicating that within two years he was attracting the attention of those who ran the resort.

The Prince of Wales Baths

The Prince of Wales Baths, in their original (pre-Broadhead) incarnation, however, constituted a serious risk. In a retrospective article of 1905, the Blackpool Gazette revealed that, after four years no buyer “could be found to touch them at any price,” although newspaper articles prior to their 1881 opening revealed that they were an expensive and luxurious development, close to one of the most refined areas of Blackpool. The Baths were sited at Central Beach, a position

93 Ibid.,
“unequalled in the town” according to the Gazette. Central Beach was almost directly opposite the toll-regulated North Pier, which Webb has identified as one of Blackpool’s “two middle class zones” on the town’s promenade. The other, Claremont Park, also with toll entry, was only half a mile further down the road towards Bispham. The choice of location could be considered a serious spatial error. The Baths were adjacent to an aquarium and menagerie, both of which Marvin Carlson terms “less culturally respectable,” and were built at a time when the power of working-class money was beginning to dictate Blackpool’s entertainment policy, and show little of Broadhead’s skill in recognising areas suitable for development. In a liminal position, one of Lefebvre’s ‘holes and chasms,’ the Baths were neither here nor there: a middle-class “useful institution” on the edge of a working-class stronghold.

The appearance of the block of which the Baths formed part, was also an indicator of the type of customer the promoters, the Lane Ends Estate, wished to attract. The entry in Barrett’s Directory for 1885-1886 reveals that it was alongside a converted mansion, and had “public rooms for balls, assemblies, &c., and a fancy market called the Prince of Wales Arcade.” The Baths were on the front of the block and adjoined the Arcade. To their side was the Prince of Wales Theatre, the

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lessee of which was Thomas Sergenson, eventual owner of Blackpool Grand
Theatre, and Broadhead’s fellow council member.  

Each component of this early leisure complex had the same ethos of rational recreation and social betterment; the assembly rooms offered evening classes throughout the low season months, whilst the market was described as “fancy”, meaning “elaborate” or “of high quality.” They were places where one could go for self-improvement, maintaining the impression of the town as a modern health resort. In spite of the Gazette’s claims that the Lane Ends Estate had created the project “with a public spirit that deserves to command success,” the development “sought the custom of the self-improving middle classes, or the petite bourgeoisie, in need of a tonic.” The emphasis was on material consumption, the interior and exterior of the site “a system of significations” accentuated by the flowing prose of the local press, making “apparent not so much the preciousness of the objects as ... potential purchasers to expect them to be precious.” The exterior of the Baths reflected such an ideal, with the front of the building, ornamented with a design in terra cotta, indicating the objects for which the block is set apart. This work of art is a classical representation of a group of swimmers – four in number- each posing in different ways, and the whole with a background of rushes forming an animated picture

As discussed previously, this might have been anathema to working-class visitors who avoided venues where they felt that they would not fit. In fact the

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101 I have not been able to trace any dates for Sergenson.
102 This term will be developed more fully in Chapter 2.
103 Parry, K. Resorts of the Lancashire Coast. (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, c.1983) P. 143
development sought to disguise the very thing that might have endeared it to
them: the materials. The *Gazette* elaborates; “the effect is at present spoiled by the
brick work, but when the latter has been cemented, the enrichment with which it is
surmounted will be a significant feature.”\(^{109}\)

Further influence of the commodity culture was found within the Baths,
with the “handsome structure” being of “classic design,” supported by “massive
pillars of Shap and Aberdeen granite.”\(^{110}\) There were terra cotta medallions on the
roof arches, provided by Doulton & Co. Even the floor of the bath itself, measuring
one hundred and three feet long by thirty-five feet wide, was lined with tiles
“supplied and laid by Messrs. Minton, Hollins, & Co.”\(^{111}\) In total, the refitting of the
existing building cost in the region of twenty-three thousand pounds, which in
today’s money would exceed one million, one hundred thousand pounds.\(^{112}\) To
complement the lavish interior, the Baths led into a “toilet saloon” provided by an
enterprising local barber and a smoke-room that served coffee.\(^{113}\) All of these
features indicate two things; that the development was aimed primarily at men,
rather than the mixed patronage of men, women and children promoted by
Broadhead during his term as lessee, and that swimming was secondary to public
appearance.

Although aimed at “flying visitors,” the baths proved a space more suitable
for a gentleman on a Grand Tour (“one of the necessities of a holiday sojourn”)
rather than the working-class excursionist, who, for want of a costume, would strip

\(^{110}\) Ibid.
\(^{111}\) Ibid.
\(^{112}\) Ibid.
naked to bathe in the sea. The article stresses that such behaviour is what the Baths were built to avoid saying, “the tastes of most people go in the groove of a well-conducted bath rather than the rough and tumble promiscuous dip on the beach.” Although bathing by-laws had been enforced as early as 1853, the practice of mixed nude bathing carried on until almost the end of the nineteenth century. Whilst addressing concerns over public decency, this attitude also shows a lack of foresight on behalf of the promoters – the main audiences for the Baths were alienated unwittingly. The elements of fun and spontaneity for the working-class holidaymaker were diminished, as Broadhead was quick to recognise during his tenure, along with the benefits of sea-bathing for those seeking a water-cure. Heating the water in the bath to seventy degrees Fahrenheit and adding showers to rid “the effects of sea-water so many people dislike,” may have discreetly addressed unease over the town’s problem of sewage disposal, regarded at the time as an “obnoxious affront,” but the natural, restorative elements of full-body immersion for Walton’s artisans would be all but lost.

It was not just the location and style, but also the type of entertainment offered by the Baths that may have deterred mass spending. As with the target market for bathing (“those who prefer taking their “dip” in comparative privacy”) the amusements at the Prince of Wales Baths also had a serious element to

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115 Ibid.
them. Their opening ceremony comprised of a “Swimming Fete,” featuring “Messrs J.B. Johnson, champion swimmer, and Peter Johnson, champion diver, with the five daughters of the latter and other celebrities.” With a nod to the Manchester capital invested in the project the Gazette mentions that the gala would be similar to a recent Johnson presentation in Manchester, which had secured a good turnout (also providing a taste of urban sophistication). The male swimmers would perform on, and beneath, the surface of the water, and the children would race one another. Although there was some spectacle and competition involved (the Gazette describes how the children’s race held in Manchester was a “very exciting contest”) there was little in the way of fun that a day trip or short excursion would warrant, and there was no aspect of the show with which spectators could interact, the Gazette stating that a “variety of comicalities” could only be “indulged in by practised performers.” There were none of the elements of spectacle, or the inclusion of circus-style entertainments that Broadhead would introduce in later years. To him, the exclusion of the audience was a failing, something he sought to redress during his time as manager.

The Baths were also threatened by their immediate rivals. There were three other indoor swimming pools in Blackpool: those of James Wylie of Foxhall, (close to the modern day site of the Pleasure Beach) and two establishments belonging to Jonathan Read, who was also a member of Blackpool Council. Read owned premises at Cocker Street, less than half a mile from the Prince of Wales Baths, but firmly within the unofficial working-class boundary, and at South Beach, a familiar

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120 Ibid.
121 Slater’s Directory of Blackpool & the Fylde. (1882). I have been unable to trace dates for Read.
area to holidaymakers due to its proximity to Central Station. Whilst the *Blackpool Gazette* damns by faint praise, it also gives a good indication as to who would use Read’s;

Mr Jonathan Read’s baths on the North and South Beach have been carefully overhauled and fitted for the approaching season, and visitors to either establishment will find every convenience for the proverbial “annual wash” of the Lancashire lad.  

In spite of this, Jonathan Read had been running his establishments successfully for some years, and shared Broadhead’s faith in advertising. As such, it is worth looking in detail at Read’s baths to discover why the Prince of Wales baths failed in its original format. As early as 1874, Read’s South Beach site took prominence in a large advertisement in the *Blackpool Gazette*. Although the actual bath was smaller than that of the Prince of Wales, Read provided separate spaces with baths for ladies and gentlemen, and also private baths. Like Broadhead, he embodied the entrepreneurial spirit by offering the benefits of his water outside of his buildings. A wealthier clientele could order “100 gallons of Pure Filtered Sea Water” for use in their own home at a charge of one shilling for cold water, one shilling and sixpence for hot.  

But it was not just Read’s clever use of advertising (something that Broadhead would also embrace fully in his theatrical career) that marks him out as an entrepreneur who recognised his area and audience. Read also appreciated that working-class audiences wanted a taste of the exotic whilst in safe and familiar surroundings. An advertisement from 1874 reads like a playbill, with entertainment topping the bill. His star performers for the season were “Marquis Bibbero and Miss

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123 Read’s Sea-Water Baths. *The Blackpool Gazette* 17 July 1874.
Bibbero, From the Royal Polytechnic Institution, Regent-street London, under the patronage of H.R.H the Prince of Wales.” The decidedly un-English names of the performers provided an element of glamour, as well as the claim that the couple had performed at the Royal Polytechnic in the capital, a venue which offered semi- and pseudo-scientific entertainments. The Polytechnic also celebrated progress, with the principal aim

To help its visitors to understand the inventions and discoveries which were changing their lives, their city and their society; it planned to achieve that aim through display and demonstration.

This however was not done in the static format of a museum, but with displays that had “dramatic visual appeal,” 124 such as Marquis Bibbero performing “aquatic stunts” in the diving tank. 125 In addition, Read mentions both London and the Prince of Wales in the advertisement which lend further sophistication; this was the same kind of marketing that led to the development of World’s Fair attractions, reinforced by the fact that the Polytechnic was said to be a forerunner of the 1851 Great Exhibition. 126 Whilst contemporary photographs show the South Beach Baths as far more utilitarian in style than the Prince of Wales Baths, Read used his entertainment as the draw for audiences. Even though Marquis Bibbero did some of the same things as the Johnson brothers at the Prince of Wales Baths, including demonstrations of helping swimmers in difficulty, Read’s reviews and advertisements were more dramatic: “the drowning man,” “illustration of the live-saving dress, in case of shipwreck.” There was also a hint of titillation in having a

125 Ibid., p.94.
126 Ibid., p.34.
female performer and a feature entitled “How to undress oneself in the water.” As with his sea-water deliveries, Read was also unafraid of taking his amusements into the public realm. In 1874, he organised a swimming fete from the extension of the North Pier, which alongside Marquis Bibbero, featured a swimming club from Leeds and their supporters, resulting in a special excursion train and a turnout of eight thousand people. This serves to highlight his entrepreneurial success since in making money for the resort, he simultaneously made money for himself, and provided amusement for the people, who, on return journeys might remember the name of ‘Read’. He was also able to have the last laugh on the Gazette’s comments about the refurbishment of the baths. In September 1881, three months after the opening of the Prince of Wales site, his South Beach building was described as being “as full as it could conveniently hold” for the Blackpool Swimming Club’s annual gala. It was this combination of the familiar, the spectacular and the popular that Broadhead provided at the Prince of Wales Baths during his term of management.

The Prince of Wales Baths were the only aspect of the Lane Ends Estate’s development that did not constitute a success. Both the Theatre, run by Thomas Sergenson, and the Market remained profitable until the eventual remodelling of the block in 1896. Sergenson, another “Big Man,” and fellow town-councillor of Broadhead and Read, offered well-known sensation dramas from the London stage such as those of Frank Harvey, including “A Ring of Iron.” Broadhead witnessed the

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success of such plays in Blackpool, and later adopted them for his Manchester theatres.  

**Broadhead’s First Venue**

It is clear that a series of errors of judgement led to the demise of the original Prince of Wales Baths; their location was ambiguous and their design overbearing, even for the “architecturally pretentious” North Shore area. The timing of building a rational and improving concern at a time when working-class spending on holiday merriment was at a peak was ill-judged, and this was echoed in the worthy tones in which the entertainment was promoted. Everything changed, however, in 1885 when William Henry Broadhead took over the lease, and commenced a style of management that encapsulated many aspects of both Jonathan Read’s baths and the Royal Polytechnic. Broadhead, described in the *Gazette* as “the enterprising proprietor” of the Baths changed the programme almost immediately. An advertisement in *The Era* revealed that by July 1885 the Prince of Wales had its own cosmopolitan performer, Mons. Ruri. In a move that eclipsed the actions of Read’s Marquis Bibbero, Broadhead’s new artiste did not officiate over swimming galas or inventive pool displays. He did not even take to the water, but performed amongst the rafters on a high-wire and trapeze, illustrating both Broadhead’s use of the buildings spatial boundaries, and his innovative fusion of circus and theatre. This “Marvellous Equilibrist” was engaged

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130 “Prince of Wales Theatre.” *The Blackpool Gazette* 3 June 1892, p.6. col. 3.
for two performances daily, one of Broadhead’s trademarks, for the 1885 season, giving his first vacant date as October of that year.¹³³

The change of direction for Broadhead and his venue was not solely due to entrepreneurial instinct, although his reputation for such offers a sound reason why he attracted interest from Blackpool Council. He was a newcomer to the resort, but with an extensive and successful business portfolio from Manchester, a place that was responsible for a large amount of investment in Blackpool. However, another reason for his early recognition in the town was the placement of his eldest son William Birch Broadhead at Blackpool Grammar School. As well as continuing Broadhead’s belief in the importance of education, this would have given both father and son access to prominent citizens of the town and their business interests. William Birch proved to be as alert as his father to his surroundings, and was also talented, being described as being a “champion diver” who appeared in competitions.¹³⁴ It is not difficult, therefore, to see how the performances given at Read’s and at the Prince of Wales Baths in its previous incarnation would have captured his attention.

Family members recognise William Birch as one of the driving forces behind the re-invention of the Baths as an entertainment centre, writing and starring in many of the productions there.¹³⁵ Burt-Briggs tells how G.H. Elliott (1882-1962) black-face music-hall singer and dancer, attended the baths as a small boy and

¹³⁴ Honri, Peter. Op cit., P. 43.
watched William Birch close the first half of the show, singing from the floating stage,

I’ll stick to the ship, lads/ you save your lives/ I’ve no-one to live for-/ you’ve your sweethearts and wives,/ you take to the boats, lads/ and praise heaven above./ And I’ll go down in the angry deep/ with the ship I love.136

The stage, one of William Birch’s own inventions (a firm example of the social entrepreneur’s use of innovative technology)137 was hydraulically operated, and designed to be stored on the floor of the bath when not in use. It would gradually sink during the performance so that the soloist would be able to swim to the side of the pool underwater during the applause, a scenario that according to Burt-Briggs “etched a vivid impression” on the audience.138

Not only did William Birch echo the ambition and entrepreneurial spirit of Broadhead, he also represented his father’s belief in the next generation. His support gave Broadhead an advantage over the coming years. With his son’s ingenuity and the practical aspect of his Manchester firm behind him, by 1891 he had transformed the Baths into what the Gazette describes as “a veritable Arcadia.”139 Notwithstanding the installation of “fairy caves and other

136 Ibid., Burt-Briggs, A.
137 Peredo, Ana Maria & McLean, Murdith. Op cit., p. 56.
139 Anon. “Prince of Wales Baths.” Blackpool Gazette 15 September 1891.
adornments,” the amount of seating in the building was increased greatly.

![The interior of the Prince of Wales Baths, opened in 1880. Aquatic shows were held there.](image)

**Fig. 2. Interior of the Prince of Wales Baths c.1896.**

A photograph taken around the time of the Bath’s closure, (c. 1896), (see Fig. 2), shows that at least three sides of the pool were taken up by seats, although Burt-Briggs describes it as a kind of theatre-in-the round. Those alongside the length of the pool are divided into four tiers, indicating that Broadhead was replicating the shape and feel of a theatre. Whilst the bottom layer was similar in

\(^{140}\) Ibid.
design to stalls, the one above was decidedly more ornate and appears to be designed as a series of boxes, each marked out by an archway, through which spectators could view the action. It is difficult to gauge the top two tiers. Whilst the length-side areas look as if they hold seating, the balcony that surrounds the perimeter of the tier appears to show only a passage or walkway on the side of the width of the bath, a possible indication that these were standing areas or promenades. At the level of the box-tier, on the width-side there were rows of benches, traditional arena-style seating, with a central staircase.141

This design shows two significant aspects of Broadhead’s ambition for the Baths. First, that the creation of a theatre was already on his mind, which is verified by Prince of Wales stationery that describes the venue as an “Aquatic Theatre & Baths.”142 Such a structure would allow him to charge patrons according to their means, where they chose to sit or which performance they attended. Prices ranged from sixpence (an amount Jonathan Read was charging twelve years previously) to two shillings. An undated playbill from the time of Broadhead’s management, complete with a line drawing of the Baths courtesy of his Manchester firm (his ideas on publicity put into practice) lists performance times of nine-thirty, eleven o’clock and later in the day at two and seven, although the four shows per day schedule was most likely at the height of the season.143 The early productions would catch the newly-arrived excursion traffic, whilst those in the evening would provide a quieter environment for families on a longer stay.

142 Honri, Peter. Op cit., p.49.
143 Playbill, Prince of Wales Baths. Cyril Critchlow Collection, Blackpool Local Studies Library.
Secondly, the influence of establishments such as the Royal Polytechnic (home of Reed’s Marquis Bibbero) is clearly visible.\textsuperscript{144} The ethos of the London establishment fitted with that of both Broadhead and Blackpool, “it knew its business, it appealed to a variety of audiences, and it was prepared to adapt to changes in public taste without abandoning its original vision.”\textsuperscript{145} Although the Polytechnic closed in 1881, due to escalating costs, it is likely that Broadhead recognised that the existing components of the Prince of Wales complex matched it on a larger scale, but, as individual areas were managed separately, the risk was lessened.\textsuperscript{146} In addition, there was nothing of the kind in Blackpool at this time, and as a whole, the Prince of Wales block could compete on a level with the larger scale entertainments that the town had to offer. Both locations offered lectures and evening classes to those in search of self-improvement. Bazaar stalls proliferated in the Polytechnic Great Hall, and it also housed two theatres, an “optical theatre” on the first floor where magic lantern slides were displayed, and a large lecture theatre, home to the annual Christmas pantomime inaugurated in 1861.\textsuperscript{147}

The buildings had structural similarities. Both had a rectangular main room, with a high, arched ceiling illuminated by electricity and also natural light from glass panels in the roof. Broadhead’s 1891 re-invention of the space within the Baths echoed the semi-circular architraves that surrounded the Polytechnic’s balconies; these were found around the second or box tier, and on the window at the far end of the building, where the words “Prince of Wales Baths” were embossed.

\textsuperscript{144} For the purpose of this chapter the Royal Polytechnic will stand as a point of comparison.  
\textsuperscript{145} Weeden, Brenda. Op cit., p.4.  
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p.34. Although there is no evidence that Broadhead visited the Royal Polytechnic, he was certainly aware of it.  
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p.72.
Spectators at the Polytechnic surrounded the action, as would Broadhead’s audience, and could interact with the exhibitions from more than one vantage point. Both venues gave visitors a chance to see the predominant feature at eye level on the ground floor, both used water as their stage, and embraced invention. For those in the higher tiers, there was the view of the pool and stage, as well as something specific to their location; pictures and machinery in the Polytechnic, trapeze artists at the Baths. As Honri describes, “drums were banged... and then the spangled aerialists spun a hundred feet above the gaping audience,”\textsuperscript{148} taking the performance to the upper galleries, an area not noted for a prime view, and also blurring whether or not the patrons therein were viewer or fellow player, an example of Lefebvre’s third space.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{148} Honri, Peter. Op cit., p.45.
\textsuperscript{149} Lefebvre, Henri. Op cit. \textit{The Production of Space}. P.188. Third space is synonymous with the theatre and interplay between “actor, audience, ‘characters’, text and author.”
It was not just the interior of the Baths that was re-modelled. A contemporary photograph of the exterior (see Fig. 3) shows a vast difference to the imperiousness of the early descriptions in the Gazette. It is just possible to make out in the two central panels what amounts to an imitation of the original animated
frieze at the top of the building; Broadhead’s versions depict scenes from the Aquatic Theatre. This would have made the frontage more familiar and inviting to working-class holidaymakers, whilst the layout of the seating around the bath itself – reminiscent of a circus or theatre - would have controlled, albeit in a mild manner, class conflict. Prominently displayed notices lure the customer with the promise of fun, and that what is contained within is “the sight of Blackpool.”

Broadhead did not overlook the suggestive aspects of female swimmers and artistes and their capacity to earn revenue. In the Grand Continental Exhibition area of the Baths (the name and content clearly influenced by the Royal Polytechnic) he had an area dedicated to a cyclorama. This comprised of images of oceans of the world, and overseas landscapes, bringing the global space into the local at a time when the travel opportunities of his patrons did not expand further than a trip to the seaside. The cyclorama also contained more sensational scenes including; “Irish Love-Making,” “The Thoughtless Mother,” “Temptation,” and “Fast Life,” titles not dissimilar to the melodramas that would fill the programmes of his future theatre circuit, but here appealing to the holiday crowd. However, the picture of a woman in a bathing costume to the side of the right-hand door may have appeared more risqué than anything actually permitted. Alongside Carlson’s comment that sexual titillation went hand in glove with the type of entertainments that Blackpool provided, Burt-Briggs tells of a sign placed outside the premises stating “all swimmers in full costume,” which also ruled out excursionists who did not possess bathing suits, as the Baths still functioned as somewhere to swim for pleasure. The

152 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 112.
local press were invited to a performance to see if there was anything “improper or
a sight to make a woman blush.”\textsuperscript{153} Needless to say, there was not a thing, although
as usual with Broadhead, this is not as straightforward as it seems. The newspaper
in question was the \textit{Blackpool Times}, of which he was a director.\textsuperscript{154}

However this is more than likely true, as the whole family was involved with
the business. In the early days of the Aquatic Theatre, Broadhead’s wife, Mary Ann
worked in the box office, whilst their daughters Nan and Kitty (Kate) were also in
attendance, carrying the takings home in a bucket after the final performance.\textsuperscript{155}
The participation of the Broadhead women in the new venture illustrate that this
was not an easy investment or an immediate success –ever the careful
businessman, Broadhead employed family members (as Peter Mathias reveals, a
classic feature of the Victorian entrepreneur),\textsuperscript{156} including William Birch as his
comedian cum stuntman, instead of spending money on staff.

The inspiration of Broadhead’s business colleagues led to more than a new
style of entertainment for the Baths. Thomas Sergenson raised money for the
building of his Frank Matcham designed Grand Theatre, at Church Street, Blackpool
by providing circus-style entertainments on its eventual site, and was involved in
multiple projects, including a theatre syndicate. He also embraced the value of
advertising to bring in custom. Allen Clarke tells how after a disastrous evening at
the Blackpool Winter Gardens, a large indoor complex containing theatres and
dance-halls established in 1876, Sarah Bernhardt criticised the acoustics,

\textsuperscript{153} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{Op cit.}, \textit{The Wriggling Fish}. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{154} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{Op cit.}, \textit{The Broadhead Family}. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{155} Honri, Peter. \textit{Op cit.}, p.48.
\textsuperscript{156} Matthias, Peter and John A. Davis. \textit{Enterprise and Labour: From the Eighteenth Century to the
announcing that she would have been more successful playing the Prince of Wales Theatre. Sergenson went on to use the quotation in his promotional material, turning the negative aspect of his small venue into a virtue. The next manager of the Winter Gardens, William Holland, was similarly adept at manipulating the media.

Holland forms an appropriate contrast to Broadhead. Although the embodiment of the “Big Man” in every sense, from his physical appearance modelled on Napoleon III “in dress, manner and moustache” to his “populist rhetoric of progress and plenty,” there were many instances in which the two entrepreneurs differed. Holland arrived in Blackpool in 1887, not for health but financial reasons, recognising the large amount of tourist money flowing into the resort. He too had initially followed in the footsteps of his father by joining his drapery and upholstery business, but it failed to hold his interest and he turned to music hall. Like Broadhead, his early projects were run-down venues, which he “rescued by the lavish refurbishments, aggressive publicity and flamboyant self-promotion that were the trademarks of his career.” Holland’s largesse is embodied by the story synonymous with his name, that of the thousand guinea carpet at the Canterbury music hall that his contemporaries jeered that audiences would spit on. Like Sergenson, Holland used the criticism as an advertising ploy, inviting people to come to the venue and spit if they so wished. It was a profitable situation for Holland, whatever the outcome; the audience had been

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159 Ibid.
charged an admission fee, the carpet itself was another representation of grandeur amongst the familiar. The story followed him from hall to hall, with both Parry and Walton citing it as a carpet at Blackpool Winter Gardens.  

Broadhead also knew the value of advertising, but in a much more restrained style. In the speech that opens this chapter, he directly addressed those who owned or managed accommodation in the town,

> company-house keepers can aid the Advertising Committee very materially, and themselves at the same time, by having on their notepaper and business circulars printed views of our grand and spacious promenade. Illustrations or pictures do more to attract by showing the town as it really is than by any other method.

These lines provide another instance of the mentality of the social entrepreneur.

The fundamental difference between Broadhead and Holland was that Broadhead avoided self-promotion. Whilst Holland enjoyed appearing in shows, for instance, “riding on Blondin’s back on tightrope,” these acts, and his charity work such as providing benefit nights for striking Newcastle workers all served to boost his reputation as “the British Barnum,” or “the People’s Caterer.”  

Although Broadhead “believed the world was a better place for his baths,” his work revolved around displaying his venues and the events within them, and he gave his son the starring role in any productions rather than himself.  

William Birch became well known through their businesses, both chose to demonstrate their values through other media. Once the Baths were established,

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father and son moved into local politics, with William Birch representing the New Cross ward in Manchester, and holding a seat on the Manchester Watch Committee.

It was Holland’s grandiose style of operation that led him to take huge financial risks. Peter Bailey tells of a bullfighting enterprise from 1869 that was not successful, leaving Holland with a seven-thousand pound loss. Seven years later he was declared bankrupt, and again in 1881. Broadhead’s father had already provided a firm example of the pitfalls of insolvency, and Broadhead himself undertook various methods to avoid a similar fate. Although the Prince of Wales Baths were a risk, he used his family rather than employing additional staff, and the “small army of workmen” responsible for the alterations would have been from his Manchester businesses, working to designs of his and William Birch’s making.

Whilst Holland’s finances were “reportedly in a mess” at the time of his death, by 1928, three years before Broadhead died, his bank cancelled an overdraft facility taken out in 1894 to cover the construction of his early Manchester theatres as “there was a credit balance in the current account of six figures... Deeds etc were in safe custody to the value of £250, 000.”

Ultimately however, both men knew how to make money, and recognised the importance of giving audiences what they wanted. In an interview with The Era in 1894, Holland said, “tickle them with ingenious advertisements as much as you like, but let them always feel confident that you will give them value for money in

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165 Ibid.
the end.”\textsuperscript{169} This was particularly true with Holland’s final venue, the Blackpool Winter Gardens, of which he became manager in 1887, a year after his arrival in the resort. Two years later he opened the Opera House within the complex, offering similar programmes to the Prince of Wales Theatre, yet also attracting such names as Enrico Caruso & Nellie Melba.\textsuperscript{170} He was also responsible for the construction of the Empress Ballroom, which remained unfinished at the time of his death. Despite resistance from more faint-hearted members of the board of directors, during his eight year tenure, Holland “more than trebled the receipts... while the basic admission charge remained at 6d.”\textsuperscript{171} In addition, his intuition for public taste, in this case, was second to none – both the Empress Ballroom and the Opera House are still in operation today.

That Broadhead and Holland were aware of one another is without question. Holland joined the network of local businessmen who lived on Park Road, moving into number forty-six, almost opposite Broadhead and Bickerstaffe.\textsuperscript{172} Although he did not take a seat on the council, he was a freemason, as was Broadhead, making them colleagues in the “tradition of public service and mutuality in the intimate networks” (freemasonry and religion).\textsuperscript{173} Whilst there were significant differences in both style and substance, Broadhead must have had sufficient faith in the Holland family judgement to purchase the Morecambe Winter Gardens, of which Holland’s son was lessee, and re-name its dancehall the Empress Ballroom.

\textsuperscript{170} Walton, John K. Op cit., \textit{Blackpool}. P.89.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Slater’s Directory for Preston and the Fylde} 1892.
\textsuperscript{173} Bailey, Peter. Op cit., \textit{A Community of Friends}. P.34.
With the influence of the Royal Polytechnic, Sergenson and Holland, alongside his own ideas and those of William Birch, Broadhead was able to turn the Prince of Wales Baths into “one of the most popular features of each season,” attracting both tourists and residents alike.¹⁷⁴ Like Blackpool council, he maintained elements of the past, whilst simultaneously looking ahead. Burt-Briggs provides two advertisements from an undated Visitors’ Guide to Blackpool.¹⁷⁵ These reveal that alongside the aquatic entertainments, the Baths still maintained their original function as a health spa, with “Turkish, Russian, and Vapour Baths” available on site, from a charge of one shilling. This was an area that Broadhead did not oversee though, with “Mr Dean, the well-known Bath-Man” taking the lead role in this particular aspect of the business. Massage treatments were also available, “either at the baths or by appointment at Patient’s Residence,” taking the service from the public to the private in a manner comparable to the hot and cold water deliveries to private residences, given by Jonathan Read.

The amusements too retained elements of previous success. An article in the Gazette from 1892 reveals that Broadhead employed “the Misses Johnson,” the same Edith and Josephine Johnson that had performed at the opening of the Baths as children, now “Women Champions of the World.”¹⁷⁶ Broadhead also chose artistes that he knew had popular appeal, such as Professor Collier, “the champion swimmer of the world, and an especial favourite of Lancashire and Yorkshire

¹⁷⁵ Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Prince of Wales Baths Blackpool. Private Collection. All citations in this paragraph are from this source. No pagination.
visitors,” thus allowing him to attract audiences that would not normally come together, and illustrating the same accurate reading of his new business landscape as in Manchester. In addition to the exterior styling of his Aquatic Theatre, he also satisfied his customers with performances that featured people from their home areas. The fact that these performers were not the highly paid celebrities of the day offers a variation on Lefebvre’s concept of the working class right to the city (as does the restyling of the exterior). For example, Miss Nellie Murray of Oldham, “the accomplished scientific swimmer,” not only gives a nod to Read’s Royal Polytechnic-trained Marquis and Miss Bibbero, she also provides a sense of pride, ownership and ultimately, social belonging by displaying both the familiar and the comfortable. The audience is thus given an opportunity to see people, or things regarded as their own, in a positive light. As Lefebvre’s city is a text produced by its inhabitants, so is Broadhead’s programme.

The improvements developed by William Birch, including performances on the hydraulic stage were also maintained, and the evening performances were lit by electricity. However, Broadhead realised that his entertainments had to evolve to ensure progress and its rewards. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, whilst William Birch planned the Manchester theatre circuit, an increase in profits allowed his father to employ Professor Ross to take care of the newly-styled “water farces.” As Burt-Briggs has noted, most of the spectacles at the Baths had an aquatic theme, from the sale of penny fortune-telling fish to the new productions

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180 Ibid.
which, with titles such as “The Warrior’s Adventures on the Floating Island” and “The Wreck of the Lively Nell,” carried on the drama of Read’s shipwreck re-enactments, but with a comic twist. It is likely that Professor Ross had the most input in these new creations, assuring Broadhead that his show was “definitely the funniest and best water pantomime ever produced, apart from the daily scenes by amateurs in the Bath.”

Broadhead emulated Sergenson and Holland, and used this quotation as part of his advertising material. Professor Ross also turned his hand to song-writing, providing the lyrics for Watching and Waiting “specially written and composed for the GRAND WATER SHOWS.” The song was also a souvenir and catch-penny. Copies bearing the illustration of the Baths were sold for 2d, with the rights of the song being held by Broadhead himself, an action common to music hall proprietors at the time.

Whilst lack of swimming ability was used as a humorous draw to lure in customers, this proved a different story once inside. The Baths still functioned as a place where visitors of both sexes could learn to swim. Burt-Briggs tells how there was a strict disclaimer in Broadhead’s programme, that

The loss of life by drowning is far too serious to joke about, in many cases the loss is almost as voluntary an act as though the person drowned had wilfully shot himself with a revolver.

This notice almost certainly relates to a number of incidents at the Baths during its previous ownership. In August 1883, a young male swimmer “by some means lost

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181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 “Watching And Waiting”. Songsheet. Cyril Critchlow Collection. Local and Family History Centre, Blackpool Central Library.
his presence of mind” and had to be rescued. 186 Only a week later, John Lowe of Hyde drowned when a group of people entered the pool after the end of a swimming gala. 187 Unfortunate circumstances were repeated in February 1884 with the death of John Riley, aged 34. 188 All of these occurrences illustrate that the main risk was posed by young men in high spirits, or as is likely, under the influence of alcohol. Broadhead moderated his disclaimer by wording it in a dramatic and somewhat theatrical style; however, the warning was clear. This was not a stiff, patronising admonition that water antics could “only be indulged in by practiced performers,” it was written in the language of the penny dreadful, in a way his patrons would have understood. 189

The exclusion of alcohol at the Prince of Wales Aquatic Theatre and Baths is perhaps the strongest indication of Broadhead’s mode of rational recreation. An article in the Manchester and Lancashire edition of *Faces and Places* for 1905, summarises appropriately:

At the Prince of Wales Baths he was granted, and held a full dramatic license, carrying with it the power to sell intoxicating liquors, but he never once used it. In making application for theatre licenses in various towns, there has always been the outcry against them becoming drinking saloons, but Mr Broadhead has always been able to meet them with the fact that he did not want to sell drink, but to give an entertainment of such a pure nature as any family might attend. 190

As with every aspect of Broadhead and his career, the truth behind his decision to run his business on temperance lines is not so easily explained. Family

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entertainment was valued in Blackpool; one of the complaints against segregated bathing was that it separated families.\footnote{Travis, John. Op cit., p.25.} As mentioned earlier, the absence of drink lessened the risk of trouble in the Baths themselves. However, the town also had a strong temperance movement; its annual mission on the sands had “gained a national reputation.”\footnote{Musk, John Henry. Letter. The Alliance News. Undated cutting. Blackpool Local Studies Library.} In addition, Reverend J.S. Balmer, a Free Methodist minister was also an inhabitant of Park Road, living next door but one to William Holland. Balmer was a high-profile and vocal promoter of temperance, authoring a number of pamphlets on the subject, including \textit{A Blackpool Story of Tea, Sugar, and Drink}, an attack on John Bickerstaffe’s 1889 offer to give the poor of the parish a pound each of tea and sugar for Christmas, due to the fact Bickerstaffe was a publican.\footnote{Balmer, J.S. \textit{A Blackpool Story of Tea, Sugar, and Drink}. (London: c.1890)\textit{.}} The tensions between his neighbours and the potential alienation of a social group would not have been lost on Broadhead. In later years, the preclusion of a liquor license would also enable the plans for his theatres in Manchester and surrounding areas to be passed more quickly, an invaluable feature in a city described as at “saturation point” with similar ventures.\footnote{Mellor, G.J. \textit{The Northern Music Hall}. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Frank Graham, c. 1970) p.167.}

With the fusion of old and new, Broadhead was able to make a success of his time at the Prince of Wales Baths. However, by 1896, the Lane Ends Estate was also keen to progress, detailing in the \textit{Gazette} new plans for the block that contained the Baths, Theatre and Arcade. It was to be remodelled into a single “Palace of Pleasure,” later to be named the Alhambra Theatre.\footnote{Anon. “The Lane Ends Estate Alterations.” \textit{The Blackpool Gazette}, Friday 9 October 1896.} This may have been a necessity, as Burt-Briggs asserts that the salt-water from the Baths had
rotted the foundations of the existing structure, but without doubt the company was also trying to compete with the new large-scale entertainments such as the Winter Gardens and Blackpool Tower.\textsuperscript{196} As part of a group of men “who knew how to take occasion by the hand and minister to the forces which make for progress,” both Sergenson and Broadhead had contingency plans.\textsuperscript{197} Sergenson, whilst managing the Prince of Wales Theatre, also presided over another small establishment in addition to exhibiting circus-style entertainments.\textsuperscript{198} These activities enabled him to cover the cost of the 1894 Grand Theatre and, allowed him his own stage, a “response to competition from the Tower for his circus and variety entertainments.”\textsuperscript{199}

Broadhead too had been moving away from the sole venture of the Prince of Wales Baths. In 1895, he was approached to stand for Blackpool council, and was elected to Bank Hey Ward, which surrounded the Prince of Wales complex. This was an advantageous move for all concerned. It gave Broadhead social standing within the town and allowed him to participate in many of the new developments that controlled Blackpool as a social space, whilst simultaneously making money and giving pleasure to others, including the Victoria Pier, which opened in 1904, a year after Broadhead became a Justice of the Peace for Blackpool. However, his presence also aided the council. By 1898 there was uneasiness over the large amount of local politicians who sought to make money through their positions by selling land to the council at high prices, and also over the regulation of drink in the

\textsuperscript{196} Walton, John K. Op cit., \textit{Blackpool}. P.92.
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Faces and Places Illustrated}. Op cit., p.383.
\textsuperscript{199} Walton, John K. Op cit., \textit{Blackpool}. p.96.
town. This general theme of unscrupulousness led to “a campaign for municipal morality, financial and otherwise... with considerable input from Nonconformists and Co-operators.”

Broadhead, with his successful management of not only the Baths, but the temperance debate and class-conflict alongside his extensive Manchester business network and religious leanings was an ideal candidate.

However, Manchester was also to the forefront of Broadhead’s thinking at this time. Burt-Briggs tells how William Birch convinced his father to invest in a theatre in the city, but to build rather than to buy an existing concern. Continuing the entrepreneurial drive that he had revealed with the hydraulic stage at the Prince of Wales Baths, William Birch had travelled to South Africa looking for suitable acts for the Aquatic Theatre, where he had become inspired. The venture was against the wishes of Mary Ann Broadhead, but it is not documented whether or not this was on moral grounds, given her religious background, or whether she feared the speculation would threaten the status and comfortable lifestyle that the family had earned in Blackpool. Jacky Bratton explains such conflict for women who were part of theatrical families either as actresses or, as were Mary Ann and her daughters, behind the scenes workers;

At a moment when all social pressures told them that if they were to be middle-class, they should not be doing so; and, in addition, they were participating in a profession that actually exploited and shockingly revealed their femininity as a saleable commodity.

In spite of this, Broadhead had faith in his son, and between 1894 and 1896, “various sites were purchased in Hulme, New Cross, Openshaw, Longsight, and sites earmarked in other towns for future development,” with nearly all the later

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200 Ibid., p.85.
locations selected by the end of 1903. \footnote{202} By the time of the \textit{Gazette} article listing the changes to the Prince of Wales complex, the Osborne Theatre on Oldham Road, Manchester had already been open for six months. \footnote{203} The following chapter will discuss how Broadhead used the above locations to provide for both his audiences and his own family.

\footnote{203}{The Osborne Theatre, or Royal Osborne as it is sometimes known, opened on 13 April 1896.}
Chapter 2

Location

The map that opens this chapter (Fig.4) is taken from Andrew Davies’ book *The Gangs of Manchester*, an account of the activities of the Scuttlers, feuding gangs of youths, that proliferated “throughout the poorer, working-class districts of the Manchester conurbation” during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whilst the impact of the Scuttlers on the communities that would eventually become Broadhead’s locations will be discussed later in the chapter, the map is useful in other ways. Davies uses it to show the widespread problem of scuttling over a relatively small area, but it is also useful to the study of the life and work of William Henry Broadhead and his family. For such purposes, I have inserted the names of his Manchester theatres, in red, onto the map.

In this chapter, I aim to offer a wider reading of the place of the Broadhead Circuit in Manchester, ultimately adding to a more thorough knowledge of provincial theatre. Alongside the theories of anecdote and genealogy employed in the previous chapter, I shall adopt another methodology used by Jacky Bratton, and also by Joyce Knowlson, one of “Victorian journalism’s familiar genres”, that of walking the streets, and describing the places of entertainment found therein. But this account will differ from those of Knowlson and Bratton on two key instances.

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2 Ibid., p.16.
Although by default I may give a female perspective, I am not arguing from the point of view of gender-specificity, as does Bratton. Secondly, the distance between the Broadhead houses that surround Manchester city centre is too great to provide a complete spatial representation of each and every area. For the same reason, it is not possible to ‘walk’ on these pages from Manchester’s theatre district to the Broadhead venues; that is perhaps, a future exercise. However, the influence of Knowlson and Bratton is felt as I will employ a variety of sources including family documents that relate directly to location, newspaper and journal articles, photographs, and as Viv Gardner recommends, street directories, which will in turn, allow development of Henri Lefebvre’s concepts of the working class right to the city and the production of space.\textsuperscript{5} As Lefebre writes,

\begin{quote}
It is helpful to think of architectures as ‘archi-textures’, to treat each monument or building, viewed in its surroundings and context, in the populated area and associated networks in which it is set down.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

To do this, I shall focus on three key points: the theatre landscape of Manchester at the time Broadhead commenced building, the areas that he chose for his venues, and how the influences of Blackpool prepared him for his new career as a theatre proprietor. Additionally, as the following pages begin to discuss architectural space, the work of Marvin Carlson will also be referred to throughout this and the subsequent chapter.


To look at the theatres already open in both the city centre and the outskirts of Manchester in the last decade of the nineteenth century, I propose a fusion of walking the streets and a comparative study. There are necessary omissions; the houses discussed here, since they best fit the specification of this chapter, will be those listed on Davies’s map rather than Broadhead’s other North-West sites. Also, existing Manchester venues will be restricted to those recorded by Knowlson and Terry Wyke and Nigel Rudyard, other than those that I have encountered in additional reading, such as the Star Music Hall, Ancoats. As Wyke notes, this is due to restriction of space, rather than a view that back-room music halls, circuses and amateur groups are less important.

Davies’s map is a useful starting point for a chapter that deals with location. It gives a perspective on areas that have already been discussed in the introduction and the previous chapter, giving some idea of the distances in the spatial relationship between Broadhead’s business and family life. In a similar way, it also provides an illustration for what will be examined here and allows for the placement of Broadhead within the topography of Manchester theatre at the end of the nineteenth century. Knowlson invites the reader to join her in “a stroll down ‘Theatre Street’ in the early 1900’s” and provides photographs, drawings and a small amount textual commentary on the journey. Although the Broadhead circuit is mentioned, it is not given the space or context necessary for a more complete understanding of “the social, religious and geographical make up of the Victorian

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town” propounded by Joanna Robinson in her work of mapping the performance culture of Nottingham at this time.\textsuperscript{11}

From the key on the right hand side of Davies’s map, we can see that both major roads and railways are clearly visible, allowing the viewer to pinpoint key locations within Broadhead’s life. London Road station is almost in the centre of the map, the area that was home to Broadhead before his removal to Blackpool. Between Davies’s numbers one and two, lie both Tib Street and Spear Street, where the Broadhead offices and workshops were located. To the immediate right of number one is New Cross, the ward that William Birch Broadhead eventually represented as a Conservative Councillor, whilst number 18 hovers over the region that he wished to represent, Hulme. In between these two places, around number 14, is Stockport Road, the main thoroughfare of Longsight, home of Miss Lottie Birch, later Mary Ann Broadhead. To the far left of the map, Eccles New Road leaves the page pointing in the direction of Patricroft, Broadhead’s first home in Manchester.

It is also interesting to transfer the use of the map to the entertainment activity of Manchester at the turn of the nineteenth century. The theatre heartland is represented in the centre by Deansgate and Peter Street and the uppermost end of Oxford Road, (known as Oxford Street). These are three of the four areas that Knowlson explores in her survey of Manchester theatre.\textsuperscript{12} (Whitworth Street is not listed here.) Whilst not every theatre or music hall was located within this relatively

\textsuperscript{11} Robinson, Joanna. “Mapping Performance Culture: Locating the Spectator in Theatre History.” Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film, 31(1) (Summer 2004): 3-17, p.89.

\textsuperscript{12} Knowlson, Joyce. Op cit. No pagination.
small area, the majority, such as the Palace of Varieties (1891), The Prince’s (1864) and the Peoples Music Hall (1853) all lay within the boundaries of the city centre. Thus, is it is possible to see how Broadhead’s theatres and music halls are in radically different settings, near to, or on, main roads into the city centre. In the following chapters (particularly Chapter 4), I will argue that these areas correspond to Lefebvre’s description of ‘urban cores’ – pockets of land that still adhere to the ‘urban-rural,’ celebrating long established “parades, promenades, festivities,”\textsuperscript{13} equally as much as the city centre area designated as Theatreland.

Working clockwise from the lower left hand corner, close to Salford Docks is Eccles New Road. Broadhead’s Crown theatre (1907) on Church Street is just out of the range from here. Upwards, close to Davies’s number twenty-seven, is the Cross Lane site of the Salford Hippodrome (1904), near the Cattle Market. Moving to the top right of the image, by number nine, would have been the Queen’s Park Hippodrome (1904). Immediately below Harpurhey is Oldham Road, Miles Platting, home to the first and last of the Broadhead houses in Manchester, The Osborne Theatre (1896) and the Empress Electric (1912). These were situated almost exactly where numbers three and eight stand, respectively. In the lower right hand side of the picture Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, is visible, home to the Metropole Theatre (1898). Further movement clockwise takes the viewer to Stockport Road, the location for the King’s (1905). Around number eighteen on the map would have stood the headquarters of the family’s empire, the Grand Junction Theatre and the Hulme Hippodrome, (1902 and 1903), which were adjoined by a glass corridor

known as the Floral Hall. This gives a total of nine houses around the perimeter of the city.

Manchester theatre c.1894

As mentioned in the previous chapter, between 1894 and 1896 the Broadheads chose locations for many of their future venues. Burt-Briggs narrates that that the search was undertaken by William Birch who spent “a great deal of time exploring for sites in and around Manchester.”14 The task would doubtless have been facilitated by his interest in new inventions – he was a keen driver, motoring from theatre to theatre every evening during the early years of the circuit. Although there is no record of an address at this time, Burt-Briggs recounts that William Birch was married and lived in Manchester. A birth certificate dated 1901 for his first son, William Henry, lists the family’s address as 160 Embden Street, Hulme. This was a sub-district of Manchester, rather than one of the newly created suburbs (such as nearby Whalley Range), and Embden Street one of the major thoroughfares of the district, some four blocks from the Grand Junction Theatre, which Broadhead and Sons opened on Preston Street in the same year.15 For the purpose of this chapter I will assume that William Birch lived in this vicinity some six years earlier, and shall follow his tracks in surveying the entertainments already available in Manchester and their locations.

15 Birth certificate for William Henry Broadhead, 29 August 1901. Application no.COL615377. General Register Office. I am grateful to Peter Davis for this record.
Arriving from Hulme along Oxford Road allows the journey to start in the same place as that of Knowlson, at the corner of Oxford Street and Hunt Street, (now known as Whitworth Street). The first theatre was the Palace of Varieties, which opened in 1891. Initially the Palace appears comparable to Broadhead’s venues. It was run by a consortium of businessmen (a common practice at this time), not an actor manager or the descendants of a theatrical family. The amusement on offer – variety – mirrored that on offer at the majority of Broadhead houses. However, the acts at the Palace were of a much higher calibre, which meant a larger budget. Celebrities such as Marie Lloyd and Dan Leno were meant to embody “the experience of the modern music hall.” But, their inclusion raised prices. Despite claims that the Palace was aimed at “the classes and the masses,” the cheapest seat in the house, the upper circle (or gods), still cost sixpence. Although Broadhead was reluctant to exclude any potential audience, he recognised that this price was beyond the means of most. 6d would have paid for a seat in the pit at the Osborne.

The main difference between the Palace and Broadhead’s theatres was the controversy that surrounded the former, “almost from the time the plan was announced of building.” Dagmar Kift tells how this was due to an ill-advised remark by the promoters that they wanted to use the London Empire (beset with arguments over temperance and prostitution) as “a model for their new hall.” The Palace opened without a drinks licence, whilst an ongoing squall continued in local

17 Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.46.
newspapers. There was nothing controversial about the opening of the Osborne, and very little in the rest of the Broadhead circuit. However, the Empire debate and decision not to grant a license to the Palace affected other theatres. Broadhead had run the Prince of Wales Baths on temperance lines. As will be recalled, whilst he may have approved of the concept, it was also useful in maximising potential audiences, with no social group isolated. Not applying in the first place for such a license allowed his venues to open quickly after completion.

Further along Oxford Street, also owned by a group of businessmen was the Prince’s Theatre, which had already been successfully operated for thirty years by the time Broadhead commenced building in the city. The Prince’s gives an opportunity to view the manoeuvrings in Manchester’s theatre landscape during the last half of the nineteenth century. It was opened as deliberate competition to the Theatre Royal and Queen’s Theatre, an indication that the two venues dominated the market for drama, and that speculators felt there was room for expansion. The placement of the Prince’s provides a forerunner of the argument that surrounded Broadhead’s opening of the King’s Palace Theatre (1913) in Preston, when fellow theatre managers objected to a rival venue being granted a license. Like Broadhead’s houses just outside Manchester city centre, the Prince’s was slightly removed from its competitors with its place on Oxford Street, albeit at a much shorter distance – around half a mile. The style of entertainment was vastly different to Broadhead though, and again with a considerably larger budget; Charles Calvert promised to provide “dramatic entertainment of the highest

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22 Full discussion of this episode will follow in a later chapter.
class." But, the theatre changed hands a number of times, (a common enough occurrence in Manchester’s Theatreland, although not in Broadhead’s landscape) even belonging to the rival Theatre Royal for a short period. Various high-quality managers such as Robert Courtneidge ensured the Prince’s survival, and it later became famous for its annual pantomimes, something that Broadhead saw that he could re-work. Often, advertisements in the local press and *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure* show that a particular performance played in the city centre one week, with an alternative (less expensive) version on the Broadhead circuit the week after.

Also on Oxford Street, located in between the Princes and the Palace, was the St James’s Theatre. Opening in 1884, this venue had a number of similarities with those of Broadhead. The owner, James Reilly, had also been a tradesman, a furniture maker, and was now exploring the different space of entertainment. He too recognised the value of out of town sites, having already taken over and redeveloped the Pomona Gardens at Trafford. Although the opening performance at the St James’s, a production of “Maritana”, was performed by the Royal English Opera Company, Knowlson writes that the theatre produced much the same fare as Broadhead and was eventually leased to Andrew Melville. Melodrama was a St James’s staple, showing such titles as “A Mother’s Love” and “Driven From Home.” Knowlson describes these plays as “heavy drama”, although this comment more likely refers to the didactic elements of the plot rather, than the notion the plays

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p.53.
26 *Maritana* was a light opera, popular at this time, and as such, fitted in with the popular regime of the St James’s Theatre.
27 See Chapter 4.
were considered serious in the same sense as those of George Bernard Shaw, or Ibsen.\textsuperscript{28} This theatre may have had added interest for Broadhead and William Birch due to its adjoining venue, the St James’s Hall. Home to the John Tiller School of Dance, the building boasted an exterior big wheel like that of Blackpool Winter Gardens, a reminder of the influence that Blackpool amusements had over working class audiences. The difference here, however, was the city centre location. Even though Richard Flanagan, one of the “Big Men” of Manchester theatre, gained control of the St James’s from 1894-1905, it was not wholly successful, and closed in 1907.\textsuperscript{29} Knowlson credits this failure to “the Edwardian revolution in taste”, but factors such as the cost of the journey into the city may have deterred working class audiences, especially as Broadhead was now building on their doorstep.\textsuperscript{30} His and Flanagan’s paths would cross in 1907, when Broadhead took over Flanagan’s Eccles Lyceum and re-opened it as the Crown Theatre.

A few hundred yards down and on the opposite side of Oxford Street stood both the Gentlemen’s Concert Hall and the People’s Music Hall. Despite the similar sounding names, the establishments catered for very different audiences. The Gentlemen’s Concert Hall, opened in 1830, had little in common with the ideals and values of Broadhead. It was funded by subscribers as “a home for good music”, eventually securing the services of Charles Halle as conductor of the orchestra.\textsuperscript{31} Drama was also performed on site from 1893, but this was serious and innovative,

\textsuperscript{28} Knowlson, Joyce. Op cit. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{29} The definition of the term “Big Men” can be found in the introduction to this thesis.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.35.
showcasing playwrights such as Ibsen and aimed largely at a respectable middle class audience.

Despite disparity over its opening date, (Knowlson says 1853, Wyke 1856), the People’s Music Hall had also stood the test of time.\(^{32}\) Originally called the Casino, it acquired the nickname of “Burton’s Night School” due to its popularity with the city’s youth.\(^{33}\) Prices were comparable to Broadhead’s theatres, ranging from 2d for the pit to 6d for the lower gallery and boxes. Entertainment was also similar to that of Broadhead, with the “vocalists, comedians and dancers that made up a typical evening’s entertainment at the Victorian Music Hall.”\(^{34}\) Like the Osborne, the People’s Music Hall had a very plain exterior, and could also hold three thousand people. It is interesting to note here Davies’s description of the venue; “a squat, ugly utilitarian building that catered for a low class – some said ‘no class’ – audience... well known as the haunt of Scuttlers,”\(^{35}\) which infers that spaces for the working class were given less aesthetic attention, a point that will be revisited in the following chapter. Although Broadhead would have had some knowledge of the disposable income of some of the working class youths who frequented the People’s Music Hall, its atmosphere was a world away from his intention of providing a place of entertainment where a working man could take his wife and family. Whilst the pelting of the stage and orchestra with objects, fighting and drinking that Davies, Knowlson and Wyke recount is questionable (one of the flaws of oral testimony is that it is open to exaggeration) such behaviour would

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\(^{32}\) Knowlson, Joyce. Op cit. No pagination. Also, Ibid., p.47.
\(^{33}\) Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.47.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
certainly not have been tolerated in the Broadhead houses. Burt-Briggs tells how a
programme for the 1907 Pavilion Theatre, Liverpool contained the comments,
“Whistling and Shouting strictly prohibited”, and “Any person found breaking the
above order will be instantly expelled by the Police,”
indicating that in accordance
with other provincial theatres, Broadhead provided a security presence during
performances. Both the People’s Music Hall and the Gentlemen’s Concert Hall
closed in 1897, the year after the opening of the Osborne, for the construction of
the Midland Hotel on their sites.

The Comedy Theatre stood across the road from the People’s Music Hall at
the junction of Peter Street and Mount Street and on a site that had long been
associated with entertainment: - Wyke tells how a circus had been there
originally. This incarnation replaced the original Gaiety Theatre of Varieties,
which was built in 1878, and destroyed by fire five years later. It reopened in 1884
as the Comedy, under the control of Edward Garcia, another Manchester “big
man”, who at different times was associated with the Grand, Folly and Queen’s
theatres. Garcia aimed for a higher class audience than Broadhead, hiring such
companies as the Calvert Dramatic Players, and charging his patrons accordingly: a
box cost two guineas. However, these prices proved unsustainable, and fellow
theatre “big man”, John Pitt Hardacre took over, employing the theatre architect
Frank Matcham to refurbish the Comedy. Pitt Hardacre reduced seat prices and put
on a bill of popular drama and pantomime. However, neither man is analogous to

37 All information in this and the following paragraph is taken from Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op
cit., p33-34. Additionally, the word ‘Circus’ is not necessarily used here in the sense that we
understand it today. In the context of this chapter, the word describes a venue that may have
exhibited hippodramas, equestrian spectacles, wild animals and variety.
38 I have been unable to trace dates for Garcia, Richard Flanagan and John Pitt Hardacre.
Broadhead on a personal level. Garcia had little money sense, whilst Pitt Hardacre was the subject of “a number of scandals.” Thus the Comedy reverted to its old name of the Gaiety under the United Theatres Company, the consortium that owned the Princes.

The legacy of the Palace of Varieties endured, and the United Theatres Company were unable to obtain a drink licence for the Gaiety. By 1908, when Broadhead was moving out of the city to Ashton-Under-Lyne, it passed into the hands of its most successful proprietor, Annie Horniman. Promoting dramatists such as Shaw, Galsworthy and the “Manchester School,” Horniman’s programme differed from the majority of Broadhead’s productions, but her Playgoers’ Theatre Company provided an example of a repertory company that would be adopted by Percy Baynham Broadhead in his years at the helm of the family circuit.39

Across the road from the Comedy stood the Theatre Royal, which opened in 1845. This was an expensive venture, costing £23,000, exactly the same amount as the initial development of the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool, some thirty-six years later. Home to Charles Calvert and a stock company that included Henry Irving, the aims of this theatre were much loftier than those of Broadhead. However, the policy of raising admission prices for special events may have contributed to its decline, alongside changes in management and the loss of custom to the new theatres and music halls that were opening in both the city centre and the suburbs during the late Victorian and Edwardian years.40

The new suburban halls and variety theatres clearly had an impact on the city centre heavyweights. An interesting aside is also found in Wyke and Rudyard’s précis of the Theatre Royal. The 1882 programme that they provide as illustration includes an advertisement for Broadhead’s sign and glass writing firm, the “cheapest and best house in the trade.”41 As noted above, Broadhead valued advertising, particularly the pictorial kind, but this instance indicates his knowledge of the theatre landscape of Manchester, and the potential audience. The programme would pass through many hands, in all likelihood fellow tradesmen or businessmen.

“Further down Peter Street on the same side as the Royal, but on the far side of the Free Trade Hall, was a small intimate music hall.”42 This was the Folly Theatre of Varieties. The building, originally a Methodist chapel, had been converted to the Alexandra Music Hall in 1865, and according to Wyke was “one of the city’s most popular music halls during the 1870’s.”43 By 1879 the hall had passed into the hands of Edward Garcia, and became known as the Folly. Although the variety on offer, including dancers, acrobats and comedians appears similar to Broadhead’s bill of fare, Garcia saw fit to spend on more high profile acts including Vesta Tilley and Little Tich, a policy that was also adopted by the next manager, A.B. Wilkes. The theatre was much smaller than the Broadhead houses, seating just eight hundred. Along with the multiple changes in management (the theatre passed to Wilkes in 1897 and was renamed the Tivoli) the prices were more expensive than Broadhead’s, with seats from 6d in the gallery, and a shilling in the pit. Despite the

41 Ibid.
43 All information in this paragraph is from Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.25-26.
vast difference in size of the buildings, the elements of rowdiness displayed at the People’s Music Hall were also present here, possibly due to the fact that the Folly held a drinks licence. With a bottle of beer at 3d and a glass of port wine at 4d a trip to this particular hall would not have been a cheap night out for a working man, especially if transport to and from the venue was used.

Opposite the Folly, from his vehicle, William Birch would have seen the Grand Pavilion and Theatre of Varieties. This had been opened in 1883 by the seemingly ubiquitous Edward Garcia, and had initially been tenanted by a circus. From a financial standpoint, Garcia was a speculator, ploughing money into new ventures but without the same spatial empathy as Broadhead and William Birch, something essential to the survival of the venue. The London Standard reveals that in 1875, he had been declared bankrupt as manager of the Knightsbridge Music Hall, in the capital.44 Fifteen years later history repeated itself, although Garcia managed to retain the Mosley Hotel, Manchester, of which he was now proprietor.45

The circus entertainments of the Grand Pavilion echoed those of the Prince of Wales Baths, with water spectacles, which Knowlson feels pre-empted Stoll’s 1904 Manchester Hippodrome.46 Like the Folly, the People’s Music Hall and Broadhead’s houses, its frontage was largely unadorned, a possible indicator of the audiences that the houses hoped to attract. The acts were also similar to those on the Broadhead circuit. Complementing the Bioscope were:

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45 Anon. “Failure of Mr Edward Garcia”. The Manchester Evening News, Tuesday 17 June 1890.
Percy Walsh, Champion Circle Walker; John Lloyd, “the original Singing Collier”; Mechanical Mannikins, “The Living Pygmies”; Lensorama Dramatic Recitals; Serpentello, “Marvellous Contortionist” and Professor Alberto, “Premier Wizard.”

Seats were still more expensive at 3-4d for the pit, however, this may have been due to the city centre location. All the venues mentioned so far were constructed in an area designed for such a purpose – Manchester’s theatre district. However, the practice of clustering in this setting did not generate money as it did for Broadhead in Miles Platting or Hulme. The amount of different consortiums and managers meant that even the most established sites suffered from the building of new halls.

The final city centre theatre open at the time William Birch would have been scouting for sites, was the Queen’s Theatre. The Queen’s was slightly further afield than the other theatres already viewed, and would have involved a right turn onto Deansgate, then a left onto Bridge Street, close to the River Irwell that bisected Manchester and Salford. Like the Comedy Theatre, entertainment had long been performed on the site of the Queen’s. It had been a hotel (in the public house sense of the word) that had a back room music hall. This was subsequently transformed into the London Music Hall, and ended its days in the hands of Edward Garcia. After demolition, a new structure arose in 1870 and was destroyed by fire twenty years later. Thus, the building recognisable to the Broadheads would have been in its fourth incarnation, opening in 1891, under Pitt Hardacre, whose reputation was still, at this time, un tarnished. However, soon after the reopening, Richard Flanagan became lessee. Flanagan was also someone “who spent money faster than he made

it” – comparable to Blackpool’s William Holland.\textsuperscript{48} According to Knowlson, some productions at the Queen’s cost in the vicinity of £30,000,\textsuperscript{49} which was more than the original cost of the Theatre Royal. Consequently, it is clear that Flanagan was working in a far more extravagant league than Broadhead. Influenced by Charles Calvert, he produced Shakespearean dramas which proved popular, and founded a successful repertory company. However, his reading of location was not as adept as that of Broadhead. Shakespeare was his preferred mode of entertainment at the Lyceum Theatre in Eccles, which was taken over by Broadhead in 1907, and managed successfully as a variety theatre by the latter, until his death in 1931. The failure of the Lyceum, coupled with Flanagan’s extravagance, doubtlessly influenced his decision not to renew the lease on the Queen’s, and it closed in 1911, by which time Broadhead and Percy operated fourteen venues, including the entire Morecambe Winter Gardens. Flanagan, however, like the other Manchester “big men” before him, was by this time preoccupied with another venture. Wyke tells of plans for a new Queen’s Theatre on Great Bridgewater Street, just off Oxford Street. Unfortunately, the costs exceeded even Flanagan’s expectations, and lacking the resourcefulness and contacts of the Blackpool “big men”, the project never came to fruition.\textsuperscript{50}

The final theatre open in 1894 and recorded by both Knowlson and Wyke was not in the city centre, but on its outskirts. The Alkazar, Higher Cambridge Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock was to the rear of Owens College, now the University of Manchester. As this was one of the main routes to Hulme, William Birch would

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p.50.
\textsuperscript{49} Knowlson, Joyce. Op cit. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{50} Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.50.
have viewed it on trips to and from home. The theatre had opened in 1880 as the Bridgewater Music Hall, changing its name (presumably with its management) to the Alhambra in 1887, the Alkazar in 1894 and the Empire in 1895. The theatre was much smaller than those discussed previously, including those of the Broadhead circuit, and is described by Wyke as a “penny gaff,”\textsuperscript{51} an unlicensed venue known for “physically broad and improvised” performances due to the fact that gaffs were not eligible to present full plays.\textsuperscript{52} Despite its size, the Alkazar would have presented similar acts to the Broadhead circuit and to similar audiences. However, changes in management meant that no continuity was achieved with the venue, and it was later transformed into a boxing hall (by way of being both a chapel and a mission) and it ultimately ended its days, as did many similar houses, as a cinema.

Apart from Harte’s Theatre, Grey Mare Lane, Bradford (a Manchester district that adjoined Openshaw) the Alkazar appears to have been the only provincial hall worthy of commentary by Knowlson. Harte’s, or the Grand Theatre and Fairyland mentioned only by Wyke,\textsuperscript{53} would have warranted a separate journey, most likely through the London Road area if travelling from Hulme. Grey Mare Lane branched off Ashton Old Road, which meant that during 1898-1899 Harte’s would have been around the corner from and competing with the Metropole, the second Broadhead house. The former circus showed entertainment that could have been taken from a Broadhead bill; acts such as “the Musical Palmers, Silveno, “The Man with the Mysterious Finger” and the comedian Will

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.27.
\textsuperscript{53} Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.36.
Atkins”, and charged comparable prices of 2d, 4d and 6d. On the other hand, the wooden structure of Harte’s did not measure up to Broadhead’s buildings of Accrington brick, or his attention to fire regulations, which were foremost on all his theatre plans. (Fire safety will be discussed further in the following chapter.) The theatre burned down in 1899. However, the fact that both the Alkazar and Harte’s were situated in built-up, poverty-stricken areas and enjoyed a degree of success show that there was a definite market for out-of-town sites. Both venues – the Alkazar through mismanagement, Harte’s through insubstantial building – echo the story of many of the larger city centre theatres. With the hard-learned lessons of Broadhead senior’s business dealings, the influence of the “Big Men” of Blackpool and the youthful drive and ambition of William Birch, Broadhead would have had a clear idea what was needed to survive in the Manchester entertainment industry.

**Broadhead’s Manchester Locations: Miles Platting**

In the opening paragraphs of his writing on the Osborne Theatre, Burt-Briggs tells how his grandfather chose for his first location, “a thickly populated area far removed from the normal theatre area in Manchester. Whenever William Henry built in the future it would be to the same pattern.” Whilst this is not strictly correct– the venues in Bury, Preston, Ashton and Morecambe are all in town centre or seafront locations – it does apply to those in Manchester and Salford. The following pages expand on the brief description given in the introduction to this

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54 Ibid.
thesis of the places where the Broadheads situated their halls. This is done on an area by area basis, although for the most part it will follow the building timeline to explain any links between sites. Similarly, although William Birch Broadhead drove between the Manchester houses on a nightly basis, the route here will not be as direct as the one taken by him.

With the exception of Ancoats, there is little more than a cursory sentence on Broadhead's locations in academic writing on the city, whilst texts such as The Gangs of Manchester mention them solely in a specific context. They represent the holes and chasms described by Lefebvre “that contain the floating and dispersed elements of the possible, but not the power which could assemble them.” The following pages will illustrate how Broadhead’s work began to create spaces within working class areas that gave his audiences a voice, and a place for self-recognition. The only mentions of theatre in these areas are in local history books, such as Glynis Cooper’s The Illustrated History of Manchester’s Suburbs. Although such texts are not written from an academic standpoint, they are useful in providing insight into the communal life of each district, and as such they are included here.

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57 Much is made of Ancoats, as the location of Mrs Gaskell’s Mary Barton and as home to the University Settlement. (I shall return to this in later chapters). Although Alan Kidd does mention each district used by Broadhead, it is very much in isolated sentences rather than a detailed description. Kidd, Alan. Manchester: A History. (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006)
58 Davies, Andrew. Op cit.
59 Lefebvre, Henri. Op cit., p. 156.
60 Cooper, Glynis. The Illustrated History of Manchester’s Suburbs. (Derby: Breedon Books, 2002)
The Osborne Theatre, Oldham Road, Miles Platting opened on 13 April 1896.

In November of the preceding year, the family placed an advertisement in the theatre and music hall paper, the *Era*, the first part of which reads;

**MANCHESTER.- OSBORNE THEATRE, OLDHAM-ROAD. —Proprietor. Mr W. H. BROADHEAD.—Now in course of erection, to open early in 1896. Holding Capacity, 2,700. Splendid Frontage to Main Road, centre of Densely populated District, 1½ Miles from any other Theatre. Trams pass Doors every Three Minutes.**

Using the advertisement as Ann Featherstone advocates, as not only a statement of “hard facts” but “a more subtle indication of the cultural resonances, the ideological shifts at work in the lower strata of popular entertainment,”

62 gives some clues as to why Oldham Road was chosen for the location of Broadhead’s first theatre. To begin, it was the “centre of a Densely populated District.” Whilst individual population statistics for Miles Platting are not known, it was “a child of the Industrial Revolution” with plentiful industry including a chemical works, timber yard and forge, tannery and gasworks, which suggests a large workforce with disposable income.

63 The Osborne was bordered on the Manchester side by New Cross, (Burt-Briggs occasionally refers to both the Osborne and the Empress as being situated here), 64 the area that William Birch represented as Conservative councillor from 1903-1905. Both New Cross and Miles Platting were part of Ancoats, “about the same size as Oldham... a place of work and residence, a socially unmixed barracks of industry,” an area that epitomised Lefebvre’s dual process of

industrialisation and urbanisation with its multitude of mills, factories and row upon row of back to back housing. The Ancoats tenement block, Victoria Square (1894) was a five minute walk from the Osborne. Built as part of early slum clearance, Victoria Square together with its neighbour, Granville Place (1897) provided 418 dwellings. These, however, were both inadequate in number and “beyond he means of the displaced residents.” Although the tenements improved the outward appearance of Oldham Road (with which the “Splendid Frontage” of the Osborne fitted) the mass of “back to backs, one up one downs, and cellared three storey houses with attic workshops” remained behind them.

Returning to the advertisement, also significant is the fact that the Osborne was “1 ½ Miles from any other Theatre.” This meant that Broadhead had a captive audience. The Star music hall of Pollard Street, Ancoats, had ceased to exist some eight years earlier, and although there were pubs and beershops in the vicinity which may have offered entertainment, there was nothing so well organized or on the same scale. At 323 -327 Oldham Road, the Osborne was surrounded by a combination of shops such as a pork butcher, tobacconist and confectioner at 215, 259 and 315 respectively, catering for a working class with disposable income. These businesses were interspersed with residential dwellings of tradesmen and women in a multitude of fields indicating, as Davis and Emeljanow found in the areas surrounding the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, “pockets of more affluent or

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68 ibid.,p. 16.
69 Op Cit., The Era.
70 Slater’s Manchester and Salford Directory 1897. All subsequent statistics are from this source.
more educated inhabitants in close proximity to the theatre, who might well have visited it and contributed to a wider social range among the audience...”71 In Miles Platting, these included Graham Charles Nicol who is listed as a surgeon. On the other side of the road, where the “highly mobile and at times turbulent population”72 of Ancoats of the newspaper accounts and public anxiety was perceived to start, there was a similar range of trade and commerce including a post office, tea merchants and a fent dealer - a person who traded remnants or bolt-ends of cloth. The lack of a liquor license would not, as may be imagined, have posed a threat to the success of the Osborne. Within two blocks of the theatre were two beerhouses (often ordinary houses where alcohol was sold in the front room) with a further three immediately across the road. The walk from Oldham Street, Manchester to the Osborne, which would take in the region of fifteen minutes meant that a pedestrian would pass an approximate total of twenty public houses and beerhouses.

The blend of the residential and mercantile would also have proved attractive to theatre professionals. There were places to buy food, drink and tobacco. There would also be less jostling for room in lodging houses out of the city’s theatre district. In addition, the lack of competition in the area meant that their acts were more likely to stay in the audiences’ memories. For entertainers travelling around the country, the railway ran parallel to Oldham Road at the back of the theatre, and there was a stop at Miles Platting which meant that props etc

would not have to be carried over huge distances.  

The Osborne was well situated for public transport. As the advertisement tells, trams passed by every three minutes, indicating that although it was the only theatre for 1½ miles it was by no means isolated. As this was one of the main roads to and from the city, it was also served by omnibuses. Its location also meant that the theatre was visible to a large number of people who did not live in the immediate vicinity. For the majority of patrons though, there would be no transport costs to reach the venue, and with seats starting at 2d, the evening’s entertainment could cost less than a pint of beer. That the family expected large audiences is evident from the seating allowance of 2,700, with the Blackpool Times reporting that the building process was “eagerly watched by the people in the locality and they rejoiced greatly that they were to have a theatre of their own,” an early indication that Broadhead’s work gave the population of Miles Platting legitimate and respectable spaces of entertainment, an extension of their right to the city.

The success of Oldham Road as a location was evident, when, sixteen years later in 1912, the Osborne still in full swing, Broadhead placed the Empress Electric Cinema, which seated 1,120, at numbers 363-371, the end of the next block. According to Burt-Briggs, the land had been owned by Broadhead for “some time,” a practice that was repeated throughout his theatrical career. Although it is not clear if the land was purchased before 1900 along with other sites in Salford and Longsight, it was still a shrewd move – it precluded the threat of competition

73 Wyke, Terry & Rudyard, Nigel. Op cit., p.91
74 Ibid.
76 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Empress Theatre: Oldham Road, Manchester. No pagination.
and simultaneously allowed the family to capitalise on the cinema boom when it arose.

Contemporary maps show that little had changed along the road since 1896; (see Fig. 5) the earliest part of Oldham Road at New Cross was still dominated by the potato market, the city cleansing department still resided in the block immediately before the Osborne, and multiple mid-scale factories and works nestled in the back streets of Miles Platting, against the background of the Ancoats millscape. As the Osborne and Empress offered different styles of entertainment, they complemented each other and appealed to separate markets. The only other

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cinema nearby was nine blocks away, on Enoch Street, which was a back street location, thus missing the audience opportunities of the Empress.\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Slater’s Directory} for 1916 also shows little in the way of structural change in the area.\textsuperscript{79} The block between Broadhead’s venues still held the same mix of householders, a dining room and a beerhouse. However, the block after the Empress housed John Clough, “picture hall attendant,” a sign of shifts in employment to keep up with new trends.

\section*{Openshaw}

Whilst the remainder of this chapter will illustrate the similarities between the Manchester sub-districts (notably the amount of working class housing) it will also emphasise that each had its own idiosyncrasies which often were the reasons for its selection by Broadhead. On the other side of Ancoats stands Openshaw, site of the Metropole Theatre, which opened on Ashton Old Road on 11 April 1898.\textsuperscript{80} Like the Osborne, this was an Easter opening, a time that marked the end of winter and when people would have a holiday from work that would not interfere with saving for organised summer trips. In a practice that commenced with the Osborne and continued throughout his career, Broadhead purchased surrounding properties for staff use.\textsuperscript{81} In an interesting note (harking back to the early investment in the site of the Empress) Burt-Briggs tells how Broadhead also bought 2,000 square

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{The Metropole Theatre: Ashton Old Road, Manchester.} Private Collection. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{81} I shall refer to this habit in more detail in the following chapter.
yards of land adjacent to the Metropole, which he used for storage, as well as the land where Harte’s Theatre had stood. There are conflicting accounts whether the latter plot was ever redeveloped; Burt-Briggs argues that it would have been competition for the Metropole which held around 3,200 people – 500 more than the Osborne. Cooper however says it was eventually home to a cinema. The site of the Metropole was also much larger than that of the Osborne, at 2,291 square yards against 1048 square yards. Broadhead also included five shops within the building project, although it is not clear if these formed the base of the theatre structure, as at Morecambe Winter Gardens, or if they adjoined the building. He now owned large and visible amounts of land on two of Manchester’s arterial roads, thus contributing to the business life of the area as well as the social. Whilst the mercantile element in these purchases is undeniable, it is still possible to depict Broadhead’s work in such areas as Openshaw and Miles Platting as oeuvre, Lefebvre’s description of “a feature which contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and products [sic].” The concept of social entrepreneurship that Broadhead espoused gave his venues use value rather than product value, and embodied the idea of “the city and urban space as a creative product of and context for the everyday life of its inhabitants...”

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82 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.136.
83 Ibid., pp.1-2.
84 Lefebvre, Henri. Op cit., p.66.
Openshaw too was a busy district. It was accessible from Gorton Station, and trams passed the Metropole every minute,\textsuperscript{86} indicating that this thoroughfare was more heavily used than Oldham Road, perhaps due to the route passing London Road Station. It is described by Alan Kidd as a “manufacturing district”,\textsuperscript{87} whilst Glynis Cooper tells how “engineering works and ordnance (gun) manufacture replaced the cottage bleaching industry.”\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{openshaw_map}
\caption{Map of Openshaw c.1908, showing the Metropole Theatre.}
\end{figure}

A contemporary map of the area shows a timber yard to the rear of the Metropole, (see Fig. 6) and a small engraving works almost eclipsed by the gigantic Ashbury

\textsuperscript{86} The Era. 26 March 1898. Issue 3105.
\textsuperscript{87} Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.120.
\textsuperscript{88} Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.135.
Railway, Carriage and Wagon site directly opposite the theatre.\(^{89}\) Whilst this was much heavier industry than Miles Platting and Ancoats, all of these businesses also lay amidst rows and rows of terraced housing. Again, Broadhead would have a residential audience and one of workers. Importantly, Openshaw was not home to cyclical employment (building projects or dock work); industry here promised a regular wage.

Narrowing the focus on the area even further, *Slater’s Directory* for 1899 shows Ashton Old Road as very much a high street environment.\(^{90}\) The blocks were longer than those of Oldham Road, and thus contained more properties. In the block that preceded the Metropole, the businesses included a tobacconist, grocer, draper and three butchers’ shops. The theatre itself was flanked by the Board School and Recreation Ground, with a bank, chemist, confectioner and fried fish dealer amongst the shops on its other side. Three beer retailers were spread through the two blocks, all of which would have gained trade from the Metropole, which, in common with its predecessors did not have a liquor license. Placing the Metropole in this location and building in a style less elegant and intimidating than the city centre venues allowed Broadhead to make theatre accessible to a far wider audience, by rendering a familiar setting new and consequently making the surrounding space more visible, thus enhancing local businesses.


\(^{90}\) *Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford*. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1899) p.21.
Openshaw was a working class stronghold, home to the first independent Labour Councillor,\textsuperscript{91} which points towards market confidence on the part of Broadhead and William Birch - they established their venue in an area removed from their own political sensibilities. However, there were elements of the self-improvement of the working class visible on Ashton Old Road with which the Metropole fitted. Within walking distance of the theatre stood the Openshaw Lads Club, Library and School of Technology.\textsuperscript{92}

The Metropole stood unopposed from any permanent form of entertainment until 1910, when the Alhambra theatre was built.\textsuperscript{93} From the illustration given by Terry Wyke, the building resembled those of the Broadhead circuit, constructed in red brick, with shops on either side of the entrance. However, presumably to help illustrate its exotic name, the Alhambra was crowned with a glass dome. According to Wyke, the site had a “chequered career as a music hall,” and was turned into a cinema before the First World War, inviting speculation that its larger and longer established neighbour had a firmer grasp on the market. Longevity, however, did not come without trial and error. Within a couple of years, Broadhead’s initial goal “to provide dramatic productions of an uplifting and moral character at a reasonable price for this poor district” had to be revised.\textsuperscript{94} In its new incarnation, the theatre showed variety interspersed with an occasional performance of melodrama, a formula that continued to work for over thirty years.

\textsuperscript{91} Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.176. 
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford}. 1899. Op cit. 
\textsuperscript{93} Wyke, Terry & Nigel Rudyard. Op cit., p.26. All quotations in this paragraph are from this source. 
\textsuperscript{94} Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p. 135.
Hulme

The third location chosen by the Broadheads was Hulme, where both the Grand Junction and accompanying Floral Hall, and the Hulme Hippodrome were built. The two theatres together occupied the largest site yet at 4,056 yards, demonstrating that Broadhead and his sons had not yet reached their limit in size and scale, and felt there was a target audience to fill some 4,300 seats. Like Hoxton, London, Hulme was “largely an industrious, hard-working community, very much in need of entertainment and recreation to fill the leisure hours of its inhabitants.”

The Grand Junction and Floral Hall opened on 7 October 1901, bordered by Preston Street, Derby Street and Warwick Street. Almost a year to the day (6 October 1902), the Hulme Hippodrome opened on the remaining 992 square yards. This was by far the smallest Broadhead house, only seating 1,000. The Hulme theatres were distinctive on several fronts. Nowhere else did Broadhead place adjoining theatres, nor did he ever repeat a structure such as the Floral Hall, influenced by its namesake at Blackpool and Southport Winter Gardens, a large glass-roofed conservatory filled with “choice palms and foliage and flowering plants,” where patrons could wait for the performance to start. The Floral Hall was eventually converted to offices which linked the two theatres, indicating that although Broadhead was aware of current trends in the entertainment industry, some features lent themselves to areas whilst others did not. Hulme required

functionality, and nowhere was this better reflected than in the unique exchange of names and styles of entertainment. The Grand Junction had shown melodrama and light opera, the Hippodrome, variety. In 1905, the two venues switched over. The Hippodrome, already the much larger theatre, showing variety and bioscope presentations, whilst the Junction closed for modifications and opened later that year showing plays. As with the Metropole, audience figures and reception had been analysed, and acted upon.

Hulme itself had distinctions recognisable in Broadhead’s previous locations. It too was an area of the “highest housing density and overcrowding.”

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A map from the early 1900s illustrates an astonishing number of residential dwellings,\(^{100}\) (see Fig.7) which had sprung up in response to the rapid increase in population through the latter half of the nineteenth century. This had led to a building design known as ‘courts’, where “houses were built around a small square which had washing and sanitation facilities in the centre.”\(^ {101}\) To cater for the increase in population, churches and affiliated schools had been built, along with the elements of reform found in Ancoats and Openshaw. The township had a public library from 1866 and a Lads’ Club preceded the Grand Junction by three years.\(^ {102}\) However, it was not one of the worst districts of Manchester. The main difference from its predecessors, as Jacqueline Roberts reveals (and the map verifies) was that industry in Hulme was not intermingled with the housing. Roberts notes that it was only a short walk for the worker to the mills of Oxford Road, or the large Iron works at Knott Mill.\(^ {103}\) However, in this assumption she omits the proximity of Hulme to Trafford Park (“the world’s first industrial estate”)\(^ {104}\) and the Manchester Ship Canal, as well as the neighbouring township of Moss Side. Burt-Briggs writes that Broadhead expected patrons from these areas.\(^ {105}\) The family had a native perspective, with William Birch and his wife Edith living in the district. Embden Street was in the middle of Hulme, and stood only five blocks from the theatres.

Unlike the Osborne and the Metropole, the Grand Junction and Hippodrome were not placed on the main street that bisected Hulme, Stretford Road. Instead

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101 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.91.
102 Ibid.
they were set some three or four blocks back. In spite of this, the distance from
Stretford Road to the theatres was but a few minutes’ walk, whilst the site was still
accessible by public transport – trams ran down Upper Moss Lane, Moss Side, onto
Preston Street, or from Upper Jackson Street down Soston Street, forming a box
shape around the theatres. This would mean easy access to a number of places: the
cavalry barracks off Stretford Road, Knott Mill Iron Works which was close to the
enormous gas works at Gaythorn, a rubber works at Cambridge Street and a
scattering of breweries.106 This made the theatres a focal point for several areas of
the working population – the Grand Junction and Hippodrome occupied the space
of a full block of terraces or a court – and were also a magnet for both the pay
packets of steady employment (the ironworks or the barracks) or short but well
paid bursts of work, (the docks at Trafford Park).

Narrowing the focus on the location even further, the Broadhead theatres
were surrounded by houses which were laid out in a grid fashion. The courts
described by Roberts are visible on the map, but the majority of properties are back
to back.107 The area was in the heart of the Medlock Street Ward (stretching from
Knott Mill to the boundary with Moss Side)108 which William Birch hoped to
represent as a Conservative Councillor in 1902.109 Slater’s Directory for 1907 lists a
similar range of shops on Preston Street (the front of the Hippodrome) to those
described for previous theatres; a newsagent, confectioner, grocer etc. The street
had a conspicuous lack of public houses and beershops - nothing within six blocks of

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106 “Old Map of Hulme.” Op cit., All information in this paragraph is taken from this source.
107 Ibid.
108 “Voting Registers and Eligibility in Manchester,” Manchester Family History Research
109 “The Late W.B. Broadhead,” The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure. 18
March 1907 pp.8-9.
the site. 110 Warwick Street (to the side) remedied this by having four before the theatre and one after. The remainder of this street is taken up mainly by “householders,” 111 illustrating how deeply Broadhead’s premises were embedded in everyday life rather than in the city space designated for theatre.

**Salford**

In between the opening of the Hulme Hippodrome and its change of identity with its sister site, the Broadhead family had a boom year for theatre building. This was 1904, when four theatres were opened, two of which were some distance from Manchester, the Hippodrome at Bury and the Empire Hippodrome at Ashton-Under-Lyne. (These venues will be discussed in the following chapter, the focus here remaining on Manchester and sub-districts.) The next area chosen by Broadhead and Sons was Salford, where the Royal Hippodrome opened on 7 March 1904. 112 Salford embodies the liminal aspect of the locations of the Broadhead circuit, in the sense that there is a disparity that stands to this day as to whether or not it is actually separate from Manchester. 113 At the time of the Norman Conquest, Manchester was secondary to Salford as part of the Salford Hundred. However, shortly afterwards the two territories were separated “and their paths were hitherto divided.” 114 This evidence notwithstanding, accounts of Broadhead

111 *Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford*. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1907) p. 599.
113 For the purpose of this thesis, the meaning of the term is taken to be a place on the margin, where boundaries of class and propriety are blurred.
114 Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.3.
theatres that opened in Salford and Eccles were reported in the *Manchester Evening News*, indicating that Salford was regarded as another part of Manchester.

The Salford Royal Hippodrome was at the Pendleton end of Cross Lane, and was bordered by Peel Street and Broad Street. This was not a location just across the Irwell, but into Salford proper. The site was purchased at the same time as those in Miles Platting and Openshaw, and had the advantage of being visible “a long way down the Crescent,” even though the area was, again, heavily populated. The Hippodrome was another large building; although press reports differ over its seating capacity it is likely that it held between 3-4,000 patrons. What makes the site stand out from previous Broadhead locations though is the revelation by Burt-Briggs that “it was the fifth theatre to be built in Salford in twenty years.” Making allowances for travelling performers and circuses, previous sites had no permanent competition, inviting speculation that with six theatres already under their belt, Broadhead and Sons were confident in the success of their style of entertainments. True to form, however, the Hippodrome had the best location in the town.

In 1904, only three of the houses noted by Burt-Briggs were still trading. The Canterbury Music Hall on Chapel Street had closed in 1893. Had it remained open, it would have still been some distance away from Cross Lane, near to Salford

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116 Salford Crescent was stretch of land from Windsor Bridge situated at the front of the Hippodrome to the hospitals – a rough distance of a mile or so.
117 Burt-Briggs quotes an uncited article which mentions “seats for 3,000, not to mention excellent standing room for a thousand more.” Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Ibid. The *Manchester Evening News* however, tells that the theatre “will accommodate some 3,000 people.” Anon. “The Salford Hippodrome.” *Manchester Evening News*. Saturday 5 March 1904, p.2.
Central Station, whereas the Hippodrome was near to Salford Crescent Station, illustrating that the family recognised the advantage of building close to public transport networks. Two more of the remaining theatres were also out of the Hippodrome’s catchment area. The Prince of Wales Theatre (1882) was on Liverpool Street, and was near to Ordsall Lane Station, south-east of the city.

Tenanted by the actor/manager Brinsley Sheridan, the building was the same size as the original Hulme Hippodrome, seating only 1,000. Whilst the size of the venue may have ensured full houses, the entertainment failed, and a year after the opening of the Hippodrome, it became a cinema. The Victoria Theatre was also far flung, at Great Clowes Street, east of Cross Lane at Lower Broughton. It too was a small site, with an auditorium described as “intimate.” Designed by Bertie Crewe, the Victoria opened in 1900 running a variety programme, but had even more of a chequered career than the Prince of Wales, changing to a cinema in 1913, reverting back to live theatre in 1917, and back again in 1919, and though responding to current trends, not showing the consistency of the Broadhead houses.

The main competitor to the Hippodrome was the Regent Theatre and Opera House (1895). Designed by Frank Matcham, the 3,000 seat structure was also on Cross Lane, albeit at the bottom end, near to the Salford Corporation gas works. In 1903 the style of entertainment changed to variety, indicating Broadhead’s accurate reading of the area in placing a similar house close by. The concentration of industry around the district, and as the Era notes “the rapid increase of the

120 Ibid.
population of Salford caused by the completion of the ship canal”, ensured that the
two venues could co-exist,\textsuperscript{123} both remaining in business for almost thirty years.

The placing of the Hippodrome at the Pendleton end of Cross Lane, however, had specific benefits alongside visibility. Cross Lane was a major thoroughfare, with its own station and the requisite tram lines for a Broadhead house.

\textbf{Fig. 8. Map of Salford c.1908, showing the Salford Hippodrome.}

A map from 1908 shows that a block away from the Hippodrome was the huge Cattle Market (see Fig. 8), itself covering the length of a block and the width of

\textsuperscript{123} Quoted in “Theatres and Halls in Salford, Greater Manchester.”
\url{http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/SalfordTheatres.htm} Accessed 17 July 2013 op cit.
several. At the rear of this building were iron and engineering works, which were flanked by Hayfield and Pendleton Mills. On the other side of Windsor Road stood the Crescent Iron Works and a Glass Works. As with Ancoats and Openshaw, these were surrounded by blocks of terraced houses suggesting both a residential and workforce audience. The theatre was also within walking distance of the Peel Park which opened in 1846, “to provide recreational and instructional facilities for the working class,” meaning that it may also be considered part of an area given to leisure and self-improvement. At street level, occupations specific to the locale were found, with Joseph Silvester and his son described as “Cart Owners” and “Carriers” and Fras. Ward. McCormack a “Cattle Foreman.” Two surgeons were also listed - the theatre was in close proximity to the hospital. That Cross Lane was a place for trading was reinforced by the inclusion of banks and the Central Loan Company. Pubs and beershops proliferated in Salford. According to the Arthur Lloyd website, this was the reason for the closure of the Canterbury Music Hall; local magistrates were concerned about the number of drinking places in the town, “about one for every 106 people.” As Broadhead was himself a magistrate by this time, and with William Birch on the Manchester Watch Committee, both would have realised the advantages of not serving alcohol on their premises in circumventing delays in planning and building approval.

126 Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1905) p.162. All further information in this paragraph is from this source.
Returning to the map that opens this chapter, it is now possible to see that the four locations around Manchester and Salford where Broadhead and his sons had venues form (roughly) the corners of a rectangle. From here, a pattern of area, whether or not by design, becomes less obvious. Their next theatre was the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, which opened on 16 April 1904, fewer than six weeks after the opening of Salford Hippodrome. The closeness of these dates make clear that Broadhead’s trade business in Manchester was of sufficient size and reputation to cope with several large projects simultaneously, although on out of town sites, he may have used local labourers to supplement his own. Renowned for swift construction, with most theatres taking less than a year from the submission of plans to being open to audiences, 1904 saw opening performances in March, April, October and November, adhering to Broadhead’s preference for spring or autumn beginnings.

Harpurhey

The Queen’s Park Hippodrome fits the characteristics of location already established with previous Broadhead houses. The theatre was built on the site of an old tram shed on Turkey Lane, Harpurhey, just off Rochdale Road, another arterial road into the city. Whilst the new Hippodrome did not have the prime spot of The Osborne, Metropole, Salford Hippodrome or Empress, it was significantly more visible from a major road than the Hulme theatres. The building itself was small by

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129 Ibid.
Broadhead standards, seating 2,000, which meant that some of the original 1,186 square yards on which it was built were remaindered. Broadhead, however, saw that they were put to good use, offering them to Manchester City Council. This philanthropy is also a supreme example of the thinking of the social entrepreneur inasmuch that the donation provided a return. In a gesture of quid pro quo, the council allowed Broadhead to construct a veranda for the Hippodrome, cementing an already successful reciprocal relationship.  

Like the Hulme and Salford Hippodromes, the new theatre took its name from the surrounding area. Queen’s Park was on the other side of Rochdale Road. As with Salford’s Peel Park, it had opened in 1846 during the heyday of rational recreation, and was home to an art gallery, a museum and a statue of Ben Brierley, a local dialect author. Thus the theatre can be reasonably situated within an area for leisure – the early evening performance a suitable end to a day out.

130 Ibid.
131 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.89.
However, in spite of a contemporary map showing Harpurhey as a much more open and undeveloped space than previous locations (see Fig. 9) it also had its fair share of industry. Turkey Lane (like the neighbouring districts of Crumpsall, Blackley and Moston) was an area renowned for dyeing and bleaching, with its own dyeworks at the end of the road. Here, John Andrews had developed a new colourfast red dye, “Turkey Red.” Although it is unclear whether the dye or the street was the namesake, the relationship between place and local industry is important. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, heavy industry had moved into the area deemed too distant and dry for cotton mills. Cooper refers to

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“engineering works, rope works, tarpaulin works, wire works, two mills and a brewery.” The map of Harpurhey from 1908 shows in addition, iron, print and brickworks and accompanying clay pit within the distance of a mile, some on the border with Collyhurst. The housing that made up both districts is a combination of back to back and courts, and like Ancoats, Openshaw and Salford, it surrounds the businesses, albeit at a much lesser volume.

Turkey Lane itself was not a tram route, yet the terminus to the rear of the street bore its name. This did not cause difficulty; Rochdale Road, as a main thoroughfare would have been well served by trams, and Burt-Briggs tells how Broadhead capitalised on this by arranging special services to coincide with the end of Hippodrome performances. There were also frequent omnibuses to Harpurhey and Queen’s Park. The area is also interesting at street level, as it is the first to illustrate a move away from traditional trades. Surprisingly, there was only one dyer, but two electricians and two mechanics. Improvements in transport were reflected by John Wilcockson, Commercial Traveller. Whilst there were residential addresses on Turkey Lane, it also housed a diverse range of factories, two on either side; an embroiderers, a calenderers, a tape company and Thomas Chew and Sons, Hair and Fibre Manufacturers. Like the majority of Broadhead’s other districts (with the exception of Hulme) the street reflects the area as a whole, a blend of industry and homeowners.

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133 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.86.
135 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.86.
138 *Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford*. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1905) p.568. All further street references are from this source.
Longsight

Whereas the Queen’s Park Hippodrome was the most northerly point on the map of Broadhead’s Manchester houses, the King’s Theatre at Stockport Road, Longsight, filled a gap in between Openshaw and Hulme. This was another venue where the land was purchased in advance, between 1900 - 1902. However, it was March 1905 before the plans for the theatre were submitted. This delay is not surprising; from the evidence provided by Burt-Briggs it is now clear that virtually all the land for the Manchester sites was selected and paid for beforehand. The King’s opened to the public on 30 October 1905, the third Broadhead hall that year. As with the other locations discussed in this chapter, the King’s stood on the main road through the district, close to the border with Gorton, on a site previously occupied by cottages. As expected, the theatre was only a short way from Longsight Station, on a tram route which was also served by omnibuses at five minute intervals until 10.30pm.
Fig. 10. Map of Longsight, c.1908, showing the site of the King’s Theatre.

Longsight too had features which made it stand out from the other Broadhead locations. It was a district that had “limited industry”, as neither canal nor river flowed through it,\(^\text{143}\) apparent in a map of the area from 1908 (see Fig. 10), although the presence of the railway may have alleviated the problem. The main business of the district was concerned with the railway, with vast engine sheds and maintenance works only a handful of blocks to the rear of the King’s.\(^\text{144}\)

Whilst these dominated the area, there were smaller businesses such as the Daisy Works Mill on Stockport Road, which made cotton undergarments, the Co-operative Printworks a couple of blocks further down than the theatre, close to the junction with Dickenson Road, and an ironworks, bleachers and brickmakers. As


\(^{144}\) “Old Map of Longsight.” Op cit. The rest of the information in this paragraph is from this source.
these were on a much smaller scale than in previous locations such as Hulme, the potential workforce audience would have been reduced. Gorton, the neighbouring district also bordered Openshaw, and at best, the patrons would have been divided. A working class audience was more likely to have favoured the Metropole.

Such a choice highlights the most crucial point about Longsight. It was unique amongst the Broadhead locations because it had boundaries on one side with industrialised Gorton, home in 1901 to 55,417 people, and on the other with a gated community of gentlemen’s residences, Victoria Park, Rusholme. The map shows that across the road from the theatre and behind a single block of housing were a variety of opportunities for outdoor leisure: a golf course, and towards Victoria Park, tennis courts, a bowling green and a cricket ground. This was also repeated south-east of the King’s at Crowcroft Park, the far edge of neighbouring Levenshulme, although this area also had industry intermingled, with a “cotton manufactory” in the park itself. (The term ‘park’ in the two Longsight cases is used in a different context to Peel Park, Salford and Queen’s Park, Harpurhey, more in a sense of land attached to a certain estate rather than an area for public recreation.)

The King’s was in the most parochial of the Broadhead locations. This was reflected in concerns that the theatre would corrupt the morals of Longsight inhabitants. Burt-Briggs reports a local newspaper’s anxieties over the building of “a

145 Cooper, Glynis. Op cit., p.83.
147 Old Map of Longsight.”. Op cit.
great variety hall in this area,"¹⁴⁹ even though the author’s fears were assuaged after watching a performance.

We were agreeably surprised to find a well filled and well dressed house from which we gathered a goodly number of the local population. We hope that Mothers’ meetings, Evening Female Temperance associations and the like will not suffer; so far as our observation goes the morals of the good folk of Longsight are not at risk.¹⁵⁰

The quotation highlights the different fears of the neighbourhood to its predecessors, corruption versus rowdyism. Physical appearance and dress were important to Longsight. The block surrounding the theatre included a dressmaker, milliner and draper,¹⁵¹ whilst the area itself was home to a “number and diversity of churches,”¹⁵² reflecting middle class concerns that in areas such as Ancoats, slum dwellers who were unclean bodily were also lacking in virtue.¹⁵³ This information also casts a revealing light on the disquiet of Mary Ann Broadhead, brought up in Longsight, over the proposed theatre business of her husband and sons.¹⁵⁴

Broadhead, however, took matters in his stride. The new venue was originally named the King’s Opera House, although this was eventually abandoned in favour of the King’s Theatre. The decision not to call the new venue a hippodrome, the name given to the previous six houses (both in and out of Manchester), shows an astute reading of the area.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, the theatre was built with shops on either side, which in this location can be viewed as an attempt to tap into the middle class, female-oriented pursuit of shopping for leisure,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.2. Uncited article
¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 1.
¹⁵⁵ There will be further discussion on the names of Broadhead’s theatres in the following chapter.
alongside Jacqueline Roberts’ theory that “commercial property brought in a far better return on a builder’s investment.” The shops of Stockport Road differed greatly from Ashton Old Road, home of the Metropole or those of the Hulme site, which was also built with shops incorporated. Whilst everyday staples such as confectionery, grocery and so on were available, on Stockport Road there was a unique occurrence of shops selling luxury goods such as stationery and china rather than tripe or fried fish, indicating a different kind of space to the previous Broadhead locations.

As a final point, the area is also noteworthy due to its closeness to “an exceptional magnet for the crowds,” Belle Vue. Opened in 1846, the site included a zoo, a Kinematograph, a lake, pleasure gardens, tearooms and a ballroom. Broadhead, however, was not without an advantage. Although the venue had a Music Hall (1856), this was literally a function room where music was played, not a variety theatre. If variety acts appeared on site, this was usually a one-off performance, with no sustained programme of theatre-style entertainments, or purpose built facilities for such at this time. In addition, Belle Vue covered a large area, and could easily occupy a day’s visit, especially for a family. If travelling home by tram, from Stockport Road, the King’s was ideally situated for an early evening performance, or a matinee.

Belle Vue was lit by electricity in 1897, which as well as providing innovation would have gone some way to addressing concerns of decency and security.

158 Nicholls, Robert. The Belle Vue Story. (Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1992) p.15. All subsequent information on Belle Vue in this paragraph is from this source.
Pleasure gardens often had an air of disrepute – John Walton tells how Raikes Hall, Blackpool, had “careered cheerily down-market,”\textsuperscript{159} with drinking and prostitution rife, incidents that the citizens of Longsight would have been keen to avoid. However, the Broadhead house, with its relative smallness in comparison to the attractions of Belle Vue proved successful amongst residents. It was in a safe and recognisable location, had no drink license and was aimed at family audiences, fitting in with the requirements of its location.

**Eccles**

The final Manchester location in the Broadhead circuit was Church Road, Eccles. This was another liminal area; even today it is not clear whether or not Eccles is part of Manchester or Salford. As Burt-Briggs observes, the neighbourhood was an early home to Broadhead following his marriage. However, his assertion that “nostalgic feelings... led him to acquire the ‘Lyceum Theatre,’” gives only a partial explanation for the first purchase in the circuit’s history.\textsuperscript{160}

Eccles had always been worthy of Broadhead’s notice. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he had invested in land for development close to his home at Patricroft.\textsuperscript{161}


\textsuperscript{161} See Chapter 1.
Fig. 11. Map of Eccles c. 1908, showing the Crown Theatre (prev. Flanagan’s Lyceum.

As with previous locations, Church Street was a main road, close to junctions with Regent Street and several other major thoroughfares, eventually turning into Liverpool Road which led to Patricroft and the docks (See Fig. 11). The theatre was in walking distance of Eccles Station, and was also served by trams. It stood a short distance from the town hall and marketplace, as well as a bowling green and club, a public hall and a smithy. Its immediate neighbour was Eccles Mill, powered by two small reservoirs at the rear. As with Broadhead’s early locations, the district’s industry was intermingled with rows of terraced housing, and a tenement block, Oxford Square, stood opposite the theatre. On the other side of the railway

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All information in this paragraph is from this source.
however, Eccles resembled Longsight with much open space, and fewer houses
built in elaborate crescents or on much larger plots of land, indicating a more
affluent part of the district.

What makes the Lyceum, which Broadhead promptly renamed the Crown,
stand out from the other Manchester or Salford venues, is that the family did not
build the theatre themselves. It was purchased at the end of September 1907 and
reopened to the public the following week, on 7 October. The theatre had belonged
to Richard Flanagan, former lessee of the St James Theatre, Oxford Street, and also
of the Queen’s theatre, which Flanagan appears to have managed simultaneously
with the Lyceum. The venue, which opened in 1899 was “the first purpose-built
theatre in Eccles” and was of a similar size to Broadhead’s houses, seating 2,500,\textsuperscript{163}
provoking speculation that Flanagan may have been aware of Broadhead’s success
placing theatres out of the city centre. However, his decision to show his lavish
Shakespearean adaptations at the Lyceum fell flat, with Tony Flynn telling how “the
Eccles public was not too enamoured with Shakespeare and culture,”\textsuperscript{164} leaving
Flanagan little alternative but to turn to melodrama and variety. The initial costs of
the Lyceum had to be met, as well as his extravagances at the Queens. As with the
latter venue, this may have forced the price of admission beyond the means of his
audiences. An advertisement for the Lyceum from 1907 shows sliding charges for
early and late houses - the earlier performances (that would catch the workforce
on their way home) were at least 2d more expensive than later ones, with prices up

to £1.1s for a private box.\footnote{165} It is likely that the theatre remained closed from 25 March, the date of this advertisement (the \textit{Manchester Evening News} reveals it was out of business “for several months”\footnote{166}) until Broadhead purchased it from a Mr Lane of Southport, to whom Flanagan owed £11,150 in mortgage arrears.\footnote{167} This was scarcely more than a third of the cost of Flanagan’s legendary productions at the Queens.

Broadhead acquired a bargain, a feat he would achieve two years later with the Morecambe Winter Gardens. (Full discussion on Morecambe will follow in the next chapter.) The newly renamed Crown fitted his requirements for location, and like the King’s, Longsight, filled a gap in the market. The structure was barely eight years old, and Flanagan’s customary wish for the best materials and designs ensured a high-quality building. The fact that the family could re-open within seven days of purchase highlights the fact that no real work needed to be done in the theatre. In addition, it is unlikely that after demolition of existing buildings in Miles Platting, Hulme, Salford, Harpurhey and Longsight (as well as out of town sites such as Bury) that Broadhead would have let an unsuitable structure remain standing; his adherence to the external pressure of safety regulations was rigorous, and shows a concern for his patrons. This was the only venue opened on the circuit during 1907, a hint that the death of William Birch Broadhead in February the same year, as well as coming as “a shock, nay, a staggerer, to thousands...”\footnote{168} may also have halted the momentum of the circuit that had steadily gathered pace since

1896. His younger brother, Percy Baynham Broadhead was left to step into the breach.

**Distinctions of Location**

The single most important point to be gained from this chapter is that the locations of the Broadhead houses ensured their success. At the time Broadhead was building there was movement away from city centre sites, illustrated in Eccles by Richard Flanagan and the Lyceum, and countrywide by circuit owners Edward Moss and Thomas Barrasford, who also built in smaller towns, such as Hanley and St Helens respectively.\(^{169}\) That theatre entrepreneurs kept an eye on the movements of their competitors (possibly through the classified advertisement pages of the *Era*) is evident from both Broadhead and Sons’ placement of town centre establishments in Bury, Ashton-under-Lyne and Preston, areas where Frank Matcham had already built theatres for other promoters, and Oswald Stoll’s move into suburban theatre, which included the Manchester working-class district of Ardwick Green.\(^{170}\) However, by the time the Ardwick Empire opened in 1903, Broadhead had already been established for seven years in the Manchester subdistricts. No further developments were made by the larger circuits in the Manchester area after Stoll’s Hippodrome, Oxford Street, which opened during the Broadhead boom year, 1904.\(^{171}\) Barrasford actually disposed of his Manchester holdings; the Grand (Garcia’s Grand Pavilion on Peter Street) and the Regent, Cross


\(^{170}\) Ibid., p.147.

\(^{171}\) Ibid.
Lane, Salford, in 1906, actions that led G.J. Mellor to describe Manchester being “at saturation point” for music hall.172

Mellor’s point was true of the city centre. The active theatres there were clustered over a relatively small area of three or four adjoining streets, and some were only a stone’s throw from their rivals, such as the St James’s Theatre and the Palace of Varieties on Oxford Street. Due to this concentration, the venues struggled to survive, often with multiple changes in ownership, management or styles of entertainment, as witnessed with both the Gaiety and Princes theatres. Continuous speculation on the part of promoters such as Edward Garcia or Richard Flanagan proved that there was room for development in Manchester’s theatre topography, but poor choices regarding location and finances led to high entrance charges, unsuitable programmes and architecture that alienated potential audiences. (I will return to the latter point in the following chapter.) Few theatres catered for a working class audience whilst those that did (the People’s Music Hall and the Folly) had a reputation for being noisy or disorderly.

Broadhead continued to build on the outskirts of the city - unhindered by large-scale rivals - until 1912.173 However, his areas cannot be described as ‘suburban’. These were not places to where middle class citizens moved as the centre of Manchester became more industrialised. Nor were they the business heart of the city, although they contained industry. Salford and Eccles have already been described as liminal. In this sense, all of Broadhead’s Manchester locations, as

172 Ibid., p.167.
173 I have not found details of any other large-scale theatre entrepreneur building in these areas other than Oswald Stoll’s Ardwick Hippodrome, which was some distance from Broadhead’s locations.
by-products of the industrial revolution and the growth of the city, are liminal,”
‘overinscribed’: everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-
contradictory,”¹⁷⁴ which gives some explanation why other circuit owners avoided
building there. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the growth
of cities had prompted areas such as Manchester’s Theatreland, and its
Metropolitan counterpart. However, Broadhead was catering for a predominantly
working class audience, and this idea was not a new one. Marvin Carlson tells how,
as far back as the Renaissance

Public theatres in England were clearly socially “marginal,” and this
marginality was expressed consistently in their physical locations. Though
widely scattered geographically, these structures were united in their
boundary locations – inescapably tied to the city, but never truly a part of
it.¹⁷⁵

The sub-districts of the city provided a home for an enormous number of people,
some of whom came and went as employment opportunities dictated. The itinerant
nature of the workforce gave cause for alarm, as Walton notes of the seaside, the
anonymity of such places and a lack of roots there allowed the individual “the scope
for shedding the constraining demands of consensual respectability.”¹⁷⁶ In addition,
the sheer amount of people clustered together caused the growth of slums, where

¹⁷⁴ Lefebvre, Henri. The Production of Space. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford: Blackwell,
¹⁷⁵ Carlson, M. Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture. (Ithaca; London: Cornell
¹⁷⁶ Walton, John K. “Respectability Takes a Holiday: Disreputable behaviour at the Victorian Seaside,”
in Unrespectable Recreations. Ed. Martin Hewitt. (Leeds: Trinity and All Saints/Leeds Centre for
Victorian Studies, 2001.) p.176
disease flourished, which in turn increased middle class anxiety over the relationship between physical and moral cleanliness.177

Whilst the areas where Broadhead’s theatres stood were not actual slums, they were cheek by jowl with them, including Miles Platting with Ancoats and Angel Meadow, Hulme with Little Ireland, and Cross Lane, Salford with Adelphi and Greengate. It was noted earlier that districts such as Hulme offered employment opportunities in both regular and casual work, but this was not the case in all Broadhead’s locations, notably Miles Platting, and even the most stable industries, such as cotton, were subject to gradations in wages depending on the role performed.178 It is not difficult to see that a lack of fixed income would lead to a lack of pride, leaving that commodity to be earned elsewhere, hence the advent of the Scuttling gangs that opened this chapter. From Davies’s map it is possible to see that each area chosen by Broadhead had been plagued by gang disruption with ten gangs active around the Osborne, Empress and Queen’s Park Hippodrome alone.179

Problems with location, however, were not the obstacles for Broadhead that they may have been for other circuit owners. He was already skilled at managing ‘in between’ spaces. His businesses in Manchester city centre did not consist of a single trade – he simultaneously managed several. This was a theme he continued with the Prince of Wales Baths, running his Aquatic Theatre as a showground, collecting aspects of performances that he had witnessed around him, such as Read’s Royal Polytechnic headline act, Sergenson’s circus entertainments and the

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179 Davies, Andrew. Op cit., map.
original swimming displays that had opened the Baths, and weaving them into a fabric that suited a variety of audiences. From his earlier time in Manchester he would have been aware of the difficulties of the “inner ring of densely populated slums,” whilst from living in Blackpool he would have seen that similar problems arose anywhere that rapid development had taken place and understood that it was a side effect of progress.

Accordingly, Blackpool was not dissimilar to Manchester. Both Walton and Darren Webb have told how the seaside has been described as liminal “to the status of cliché,” which the Baths themselves embodied. Like Broadhead’s Manchester theatres, their location was also on the border of two recognised social zones, middle class North Shore and working class Central Beach as opposed to city and suburb. It was the careful management and accurate reading of audiences that enabled Broadhead and William Birch to make a success of the venue, and they did this by embracing the fact that the Baths were an anomaly in Blackpool’s entertainment landscape. They recognised, as Victor Turner describes, that leisure itself is liminal, “a neither this nor that domain between two spells of work or between occupational, and familial, and civic activity.” Under the Broadhead’s management the Baths represented a space somewhere in between the sea and a swimming pool, a factor accentuated by the nautical theme of their

entertainments.\textsuperscript{183} They were somewhere to escape the eyes of the crowded beach, yet a place where the gaze was concentrated, and also invited, giving the proprietor ultimate control.

Blackpool too was a place fuelled by itinerant workers, with the same slum areas kept only just out of sight of the tourists. However the council learned that such problems could be managed. Both Walton and Webb reject notions of Bakhtin’s Carnivalesque, “an ephemeral regime of festive excess,” in relation to the resort,\textsuperscript{184} Walton arguing that the temporary transposition of whole families, streets or workplaces led to the working community largely policing itself.\textsuperscript{185} In Broadhead’s Manchester areas, much the same would have applied, particularly as he aimed for a family audience. However, different to his contemporaries including Barrasford, whose main aim was to oppose Oswald Stoll,\textsuperscript{186} Broadhead was concerned with the social value as well as the financial. The Scuttlers illustrate that individuality was important, on a spatial level, with their “highly distinctive uniform,” modified according to district.\textsuperscript{187} From youths, to itinerant workers, or people who did not have roots in the area, the theatre or music hall offered an alternative way of belonging. As part of the district where they lived, it provided identity “basic to a form of citizenship, to a geographical self, whereby people could know their place – in all senses of that term.”\textsuperscript{188} Although Broadhead’s productions

\textsuperscript{183} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Wriggling Fish. Private Collection. No pagination.


\textsuperscript{186} Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.159.

\textsuperscript{187} Davies, Andrew. The Gangs of Manchester. Op cit., p.18.

were all contained within actual buildings, his houses can be said to have the same
effect as the European cities discussed by Marvin Carlson, who “utilized urban
spaces for performance... to stimulate urban renewal.”

In line with Lefebvre’s premise, the theatres enhanced the characteristics of
the location into which they were placed, further contributing to the production of
Lefebvre’s ‘text’ of the city, mentioned. This feature was accentuated by
Broadhead’s attachment of area names to that of the building (such as the Queen’s
Park Hippodrome). Chapter 4 will examine how the repertoire offered by the
Broadhead houses strengthened the bond between community and venue,
providing a substitute for antisocial behaviour and the traditional means to remedy
it, such as the Lads’ clubs of Openshaw and Hulme. As did the redbrick lodging
houses of Blackpool, the areas of the Broadhead circuit made the experience of
theatre both familiar and unthreatening to a new and wide audience. The following
chapter will discuss how the design, construction and maintenance of the buildings
themselves fostered this new relationship.

189 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 27.
190 See previous chapter for discussion.
Fig. 12. Advertisement from *The Performer*. Christmas number, 1923.
Chapter 3
Buildings

The picture on the previous page (Fig. 12) is an advertisement from the Christmas issue of *The Performer*, a weekly periodical produced by the Variety Artistes Federation.\(^1\) Although the date of the image is ten years after construction and purchasing ceased on the Broadhead circuit, it is still fitting for a chapter on buildings as it lists all the venues. This was unusual; Broadhead bills often grouped certain theatres together, for example, all those close to Manchester city centre, or those that showed drama and variety, omitting cinemas, roller-skating rinks and dance-halls. Whilst such exclusions may have been due to cost or available advertising space, a similar problem applies to this chapter, in which I aim to provide an overview of the buildings of the Broadhead Circuit.

Although there is a wealth of information on Broadhead’s buildings from architectural drawings, photographs, maps and the writing of Alfred Burt-Briggs, there is significantly more material on some than others.\(^2\) Even with such lacunae there is only room to give a preliminary sketch of the houses on the circuit, and for this reason I have included a separate table containing the salient points of each theatre.\(^3\) To make this written account as clear as possible, I have divided the venues into three recognisable sections; liminal areas (those on the outskirts of

\(^2\) There is little information on the Crown Theatre, Eccles
\(^3\) See Appendix 1.
Manchester and Liverpool), of which the Hulme Hippodrome, as well as being the family’s theatre headquarters, was a model. Such an approach allows for discussion to a very specific level, not only into the three categories listed above but also to individual venues in terms of exterior structure, interior decoration, furnishings and unique features, all of which “may be subjected to semiotic analysis.” As Marvin Carlson comments “the study of the physical conditions of performance has long been generally accepted as a legitimate, indeed essential part of the historical study of both drama and theatre,” echoing the micro versus macro-history approach identified in the introduction to this thesis. Additionally, such a reading allows for discussion on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of social space in relation to Broadhead’s buildings themselves, rather than their physical location, and this will underpin the description of design, materials used and decoration later in the chapter.

Paradoxically, whilst there is overlap between the three categories (which will be identified throughout the chapter) each needs to be examined in a particular way. For example, it is not possible to talk of the liminal area theatres in the same way as the entertainment complexes. With the latter (forerunners of modern day arts complexes) the styles of building and entertainment within take precedence over the furnishings and auditorium layout of the former. However, like Broadhead’s portrait, there are surrounding details that need to be examined such as the naming of the venues, the influence of Frank Matcham on William Birch

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4 The term ‘liminal’ is used in the same context as in Chapter 2.
6 Ibid., p.5.
Broadhead’s designs for the theatres, and the role of Joseph John Alley in their execution, and this is how the chapter will begin.

The advertisement from *The Performer* that opens this chapter depicts a head and shoulders view of William Henry Broadhead in an oval frame, surrounded by the names of his venues set out in a sun-ray pattern, which forms a contrast to the stars in each corner of the picture. No establishment is given more prominence than another and they are not in date order. Each star contains information about Broadhead and Son; those in the upper corners hold telephone and telegraph contact details, illustrating the company’s long-held belief in keeping abreast of technology. Those at the bottom display the names of Broadhead’s two dance halls, both of which were part of large-scale entertainment complexes held in the town. The Morecambe *Palais de Danse*, however, was not an individual venue in its own right (it was part of the Winter Gardens) but is listed here to give balance to the overall picture.

However, there are many points in the image that are not immediately obvious. From the banners at the top and bottom of the page the reader learns that the business is now run as Broadhead and Son, with Percy Baynham Broadhead now in charge of “all communications.” By 1923, William Birch Broadhead, “architect, contractor, builder, furnisher and decorator”⁷ of the circuit, had been dead for sixteen years, leaving his brother to take the helm as their father grew old. At this time, in Lefebvrean terms, the circuit could still be viewed as *œuvre* (as

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defined in the previous chapter)\(^8\) giving back to and reflecting its locations rather than mere property, as were the theatres of contemporary circuit owner, Thomas Barrasford. The gradual decline began after William Henry Broadhead’s death, when Sonny (son of Percy) began to gain control.\(^9\) Percy Broadhead maintained strong links with the community, through his generosity to employees and his sponsorship of many charitable projects, becoming as well known as his father in the areas where the theatres stood. At this point, they were still a canvas provided by the Broadhead family, yet filled by the everyday lives and needs of the audience. However, Percy was not above using the portrait of the older man to lend gravitas to the business. Although Broadhead shunned the limelight in his career as a theatre builder, his presence in the advertisement denotes both longevity and respectability due to his age, whilst the kindly expression on his face also suggests benevolence, a closet reference to his social ideals.

The characteristics listed above were all associated with contemporary freemasonry (Broadhead was a member of the Clifton Lodge, Blackpool) of which the advertisement has recognisable undertones.\(^10\) There is a symmetry to the design, with stars (although usually five-pointed), featuring heavily in Masonic architecture.\(^11\) The central image of Broadhead not only suggests that as the founder of the circuit, he personifies the sun and stars, it also presents “a very important Masonic element: the sun in radiant splendour.” The sun stood as a

\(^8\) For description of *oeuvre*, please see Chapter 2, p. 130.

\(^9\) Sonny’s role in the circuit will also be discussed in the conclusion.


\(^11\) In an interesting aside, Annie Horniman, lessee of the Gaiety Theatre, used a star as her personal symbol “representing Glory, Fame and Success,” indicating an act of re-appropriation by the Broadhead family.
“Masonic symbol of alchemical gold, prosperity and higher understanding,” aims that embodied Broadhead himself, the social entrepreneur and the town of Blackpool, whose motto of ‘Progress’ was also a strong Masonic concept.\(^{12}\) The influence of the town on Broadhead’s style of building will be a key theme throughout the chapter.

**Naming the Circuit**

Up to 1908, Broadhead chose regally inspired names for seven of his eleven houses. His first theatre, the Osborne (1896), was originally conceived as the Olympia, but the name was changed to reflect the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, “a tribute to the Queen’s home on the Isle of Wight.”\(^{13}\) However, the jubilee may not have been the sole reason for the change. The name also acted as a signpost, as there was an Osborne Street two blocks away from the theatre;\(^{14}\) Broadhead had not yet moved into naming theatres according to their location. By a fortunate coincidence the Queen’s Park Hippodrome (1904) contained both a place name and a link to the monarchy. Also built before 1908 were the Empire Hippodrome, Ashton-Under-Lyne (1904) with both royal and patriotic connotations, the King’s theatre, Longsight (1905) and the purchased Lyceum Theatre, with its (possibly alienating) implications of learning was changed to the Crown in 1907. Such names suggest a number of characteristics: respectability, morality and quality

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\(^{12}\) The sun image could also be a reference to the contemporary Sunlight Soap, produced by fellow entrepreneur, William Lever, an attempt by the family to appeal to the same popular audience.  
\(^{14}\) *Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford*. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1896) p. 313.
The exterior of Broadhead’s structures would have made plain that they were not real palaces or places frequented by royalty, which would have been snubbed by working class audiences, (G.J. Mellor tells how patrons of the St Helen’s Empire refused to return to their theatre after a lavish rebuilding process as “it was too posh”) \(^{15}\) but something as reassuring and solid as the empire itself at that time.

Broadhead continued to use patriotic names with great success, opening the Empress roller-skating rink, Ashton-Under-Lyne, \(^{16}\) the Empress ballroom and King’s Pavilion music hall (both as part of Morecambe Winter Gardens) in 1909, the Empress Electric cinema, Miles Platting in 1912 and the King’s Palace, Preston in 1913. He also interposed the word ‘royal’ before the names of some of his venues: the Royal Osborne and the Royal Salford and Preston Hippodromes (both 1904). However, both Victor Glasstone and Claire Cochrane observe that such an act had little meaning, the only requirement being that the name had to have been passed by the local licensing authority. \(^{17}\) This would not have posed great difficulty for Broadhead who, alongside a flourishing political career in Blackpool, took pains to cultivate a good relationship with the city council, \(^{18}\) of which William Birch was a member from 1903-1905. \(^{19}\)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the names of the majority of the remaining theatres gave identity and social presence to the areas where they stood,


\(^{16}\) This was renamed the Palais de Danse in 1919 when the type of entertainment provided on site changed.


\(^{19}\) See Chapter 2.

\(^{19}\) These are: the Royal Salford Hippodrome and the Queen’s Park Hippodrome (both 1904) and the King’s, Longsight (1905).
for instance, Hulme Hippodrome (1902), Bury Hippodrome (1904) and to a certain extent the Grand Junction, Hulme (1901), which marked the junction of Preston Street and Warwick Street. The latter however, as “a point where two or more things are joined,”20 could also refer to the proximity of the site to that of its sister theatre, the Hulme Hippodrome. Looking at this process in Lefebvorean terms, Broadhead was literally preserving his areas and their inhabitants for posterity – “the nomenclature, description and classification of objects certainly has a contribution to make to traditional history, especially when the historian is concerned with the ordinary objects of everyday life.”21

The names ‘Metropole’ and ‘Pavilion’ are the only exceptions to the rules of royal or location names. Of the two, Pavilion is easier to understand and also has strong sporting undertones, although Broadhead could have chosen the name to establish his house as part of Liverpool’s theatre heritage – the first Pavilion theatre had opened in the city in 1820.22 Metropole is less common, although Edward Moss opened one c.1897 in Glasgow,23 giving credence to the argument that theatre entrepreneurs kept a sharp eye on one another’s business – Broadhead’s Metropole, Openshaw opened in 1898. The name shares a root with metropolitan, or metropolis, meaning ‘of the city’, so is appropriate, but remained a one-off

22 “New Theatres in Liverpool: Pavilions of the Past.” The Music Hall and Theatre Review, 28 February 1908, p.144. I am grateful to Ellen Loudon for giving me this article.
23 In an interesting aside, this theatre was managed by Arthur Jefferson, author of The Orphan Heiress mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, and the father of Stanley Jefferson, later known as Stan Laurel.
within the Broadhead circuit. As Ann Featherstone comments, names that are unusual or difficult to pronounce alienate audiences.²⁴

Awkward as it may have been, the name ‘Metropole’ can be viewed as a product of its time (as can those of the other Broadhead houses) giving several potential areas that may have influenced the family’s choices. As always, the stimulus of Blackpool cannot be underestimated. Broadhead enjoyed success in the town with the Prince of Wales Baths, and William Holland oversaw the Empress Ballroom at the Winter Gardens.²⁵ However, the theatres present in Manchester during Broadhead’s building period also had a similar fascination with regal names with the Palace, Prince’s, Queen’s and Theatre Royal within walking distance of one another.²⁶ 1904 saw the opening of two Pavilion theatres in Chorlton and Rusholme²⁷ (close to Hulme and Longsight) of which William Birch may have been aware, living adjacent to these areas, in Hulme.

The naming of venues was also a way in which theatre entrepreneurs denoted ownership. At the time of his death, Edward Moss owned nineteen Empire Palaces in London and the provinces.²⁸ His collaborator, Oswald Stoll, also used the name Empire in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport and together the pair brought the name Hippodrome to prominence with their London site.²⁹ Stoll was the one who continued the use of the name, opening a second Hippodrome on Oxford Street,

²⁴ Ann Featherstone, personal conversation 5 August 2013.
²⁹ Ibid., pp. 140-156.
Manchester in 1904. These two theatres however adhered to the dictionary definition of the word; hippos meaning ‘horse’, and dromos meaning ‘course’ (or road) from the Greek ἱππόδρομος. Glasstone gives an evocative portrait of the London Hippodrome

For naumachiae (water spectacles) the lowest level of the arena could be flooded with 100,000 gallons of water from the Cran Bourne which conveniently flows under the stage. High-divers could plunge from the balustraded central dome, which opened to reveal the starry night, and twenty elephants could slide down a chute into the water. When animals were used, the arena was enclosed with steel railings 12 (sic) feet high.

Given this information, it is possible to see from the plans of Broadhead’s hippodromes in Hulme, Harpurhey, Ashton-Under-Lyne and Preston that there is no evidence of a circus-style arena, or any provision for flooding the auditorium thus rendering them not ἱππόδρομος in the true sense of the word. However, this omission may have been due to expense and logistics rather than a lack of desire. Burt-Briggs reveals that the original Grand Junction had a well in the basement that was used for turning the flywheel, and that the family intended to incorporate a circus within the Hulme complex. No reason is given as to why this style of entertainment was not adopted, but a possible explanation arises with the knowledge that the Salford Hippodrome was also built on a spring. William Birch had hoped the water source “could be utilised for the benefit of the theatre

30 Ibid., p.148.
31 Search term ‘hippodrome’.
33 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Hippodrome: Hulme. Private Collection. No pagination. Circus is defined here in the same sense as described in Chapter 2.
presentations in the same manner as the water supply in the Blackpool Tower Circus” (reminiscent of the hydraulic stage at the Prince of Wales Baths) where the sinking ring is lowered by a hydraulic ram and sinks to under six feet, with a depth of water of four feet six inches, and contains 42,000 gallons of water, filled up within a minute before the eyes of the spectators.

Unfortunately, in Salford there was insufficient water to provide the amounts needed, although the stalls area of the theatre flooded naturally when the water level was high. Therefore the naming of the theatres as ἵπποδρομος, in spite of the limited supply of water, can be seen as Broadhead and Sons appropriating a well-known name for their own ends, possibly to infer a superior or more exciting kind of entertainment to that seen previously in the sub-districts of Manchester.

Nor were they alone in adopting such a strategy. Fellow Northerner, Thomas Barrasford, opened hippodromes in Hull, Glasgow, Liverpool, Brighton, Sheffield and Nottingham but only the Glasgow venue appears to have had anything approaching circus-style entertainments.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one area where Broadhead and Sons were unique amongst other circuits and syndicates was in the design and building of their own premises, and here they can be seen as creating their own space amongst competitors. Although Moss, Stoll and Barrasford built halls (Frank MacNaghten preferred to buy existing venues) and doubtlessly had preferred contractors, because they came from different social backgrounds from Broadhead (in some cases more traditionally theatrical) they did not have their own building.

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35 Ibid.
38 Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p. 159.
firms. Also, as Mellor illustrates, Broadhead’s contemporaries tended to favour particular architects,\(^3\) with Moss and Stoll employing Frank Matcham, “the most successful and prolific theatre architect in British theatre history,” for the majority of their sites,\(^4\) whilst Thomas Barrasford preferred Matcham’s former apprentice, Bertie Crewe.\(^5\) In comparison, it is recognised that the designs for the greater part of the Broadhead theatres were created by William Birch; not only is this clearly stated by Burt-Briggs,\(^6\) but an obituary from the *Manchester Programme of Entertainment and Pleasure* also illustrates that the hierarchies concerned with entertainment and civic responsibility were aware of the driving force behind the Broadhead circuit.\(^7\) According to Glasstone “the architect as theatre-speculator... who acquired the land, made the plans and found the backers” was not an unusual occurrence.\(^8\) Thus it is possible to see the family as unusual amongst their circuit-owning peers, but not in a wider context of theatre-building and speculation.

### The role of Joseph Alley

The influence of William Birch notwithstanding, a legitimate architect or draughtsman was employed by Broadhead, and it was Joseph John Alley who was credited with “interpreting Willie’s ideas.”\(^9\) The employment of Alley was a shrewd
move on the part of Broadhead. Fire regulations were an external factor that shaped the production of space in theatre building, and for good reason. The decade before Broadhead commenced building in Manchester, the city had witnessed three venues destroyed by fire: the Gaiety Theatre in 1883, the Manchester Circus Royal in 1889 and the second incarnation of the Queen’s Theatre in 1890 (the first having burned down in 1879). The city surveyors were thus more likely to look favourably on plans that had been drawn up officially. Alley then joins the ranks of the “unremarkable local men, glad of whatever commissions might come their way,” John Earl’s description of the artisans of the architectural world. There is little information on Alley in any source. Burt-Briggs mentions him only in his writing on the Royal Osborne and the Metropole, the earliest Broadhead houses, and he is only mentioned in context with the Metropole in the *Manchester Evening News*.  

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47 I will discuss fire regulations further later in the chapter.  
The Manchester Local Image Collection sheds some light on Alley’s character, holding fifty-two pencil sketches dated between 1858 and 1894 by Alley, including one, undated, of the Royal Osborne theatre (see Fig. 13). This, however, is the only sketch of a Broadhead house, although there are also drawings of a Royal Queen’s Theatre dated 1869, possibly at Spring Gardens Manchester. The collection comprises sketches of buildings, village scenes and one image of Gynn Square, Blackpool, which places Alley moving in the same circles as Broadhead. Two drawings stand out: the depiction of a fire in Minshull Street, Manchester, dated 1858 and a rail collision at Eccles Junction dated 1877. These sketches give rise to speculation that Alley could have worked as an artist for a local newspaper – 1858

was still early in the development of photography, and pencil drawings would have been a cheaper alternative.

In the absence of any dates for Alley, it is difficult to estimate his age. Assuming that he started work at fifteen, the same age as Broadhead, and that the earliest image is dated 1858, this would place his year of birth as 1843, some five years before his employer. A search of Manchester street directories illustrates that Alley and Broadhead worked in close proximity to one another. Going back in ten year intervals from the opening of the Osborne (1896), the first mention of Alley is in 1876, when he is listed in the alphabetical directory as “Alley, Joseph John, Consulting and Practical Decorator and Signwriter. Office and Works, 52 Granby Row.” This was part of the London Road area, where Broadhead lived and worked at this time. Alley also had a block advertisement at the back of the directory giving the same details. There is no record of him under the heading of “Architects and Surveyors,” although there is a listing for a Peter B. Alley at 45 Cross Street, Manchester in this section. The likelihood that Peter Alley was Joseph Alley’s father or grandfather is increased with the inclusion of a daguerreotype of a “Peter Alley Esq.” dated 1819 in the Manchester Local Image Collection, together with Alley’s sketches and a photograph of himself, dated 1882. If Peter Alley was indeed his father, Joseph would have had the necessary credentials to draft William

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52 There is every probability that Alley is much older than this.
53 *Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1876)
54 Manchester Local Image Collection. Op cit.
Birch’s designs, with the additional benefit of a long-established name in the business, something that Broadhead valued.55

By 1886, the landscape of Granby Row had changed, with a coal merchant listed at number 52, and no mention of Alley.56 By 1896 it was different again. The building had been let to a firm of concrete suppliers, which implies a short lease on the premises.57 Unfortunately, there is no insight from Burt-Briggs as to when Alley became employed by Broadhead, but as his decorating and sign-writing business would have been in competition with Broadhead’s own, it seems likely that on the expiration of the Granby Row lease, he was taken on by Broadhead. The fact that Alley had relocated by 1886 is telling – this was the time that Broadhead was making alterations to the Prince of Wales Baths in Blackpool. Once established in the firm, Burt-Briggs places Alley at several Manchester addresses; at Thomas Street,58 at 102 London Road59 (the birthplace of the Broadhead children during the 1870s and 1880s) and at 25 Tib Street.60 Slater’s Directory for 1896 reveals that all these premises still belonged to Broadhead.61 Thomas Street and Tib Street housed the firm’s ticket writing business, although Burt-Briggs tells how in later years, 25 Tib Street was the design centre for the circuit. London Road was used for the firm’s sign-writing, gilding, embossing and glass-writing. It is likely that as Broadhead’s employee, Alley would have needed to move according to which workshop needed

55 Broadhead uses his own father’s name on business advertisements to imply longevity. See Chapter 2.
56 Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1886)
57 Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1896)
him at a particular time, no great difficulty, as all the branches were within walking distance of one another.

This is a fitting point to return to Alley’s disappearance from the press after the opening of the Metropole (1898). According to Ellen Loudon, he was responsible for interpreting the plans of the Liverpool Pavilion (1908). However, working on the assumption that he was born around 1843, at this time Alley would have been at least mid-sixties, whilst Slater’s directory for 1901 lists a Joseph John Alley as a journalist, living in Moss Side. As will be recalled, the first mention of Alley comes with the portfolio of sketches in the Manchester Local Image Collection. In addition, the John Rylands Library, Manchester, holds two issues of Pallas, a short-lived periodical from 1883. Edited by Joseph John Alley, Pallas was aimed at readers “who desire more than ‘sensation’: who look often in vain for the charms of freshness and vigour of style.” Of course, it is again speculation as to whether this is the same Alley who worked for Broadhead, but the probability is increased by the inclusion of an article in the second issue of Pallas by ‘WHB’, entitled “Midsummer at the Lakes.” Broadhead eventually became the owner of Lakebank Lodge, Coniston.

Journalistic activities, however, do not account fully for the omission of Alley in newspaper reports of the Broadhead circuit, and it is likely that he used his income from Broadhead to supplement his writing activities throughout the latter years of the nineteenth century. The most useful strategy in defining Alley’s role

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63 Slater’s Directory for Manchester and Salford. (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1901)
64 Pallas, 1(1) 1 December 1883.
65 WHB. “Midsummer at the Lakes”, Pallas, 1(2) 8 December 1883.
within the design of the Broadhead Circuit is to take Burt-Briggs’ words at face value: Alley interpreted “Willie’s ideas.”⁶⁷ William Birch died in February 1907 after contracting pneumonia driving to and from London in an open-topped car.⁶⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, his death prompted a change in direction for the circuit, with the family’s next move being the purchase of the Lyceum (Crown), Eccles.⁶⁹ The purchase thus begins to elucidate Alley’s role in the circuit. He did not design the Lyceum (it was built for Richard Flanagan) nor the Morecambe Winter Gardens. For the plan of the Empress Skating Rink, Ashton-Under-Lyne (1909), Broadhead hired John Eaton Sons & Cantrell, “the architects of Ashton’s main shopping area, Stamford Street.”⁷⁰

It is also unlikely that Alley was responsible for the King’s Palace, Preston as Burt-Briggs reports that the exterior “was different from other Broadhead theatres,”⁷¹ also indicating that with the later Ashton-Under-Lyne and Preston venues Broadhead was keen to fit in with neighbouring buildings. This leaves Alley with the design of the Manchester theatres, the Royal Hippodromes at Ashton-under-Lyne and Preston and the Liverpool Pavilion, all of which could have been drawn up some years prior to the plans being submitted, given Broadhead’s proclivity for selecting and purchasing sites well in advance of use — the site for the Empress Electric Cinema, Miles Platting, was held for some twelve years before the

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⁶⁸ Ibid.
⁶⁹ See Chapter 2.
⁷¹ Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The King’s Palace Theatre, Preston. No pagination.
building was erected. However, another possibility arises, that of architectural templates. In his writing on the King’s Palace, Burt-Briggs tells how “most of the other theatres had been built on a square basis.” Not only does this reinforce the apocryphal statement that the theatres could have been reused as warehouses should the businesses fail, it also demonstrates the use of a formulaic design that would have been easy to replicate by someone other than Alley, explaining his disappearance from the public realm, and shows Broadhead as still having the mindset of a builder rather than a theatre builder. However, it also reflects his social entrepreneurship by keeping costs low. This theory is all the more feasible knowing that Broadhead was in the business of ‘recycling’ – buying materials that had been used before, such as the columns from the old Manchester Royal Exchange to build the Osborne, a fascinating transposition of elements of one space into another, and in particular, one from which his audiences would previously have been denied. In addition, he also had an abundant labour pool from his existing Manchester firms and contacts in Blackpool from which to select workmen. One of the hallmarks of the circuit, reflected in its motto of “quick, clean, smart and bright” was the speed of construction with most venues open to the public less than a year after the plans were passed.

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74 Ibid.
76 Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.169.
Inarguably, the reputation of Joseph John Alley was considerably less than that of Frank Matcham. By 1896, “matchless” Matcham\(^{77}\) dominated the topography of theatre architecture, designing thirty-one theatres (including his first for Edward Moss)\(^{78}\) and refurbishing seven others, an average of eight venues per year.\(^{79}\) These included three sites in Blackpool: the Opera House (part of William Holland’s Winter Gardens, 1889) and in 1894, both the Grand Theatre and Tower Ballroom. These were all buildings connected to the Broadhead family. William Holland was their residential neighbour, the Grand was built for Thomas Sergenson, the family’s business neighbour at the Prince of Wales complex, and Broadhead was a member of the Tower Committee.

Matcham’s Blackpool designs represent the three divisions that the Broadhead houses fall into – liminal areas, town centres and entertainment complexes. The idea of Blackpool as a place that resisted definition has been discussed in the previous chapters. However, like Bury and nearby Preston, it was a town undergoing swift development, a home to various entertainment complexes, of which the Opera House was a part. The popularity of Matcham as an architect meant that his Blackpool designs were by no means the only examples of each division,\(^{80}\) which will be illustrated throughout the following pages. In the context of this chapter, however, they represent a springboard for the theatre building career of the Broadhead family.


\(^{78}\) This was the Edinburgh Empire, 1892. Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.125.

\(^{79}\) This figure is calculated with the aid of the Appendix of Matcham’s buildings to Read, Jack. *Empires, Hippodromes and Palaces*. (London: the Alderman Press, 1985) pp 239-46.

\(^{80}\) Matcham was responsible for the Regent Theatre, Salford. This however was an entertainment complex rather than an individual house.
Liminal Area Locations

On the surface, Broadhead’s liminal area buildings (the outskirts of Manchester, Salford and Liverpool) do not compare well to those of Matcham, constructed with a builder’s eye and budget, rather than that of a wealthy or ambitious speculator such as Holland. There is little reported on the exterior of Matcham’s Blackpool Opera House, but the Grand Theatre warranted press attention. Although described as “relatively plain” (built in brick and stone), it also had “a dome, clad in copper fishscale tiles,” a touch of the eastern-fantastic style beloved by Matcham, with a nod to the seaside space it inhabited. All the Broadhead theatres in liminal areas— the Osborne (1896), Metropole (1898), Salford Hippodrome (1904), Liverpool Pavilion (1908), and Empress Electric (1912)— were square or rectangular structures, built of brick and stone and almost free from embellishment. However, this was not unusual. Carlson tells how “the shape, fenestration and decoration” of facade theatres (of which, all the above serve as examples) “almost never provided any information about the spaces inside or their use.” Unfortunately, there is no photographic evidence of the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, Harpurhey (1904), but the plans for this theatre do not show any changes in building materials.

82 Ibid.
83 Unfortunately there is little information on the plans or interior of this theatre, hence the reliance on other liminal area venues in this chapter.
84 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 108. The definition of a facade theatre can be found in the introduction to this thesis.
85 Plans for Queen’s Park Hippodrome, Harpurhey. Manchester Local Image Collection.
By 1912, when the Empress Electric opened at Miles Platting, Broadhead was still using red brick, picking out detail with buff terra cotta. His materials were in plentiful supply and fitted with the surrounding area. However, there had been a change in his style of building. The Queen’s Park Hippodrome was a split-level structure, more akin to a sports pavilion than either of the subsequent Pavilion theatres. It had a much wider frontage than its predecessors, did not stretch back as far and did not contain a gallery – the body of the theatre contained just pit and stalls and a circle. The Empress Electric cinema (1912) differed again, possibly to accommodate the area of the land that Broadhead had held in reserve since the turn of the century. It had a narrower frontage than the Metropole and Queen’s Park Hippodrome but, true to many Broadhead houses, stretched back a long way and was wider to the rear. The Empress also bore the standard Broadhead features of a canopy over the main entrance, and had its name picked out in terra cotta on the front of the building. Structurally, this venue was similar to the town centre New Pavilion cinema, Ashton-Under-Lyne (1908).

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87 Plans for the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, Harpurhey. Op cit.
88 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Empress Theatre: Oldham Road, Manchester. No pagination.
However, the exterior of the Empress was more elaborate (see Fig. 14). The roof contained a row of decorative flues, whilst the front was adorned with a series of ascending finials surrounding a raised central panel that gave the appearance of an inverted letter B.\footnote{Plans for the Empress Electric Cinema. Op cit.} It is speculation that Broadhead may have wished to create a design feature unique to his houses, but this aspect of many of his buildings can be seen from the Empire Hippodrome, Ashton-Under-Lyne (1904), to the last house in the circuit, the King’s Palace, Preston (1913).

All three of Matcham’s Blackpool houses, however, were praised for their sumptuous interiors, none more so than the Tower Ballroom, which contained
many of the elements of theatre architecture: the two tiers of balconies on three sides, the characteristic onion-domed canopies over the corner boxes, and the splendid ‘proscenium’ framing the orchestra platform with the ceiling described as “a tour de force of flamboyant plasterwork and painted panels.”  

As John Walton remarks, the ability of Matcham to transport his audience to another, more fantastic place, “inclusive [of all classes] in its embrace,” was embodied here. Opulence, however, also featured inside the Opera House:

The ceiling which is in the Louis Fifteenth style, is in itself a perfect work of art... Turn where one will the eye rests upon a lovely bit of carving; some gilded ornamentations which suggest a fairy palace, delicately painted mirrors... or some marble work...  

and also at the Grand Theatre;

Encircling the proscenium arch are twelve small floral panels representing the months of the year. The background is cream, but gold is lavishly used, and blue – which is the prevailing colour throughout the theatre is introduced with charming effect... The ceiling is also divided into panels radiating from the fine centre piece from which hang the magnificent brass electroliers, and upon this panels are inscribed in letters of gold the names of famous composers.... Cream and gold are also predominant colours in the beautiful plasterwork encircling the fronts of the upper tiers, while these are also relieved by prettily painted panels.  

Such luxury was not practical financially for Broadhead as a fledgling theatre entrepreneur. He had only had one venture, the Prince of Wales Baths, prior to the opening of the Osborne, and as Chapter 1 recounts, this was run with the help of his wife and children. Thus, from the outset, Broadhead can be described as the patriarchal figure of a family firm, which Tracy Davis asserts was “probably the most

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prevalent business structure in the British theatre.”94 However, it also meant that his actions entailed a risk to his family, unlike fellow circuit manager Frank MacNaghten, who never married, or William Holland, whose legacy was destroyed by financial mismanagement. Therefore, whilst a removal from everyday life was desirable, the Matcham features that Broadhead chose to emulate had to be necessities: clear sight lines and fire precautions.95

In the theatres in liminal areas, to ensure all patrons had a satisfactory view of the stage, Broadhead and William Birch staggered the auditorium, with the gallery set further back than the circle.96 Exceptions to this rule were the Queen’s Park Hippodrome which had a circle, but no gallery, and the Empress Electric, where all seating was at ground level.97

96 Photographs of the Osborne and Metropole Theatres. Manchester Local Image Collection. All subsequent comments on these theatres are from this source.
Fig. 15. Interior of the Osborne Theatre c. 1900.

While Matcham used a combination of pillars and cantilevers at the Blackpool Grand,\(^9\) the Osborne’s upper tiers are shown to be supported by pillars (see Fig. 15) as are those of the Metropole. The two early houses differ though in layout, with the gallery of the Metropole containing benches that face forwards rather than the sideways ones of the Osborne, where the centre panel of the gallery is blocked off and stands only as a decoration, an indication that Broadhead refined his craft with alterations of the interior space in each subsequent house. It is also interesting to note from these photographs that the theatres have been built with a proscenium arch, rather than the ‘in the round’ style of the Prince of Wales Baths,

\(^{98}\) Brereton, Christopher. Op cit., p. 126.
meaning that there was a greater degree of separation between the audience and the performance area, possibly to minimise the risk of rowdy behaviour.

The seating at both the Osborne and the Metropole was not the plush kind fitted by Matcham at the Grand, but an unequal blend of benches and wooden tip-up seats, with the Osborne having seven rows of tip-up seats in the stalls and the entirety of the circle, whilst the Metropole had only three rows of tip-ups at the front of the stalls and five rows in the circle (See Fig. 16). The Metropole was the larger house, seating over 3,100 patrons in comparison to the Osborne’s 2,500

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99 Ibid., See photograph.
100 All information in this paragraph is taken from the plans of the various theatres. Op cit.
person capacity, which may have been due to the ability to fit more people onto benches than individual seats.\textsuperscript{101} The six year period between the construction of the Metropole and the Queen’s Park Hippodrome showed that Broadhead was still building for a working class audience. At the Harpurhey house, all the stalls were tip-up seats (eleven rows) whilst the pit and circle contained just benches. Additionally, the Queen’s Park Hippodrome was the first house not to contain boxes at circle level, an indication that Broadhead expected an unpretentious (and possibly disruptive) crowd. The *Manchester Evening News* expressed anxiety over “rowdyism or disorder,” due to the popularity of the theatre.\textsuperscript{102} In 1908 the Liverpool Pavilion contained four boxes at circle level, a feature more common to Broadhead’s town centre sites.

Photographs of the Osborne and Metropole show that the auditoriums were not completely unadorned (See Figs. 15-16). The circle balconies of both theatres were embellished with plasterwork. However, in comparison to the descriptions of the Blackpool theatres, Broadhead’s houses seem an exercise in austerity, the walls decorated with photographs and posters rather than painted panels and exquisite carvings. The predominant material was wood, betraying Broadhead’s trade roots as a joiner. This was a durable material that was readily available, and would withstand vigorous and even careless use. Broadhead would have also had contacts in the timber trade from his sign-writing business. Even with this advantage, he did not spend foolishly, and purchased high-quality second-hand supplies. The Osborne was constructed with “steel girders and large steps” from the old Royal Exchange.

\textsuperscript{101} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. *The Royal Osborne Theatre: Oldham Road, Miles Platting & The Metropole Theatre: Ashton Old Road, Manchester.* Private Collection. No pagination.
that had recently been destroyed by fire.\textsuperscript{103} Such an action also reinforces the idea that Broadhead and William Birch were working on a larger concept; a chain of theatres, rather than the individual project (such as that of Sergenson and the Blackpool Grand, into which all capital was sunk), and taking the necessary steps for a minimum risk speculation.\textsuperscript{104}

Also important to Frank Matcham was fire safety.\textsuperscript{105} Within the Blackpool theatres, it is only mentioned in connection with the Opera House, with the \textit{Blackpool Gazette} commenting that “it would almost be an utter impossibility for life to be lost under any circumstances” in the event of a fire.\textsuperscript{106} Whilst Broadhead did not make such extravagant claims for himself, fire regulations were adhered to strictly, presumably due to the flammable nature of wood and moulded plaster. Whilst there is no mention of any of Broadhead’s materials being treated to make them fireproof,\textsuperscript{107} many of the theatre plans list on their cover sheet the precautions taken to ensure the safety of the building: “public passages and stairs to be of concrete and stone,” and “ample provision to every part of the building for instantaneous exit.”\textsuperscript{108} The City Engineers department photographed the Osborne and Metropole circa 1900, concentrating on the stairs and exits, illustrating not only the importance of fire safety at this time, but a different social construct on Broadhead’s spaces: as well as being places of entertainment, where a working

\textsuperscript{104} Read, Jack. Op cit., p.178-79.  
\textsuperscript{105} Ehrlich, Cyril and Walker, Brian Mercer. Op cit., p. 28.  
\textsuperscript{106} Walker, Brian Mercer. Op cit., p.155.  
\textsuperscript{108} Plans for the Queen’s Park Hippodrome. Op cit.
class audience would feel comfortable, they also had to satisfy local government regulations.\textsuperscript{109} Plans show that the Osborne had five exits to the side of the building and two to the front, all accessible by steps, whilst the Metropole had three exits to the rear and one to the right which were reached by inclined walkways, thus avoiding trip hazards in a jostling crowd.\textsuperscript{110} By 1904, Broadhead was still using steps to the multiple side exits of the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, but this was only a two storey structure built on a natural slope.

\textbf{Fig. 17.} Exterior plan for the Pavilion Theatre, Liverpool, 1906.

The plans for this theatre and those of the Liverpool Pavilion, also mention the installation of “the latest improved steel fireproof curtain and fire hose,” and

\textsuperscript{109} Photographs of the Osborne and Metropole Theatres. Op cit.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid and plans for the Osborne and Metropole Theatres. Op cit.
fireproof doors between the stage, dressing rooms and auditorium\textsuperscript{111} (see Fig. 17), a response not only to the six hundred deaths following the Iroquois Theatre fire the previous year,\textsuperscript{112} but also a series of incidents in Manchester between 1880-1890, where fires had started in backstage areas.\textsuperscript{113}

With the material available on the Broadhead circuit, it is possible to construct an image of the interiors of Broadhead’s theatres that is much clearer than those of Matcham. On a basic level, until the Empress Electric, all theatres were lit and heated by both gas and electricity by way of a National Gas Engine manufactured in Ashton-Under-Lyne.\textsuperscript{114} As gas was used only as a backup system, the engines provided a safer and cooler auditorium. In addition, as they were manufactured in Ashton-Under-Lyne, their purchase was an instance of both Broadhead’s cost-efficiency – using local tradesmen as opposed to Matcham who employed specialists from far and wide- and also his recognition of the local business topography. Networking at a regional level was an area in which he excelled. The first engine was installed at the Osborne, and housed in a cottage that Broadhead had purchased next to the theatre.\textsuperscript{115} Buying extra property was an astute action and one very much in keeping with Broadhead’s personal ethos.

Chapter 1 mentions his acquisition of land for speculative purposes, and in later life

\textsuperscript{111} Plans for the Queens Park Hippodrome. Manchester Local Image Collection. Plans for the Liverpool Pavilion, Alfred Burt-Briggs Collection.

\textsuperscript{112} The fire at the Iroquois Theatre, Chicago occurred in December 1903. The failure to have clearly visible exits and fire doors is held as an illustration worldwide into the importance of fire safety. “The Iroquois Theater Fire.” \textit{The Chicago Tribune} 30 December 1903. \url{http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/chi-chicagodays-iroquoisfire-story,0,6395565.story} Accessed 3 November 2013.

\textsuperscript{113} Sachs, Edwin O. Op cit., pp.37-45. These included a fire at the Gaiety Theatre in 1883 as a result of lighting the gas.

\textsuperscript{114} Burt, Briggs Alfred. All writings on individual theatres. Private Collection. No pagination.

he would register purchases in the name of his wife or children, thus avoiding death
duties.\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. *Theatre Monarch*. Private Collection. No pagination.} However, as John Earl reveals, buying property in close proximity to a
theatre site allowed owners to expand the venue if business was successful.\footnote{Earl, John. Op cit., p.5.} Two
years later, the engine for the Metropole was housed under the stage (the safety of
the device having been tested at the Osborne) and additional property in
Openshaw was used for storage.\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. *The Metropole Theatre: Ashton Old Road, Openshaw*. Op cit. No pagination.}

Standard interior features of the theatres in liminal areas included toilet
facilities, for both ladies and gentlemen, on every floor.\footnote{All information in this paragraph is gathered from individual theatre plans. Op cit.} This meant a single
lavatory for each gender, a provision that had not increased by the time of the
Liverpool Pavilion. Whilst an indoor lavatory would have been far more of a luxury
to the larger part of Broadhead’s clientele than that of Matcham, six units for an
audience of around 3,000 was scarcely generous. At circle level, the lavatories were
situated on either side of temperance bars, or crush rooms, (the Metropole and
Osborne), or in waiting rooms, (the Liverpool Pavilion). This type of layout
preserved modesty and also precluded large-scale flooding in case of leakage.

It is also interesting to note that waiting rooms were a late addition to the
liminal area theatres. The Osborne, Metropole and Queen’s Park Hippodrome had
canopies to shelter patrons between performances, rather than indoor areas, a
possible indication that Broadhead too was concerned with the behaviour of his
audiences. Although alcohol was not sold on the premises, the proximity of his
theatres to pubs and beerhouses meant that the threat of rowdiness was never far
away. Paradoxically, however, the circuit in some cases relied on neighbouring licensed premises. The Liverpool Pavilion and Empress Electric boosted the trade of adjacent pubs, and vice versa, whilst smaller houses such as the Queen’s Park Hippodrome (seating 2000), had no refreshment areas; all space was given to stage and seating, meaning food and drink had to be purchased elsewhere.

As well as public and auditorium facilities, the areas for performers also evolved with Broadhead’s increasing knowledge of his new business. Plans for the Osborne show a very narrow stage –scarcely wider than the orchestra pit, and have no provision for dressing rooms, with a single “changing room” at the front of the theatre, a lack of facilities which may have deterred established or successful companies. As Carlson comments, dressing rooms, whatever the location (in a parallel with lobbies and crush rooms for patrons) gave actors “separate support spaces” where they could relax “from the tensions and obligations of the performance.” Structurally, the Metropole was an improvement, with nine dressing rooms below stage next to the engine room, giving the added benefit of warmth. The Metropole also had a separate lavatory for performers and a property room to the right of the stage, three times as large as that of the Osborne.

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120 Unfortunately the plans do not show the exact measurements, this observation is taken from the drawings alone.
121 All information in this paragraph is gathered from individual theatre plans. Op cit
122 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 133.
The size of the stage was also increased— at the Queen’s Park Hippodrome it spanned the entire width of the theatre (see Fig. 18), allowing for elaborate or complicated scenery, dancing routines, brass bands, acrobatic performances and animal acts. Broadhead also continued to utilise the space below stage at the Harpurhey venue, installing a band room and renaming the boiler area “the heating room.” The Queen’s Park Hippodrome also boasted dressing rooms at circle level, as did the Liverpool Pavilion. The plans for the former depict the first house in a liminal area to have a fly floor, (to the right of the gallery), illustrating that the family’s understanding of theatre design increased as the circuit progressed.
Town Centre Sites

Doubtlessly aware of the movements of other circuit owners (both Barrasford and MacNaghten, as well as Moss and Stoll bought and built nationwide), in 1904, Broadhead and Sons moved away from Manchester, placing their first theatre in a town centre location. This was the Bury Hippodrome, which opened on Garden Street on 10 October. That a move to more prominent locations had been in the mind of Broadhead was reinforced by the firm opening a second town centre Hippodrome less than three months later, this time in Friargate, Preston. (A second Preston house would complete the circuit in 1913.) In typical Broadhead fashion the sites for the two early buildings were purchased in advance, as was the land for the King’s Theatre, Longsight, which also opened in 1905. Although in terms of location, the King’s had much in common with the liminal area theatres, it also held many characteristics of the town centre houses and will be discussed here as such.

Town centre sites were nothing new to Frank Matcham who had designed buildings in areas as diverse as Blackburn, Halifax and South Shields. The only area that he shared with Broadhead, in this category, was Bury, where he had built the Theatre Royal, Market Street (1889). The Theatre Royal was commissioned by E. W. Purcell and operated as a drama theatre, which gave Broadhead the opportunity to provide a different style of entertainment – his Hippodromes were

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126 See Chapter 2 for further details of advance purchases.
127 This information is taken from the appendix of Walker, Brian. Op cit., pp 153-174.
128 Brereton, Christopher. Op cit., p.121-22. All information in this paragraph is from this source.
all variety houses. Matcham’s Bury venue was built from brick and stone, typical of both the architect and of the time of construction. The exterior, however, was very different to those that Broadhead had placed in liminal areas. Brereton describes it as a “interesting three dimensional composition,” where “a pedimented three-storey projection containing the main entrance was linked on each side to the high rear wall of the auditorium by quadrant wings of two storeys.” The structure was further embellished with balustrades and urns.

Fig. 19. The Hippodrome, Bury. (Undated.)

It is difficult to envisage fully the exterior of Broadhead’s Bury Hippodrome. Of only two photographs of the building, one is taken significantly later than the time of construction and the other is a dark and grainy image showing only a plain
fronted red-brick structure with no decoration whatsoever (see Fig. 19). Even the name “Hippodrome” picked out in Broadhead’s trademark individual letters over a two-door entrance is almost invisible and it is only just possible to make out the street sign mid-left of the photograph. Again, factors of cost and identity must be considered. Broadhead would have known that more expensive building materials would have meant a rise in ticket prices, plus the risk of alienating a working class audience. A contemporary map shows that the Theatre Royal had the better location, a main road close to the market, for which Bury was famous, which was also a tram route. However, given the money spent and the appearance of the theatre such a site is to be expected.

Although Broadhead did not have the prime site of the Matcham house, he still occupied a central position. The Bury Hippodrome, as well as being the first house out of Manchester’s sub-districts, was also the first Broadhead redevelopment – the building was already in place and had functioned as the Philips Hall and Trevelyan Liberal Club since 1875. Broadhead spent £4,000 refurbishing the building (although it is not clear if this figure included the freehold for the site). Unfortunately, there is no indication of the cost of Matcham’s Theatre Royal, but his Blackpool Grand which opened some ten years before the Bury Hippodrome was five times more expensive at £20,000. A complete construction

129 Undated photographs of Bury Hippodrome. Bury local studies library.
131 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., The Hippodrome, Garden Street, Bury. Private Collection. No pagination. All further information in this paragraph is from this source.
would cost more than a redevelopment, but Broadhead was also likely to keep
costs low with the advantage of his own building firm.

Although additional fire exits were added to the structure to comply with
safety regulations, the remainder of the alterations were to the interior of the
building. These transformed the Phillips Hall into a theatre rather than a municipal
building, another example of Broadhead reworking social space to accommodate
predominantly working rather than middle class patrons. The new Hippodrome
held 2,000 people and had been equipped with a new balcony, fireproof bioscope
box and increased lavatory provision, although this was probably no more than
one WC per floor, for both ladies and gentlemen. The decoration of the interior was
very similar to that of the liminal area theatres. The *Bury Times* commented that
“the frontage of the circle was finished in fibrous plaster in an artistic manner,” and
used words such as “cheerful”, “bright” and “attractive” to describe the auditorium,
with its soft furnishings of “old gold velvet.” Like the Queen’s Park Hippodrome,
the Bury house had only two levels, stalls and circle, the latter containing a
promenade. However, in accordance with Moss, Stoll and MacNaghten, each of
whom demanded complete propriety in their houses, and Broadhead’s refusal to
supply alcohol, the promenade was more likely to be a standing area, thus
modifying the disreputable space of older town and city music-halls.

Despite the improvements to the interior of the Bury Hippodrome, little
could be done with the stage, which was extended by just three feet. This meant

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135 See note 150.
that touring productions had to finish their run at Bury as the scenery needed to be cut to size.\textsuperscript{136} Despite the smallness of the house and the proximity of the Theatre Royal and Circus Hall, Broadhead’s prices of a shilling for the stalls, 6d for the circle and 3d for the pit led to a successful start for the venue. However, this caused controversy with other Bury theatre proprietors, who lowered their own prices in return, meaning that by December 1904, Broadhead had been forced to bring his charges down to 6d, 4d and 3d respectively. Having been accustomed to working alongside other entertainment promoters in Blackpool, the furore may have come as a shock to Broadhead, who, according to Burt-Briggs, arranged a meeting with the “envious owners” to rectify the situation. This was his first instance of rivalry between town-centre houses, a situation that would recur in Preston several years later.\textsuperscript{137}

Although the next town centre theatre on the Broadhead circuit was the Preston Royal Hippodrome which opened on 14 January 1905,\textsuperscript{138} I will discuss this venue alongside its sister site, the King’s Palace, as a link to the final part of the chapter, discussion on entertainment complexes. In between the Bury and Preston Hippodromes, Broadhead had opened the King’s Theatre at Longsight, Manchester. The King’s was not in a town centre in the strictest sense of the term, but it was in the heart of a sub-district of Manchester, one that differed from the liminal area sites. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Longsight was more of a middle class

\textsuperscript{136} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., \textit{The Hippodrome, Garden Street, Bury}. No pagination. All information in this paragraph is from this source.

\textsuperscript{137} I will return to the Preston incident in due course.

location than its predecessors, with particular emphasis being placed on appearance and character.\textsuperscript{139}

The architecture of the King’s reflected these concerns, offering a very different exterior to the Osborne, Metropole or even Bury Hippodrome. Photographs and plans of the building show a wide structure with two shops surrounding an entrance arcade to the stalls and circle of the theatre (see Fig. 20),\textsuperscript{140} a strategy usually applied when space is limited.\textsuperscript{141} Broadhead maximises the spatial potential here by giving the majority of viewer interest to the facade, with its wide expanse

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig20.png}
\caption{Exterior Plan for the King’s Theatre, Longsight c.1904.}
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\textsuperscript{139} See Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{140} King’s Theatre, Longsight. Manchester Local Image collection.
\textsuperscript{141} Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 102.
\end{flushright}
of glass, rather than the entrance of the theatre. Distinct from the shops at the base of the Metropole, those of the King’s have picture windows and ornamental transoms. The upper storey of the building is also more decorative than any of its forerunners, albeit much less so than Matcham’s Theatre Royal, Bury. Although the windows are rectangular, the carving around them is curved, giving a softer and more elegant line, and they are bisected by individual stone finials like those mentioned earlier on the Empress Electric. With a raised gable at each end of the frontage the building gives the appearance of a manor house or small stately home, yet it was built on the site of workers’ cottages. A third storey rises from the three central windows and is crowned by a turret of red brick decorated with wrought iron. Whilst this gives a commanding presence to the building and makes it easy for patrons to locate, it also provides a nod to the industrial roots of the district; many of the cotton mills of Manchester were graced with a similar design feature.

142 Plans for the King’s Theatre, Longsight. Manchester Local Image collection.
The plans for the interior of the King’s provide the first indication of the layout of Broadhead’s town centre venues (see Fig. 21). The most striking feature of the stage area is that the adjoining electricity room (which housed the National Gas Engine) was almost half the size of the stage itself. This signified Broadhead’s confidence in his machinery (other engines were either outside of the building or below stage) and that the area under the stage was now being used for other things. Although the plan only shows a small heating chamber, it is likely that the remainder of the space was given to dressing rooms or storage – the scenery doors are now to the rear of the stage. A large dressing room flanks the right of the stage at stalls level, but on the higher level there are blocks of them on either side of the

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Ibid. Further interior detail is from this source.
stage, adjacent to the flies. Also backstage, at ground level are the new additions of a lavatory and office.

Once through the entrance arcade at the King’s, patrons made their way through a foyer to the circle, stalls and pit, each of which had a separate entrance. The Longsight venue is the only one on which Burt-Briggs comments that “separate exits and entrances were built for each type of accommodation as it was not considered correct that the different types of patrons should seem to be treated in the same manner.”\(^\text{144}\) However, it is likely that these unwritten rules were recognised at all Broadhead houses (and at other contemporary venues) as spatial cues, guiding the audience “to a particular viewing position.”\(^\text{145}\)

Social segregation within the theatre is accentuated on the plans for the ground floor of the auditorium, with a clear boundary between the stalls and pit – a distance of some three rows. The pit is also much smaller than those of the liminal area theatres, containing only five rows of benches. Comfortable tip-up seating comprises the first five rows of the stalls and the entire circle with the exception of the row ends, which appear to be benches. The King’s has two boxes on each side of the stage at circle level in comparison to the single boxes of the Osborne and Metropole. As the venue comprised only two storeys, there would be no rowdy gallery to provoke similar fears to those engendered at the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, whilst the additional boxes gentrified the space, a possible nod to the social aspirations of Longsight’s “respectable tradesmen and mechanics, with their

\(^\text{144}\) Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., *The King’s Theatre, Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester*. No pagination.

wives and children,” patrons that Davis and Emeljanow identify with boxes in East End theatres.146

However, like the liminal area theatres and the Bury Hippodrome, the King’s Theatre was painted in white and gold, suggesting warmth, cleanliness and light. (White paint would also have been relatively inexpensive to buy in bulk.) Interestingly, Burt-Briggs mentions that this style of decoration was “of the type established by the designer.”147 If this was William Birch, it would account for individual differences to each house on the circuit. It is unlikely that the Osborne or the Queen’s Park Hippodrome had “cherubs holding up lamps around the circle” as did the King’s. The family did not attempt to compete with Matcham’s interiors; as with outside embellishments this would have raised costs that ultimately would have been passed onto the public. However, the King’s offered a kind of understated luxury, one recognisable to the audience, whilst still providing a contrast to everyday life. In terms of spatial layout within the theatre, Broadhead provided good quality and cleanliness, and accordingly expected such from his patrons. Rather like William Holland’s carpet, the level of decoration influenced the behaviour of the audience (a point I shall return to when discussing the Hulme sites). Unfortunately, the opening of the King’s marks a point in the local press where interest in Broadhead’s Manchester houses wanes. This was the sixth house in the Manchester area, and warranted only a few lines in the Manchester Evening

147 Burt Briggs., Op Cit., The King’s Theatre, Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester. No pagination. All further information is from this source.
Fig. 22. The Hippodrome, Preston. (Undated.)
The first of the two Preston houses, the Royal Hippodrome, Friargate, opened in 1904 (See Fig. 22). Preston is arguably the most important of the Broadhead town centre locations as it had not been colonised by a Matcham theatre, nor were any of Broadhead’s contemporaries operating in the town. Two entertainment venues already existed at this time, the long-established Theatre Royal, which had entertained the Prince of Wales during a Preston Guild, and the Prince’s, since its rebuilding in 1900, owned by E.H. Page. Both houses were dedicated to drama rather than variety, which meant that Broadhead was able to slip seamlessly into the theatre landscape of the town, the local press commenting on the long wait for a “thoroughly up-to-date music hall and variety theatre.”

Even the names of the Preston houses, the Royal Hippodrome and the King’s Palace, showed that Broadhead considered them equal to the Theatre Royal and the Prince’s. The press agreed, describing the Hippodrome as “a decided acquisition to the list of Preston’s places of amusement.”

The new Hippodrome had a similar structure to the King’s, Longsight, with an elegant exterior and plate-glass shop fronts on either side of an entrance arcade. The Preston house, however, was not as extensively embellished - there were no stonework finials on the front of the three-storey building, although carving around the windows gave the same soft lines as the King’s. A contemporary painting

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152 Ibid.
153 Preston Royal Hippodrome. Preston Image Collection.
illustrates a decorative iron canopy over the entrance and a slate turret akin to that of the Longsight house.\textsuperscript{154}

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig23}
\caption{The Theatre Royal, Preston. (Undated.)}
\end{figure}

It is also interesting to note similarities between the Hippodrome and the Preston Theatre Royal (see Fig.23) which was also a three-storey structure with a tower and a cast-iron canopy.\textsuperscript{155} In this case, the Hippodrome embodied one of Broadhead’s regular practices, that of using less expensive materials to emulate established designs.

\textsuperscript{154}Fletcher, Russell. \textit{The Hippodrome and Friargate}. C.1905, front cover of Hindle, David. Op cit.
\textsuperscript{155}Hindle, David. Op cit., p.42. Photograph of Theatre Royal.
In terms of location, the Theatre Royal, like its Bury counterpart of the same name, occupied the prime site due to its proximity on Fishergate, one of the main roads through Preston, to the railway station.\(^{156}\) The Hippodrome, however was also on a main thoroughfare, Friargate, and was accessible by tram. Broadhead’s house had a geographical location comparable to his Manchester theatres, a place where people congregated. It was close to the town’s market, “which like the encompassing city could be seen as a symbol of the stage upon which Everyman played his earthly role,” a signifier for trade and commerce as well as entertainment (and most importantly the bread and butter of everyday living).\(^{157}\)

This area was also to the industrial heart of the town with engine sheds, a gasworks and a soap works within the vicinity, illustrating that Broadhead was also offering the town’s workers a place of entertainment.

A description of the interior of the Hippodrome is worth quoting at length as it demonstrates how different the first Preston house was from those that had preceded it, even fellow town-centre sites Bury and Longsight:

...there is abundant evidence that no expense has been spared. The ceiling is divided into eight oblong panels, with splendid Egyptian mountings in fibrous plaster. These are bordered by friezes representing garlands of flowers. The proscenium is in the Ionic style, with Renaissance panels and friezes. On each side are statues representing “Repose” and “Silence” and these are supported by brackets, imitative of the heads of Satyrs... On each side of the stage is a handsomely furnished private box, prettily decorated. All the main walls are furnished with a rich crimson art paper which

\(^{156}\) Old Map of Preston”, [BMP Map], Scale 1:2500, Ordnance Survey County Series 1st Revision. [Geospatial Data], published 1912. Landmark Information Group, UK. Using: EDINA Historic Digimap Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, Date Created: 1 April 2104.

\(^{157}\) Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 17. The significance of the marketplace to Broadhead’s audiences will be developed in Chapter 4.
harmonises extremely well with the gold and white used in all other decoration.\textsuperscript{158}

Immediately it is possible to pick out Broadhead trademarks – the private boxes, the gold and white decoration and the panelled ceiling. However, many of the features of the Hippodrome were new - there was none of the austerity of the earliest houses, for instance the Osborne, whose auditorium resembled a school hall with its rows of wooden benches. The Hippodrome had more in common with Matcham’s Blackpool designs with its garlanded friezes, whilst the Ionic proscenium was a throwback to the classical influence of the Prince of Wales Baths, a hint that Broadhead was hoping to fill the theatre with an audience that had travelled into the town centre from surrounding areas, rather than workers alone. The “statues representing “Repose” and “Silence”” were an unusual feature (again possibly with Masonic undertones)\textsuperscript{159} and not as easily recognisable as the sculpture of Shakespeare in Matcham’s Blackpool Grand. However, dual representation by way of comic and tragic masks was already used to symbolise drama, and the sculptures would have formed a behavioural cue for the audience. As Fiona Wilkie argues, spatial layout influences behaviour, an indication that Broadhead expected (and received) good behaviour.\textsuperscript{160}

Further influence of Blackpool, home of the illuminations, could be found with the inclusion of the 1800 electric light bulbs reported by the press.\textsuperscript{161} Not only did these suggest light, warmth and propriety (no dark areas where improper acts could occur) they also continued the Broadhead espousal of new technology and

\textsuperscript{158} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op Cit., \textit{Royal Hippodrome, Preston}. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{160} Op cit., Wilkie, Fiona. p. 249.
spectacle. Plans for the theatre also showed a waiting room at circle level which contained daily papers.162 This was not a new feature – it had already come into force at the Hulme Hippodrome, but had not been well used. However, it must be remembered that the design of Broadhead’s theatres was far removed from larger city centre venues and that of the ideal monumental theatre described by Carlson:

It ought to be isolated on all sides and therefore situated in the middle of a square, the extent of which should correspond to that of the building it contains and to the space necessary for vehicles to circulate freely.163 Friargate was a busy street for pedestrians, shoppers and transport, rather than the residential thoroughfares of Hulme (although neither area provided “suitable vistas.”)164 A waiting room here would have been a welcome asset, avoiding pavement congestion, grime from passing traffic, and bad weather, adding to the removal from everyday life.

It was the King’s Palace, the final theatre in the circuit, that set the seal on Preston as Broadhead’s town. Although there is no definite date when the site came under Broadhead control, Burt-Briggs writes that the family operated it as a roller-skating rink named the Empress,165 so an estimate would be from around 1909, when an identical venue was opened in Ashton-Under-Lyne. The Empress was within a short walk of the Hippodrome, on the other side of the market square, and was in the next block to the Prince’s Theatre.166 The rink was successful, with a varied clientele in terms of age and social standing, and was beloved by

162 Plans for the Royal Hippodrome. Lancashire County Records Office.
163 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 79.
164 Ibid.
Broadhead’s youngest daughter, Hilda, mother of Burt-Briggs.\textsuperscript{167} However, it is likely that Broadhead was taking advantage of the sudden craze for skating rather than a serious change of business direction. By this time, William Birch had been dead for two years, and by 1910, plans were in the pipeline to convert the Empress into a theatre.\textsuperscript{168} The site was a large one – the width of a block. In addition, Broadhead would have been in a good position to realise that the Prince’s was experiencing difficulties. As soon as the King’s Palace opened (6 February 1913), the older venue changed from a “dedicated theatre,” into a site that showed films, drama and live boxing,\textsuperscript{169} all of which Broadhead had been doing for the majority of his theatrical career.

\textbf{Fig. 24. Interior of the King’s Palace Theatre, Preston. (Undated.)}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit. \textit{The King’s Palace Theatre, Preston}. No pagination.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Hindle, David. Op cit., p.48.
\end{itemize}
The design of the King’s Palace, particularly the interior, was a far cry from the early days of the liminal area theatres. A photograph of the auditorium depicts a theatre of a much higher standard (see Fig. 24). However, Burt-Briggs’s assertion (based on contemporary newspaper articles) that the final venue in the circuit was “different from other Broadhead theatres,” is not strictly correct. The King’s Palace was the culmination of a gradual procedure of learning on the part of Broadhead and Sons, and incorporated their understanding of location, changing times and theatre building. Notwithstanding the impending First World War, it is likely that Broadhead and Percy knew that this would be their final site. As will be recalled, plans to turn the Empress skating rink into a theatre had been submitted in 1910. The three year hiatus between the submission and the opening of the King’s Palace was due to the “serious illness” of Percy, who in 1910 would have been in his early thirties, the same age that had necessitated his father’s removal to Blackpool for ill health, and also seen the death of his brother, William Birch.

The exterior of the King’s Palace was still somewhat plain in comparison with the elaborate structures of Matcham, with no intricate carvings adorning the building. Like the majority of its predecessors in both town centres and liminal areas, the King’s Palace had a narrow frontage and stretched back a long way. It was made from “glazed vitreous terra cotta” rather than the standard red bricks that Broadhead had used previously, which meant that the building had a sheen to it instead of a dull finish. The King’s Palace also made use of several of the design

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170 Ibid., p. 81.
172 Ibid.
173 Plans for the King’s Palace Theatre, Preston. Lancashire County Records Office.
features of older Broadhead structures; the buff stone of the Liverpool Pavilion
surrounding the windows, the turrets of the King’s Longsight and the Preston Royal
Hippodrome and the inverted ‘B’ device of the Ashton Pavilion and Empress
Electric, Miles Platting.

The interior of the building also differed from earlier houses. The entrance
and foyer were to the rear of the stage adjoining the property room, manager’s
room and generating room.\footnote{Plans for the Grand Junction, Hulme. Manchester Local image collection. All further information in
this paragraph is from this source.} In a pleasing symmetry between the first and last
houses, the waiting area at circle level was known as a ‘crush room’, as was the
same space at the Osborne theatre. The plans for the King’s Palace had been
amended, presumably due to the two year gap between their submission and the
date they were passed, and fire regulations had to be updated. These included a
fire exit directly from the flies. However, the most noticeable aspect of the inside
of the theatre was the decoration

Inside was a three-domed ceiling with a proscenium arch supported by
colonnades of red and black marble. The decorations of the hall had been
carried out by a Mr Bartlett, who had been responsible for the interior work
at the “Stoll Theatre”, London. The motif of the decorations was “Louis XIV”
in an attractive colour scheme of cream and gold. All the curtains and
draperies in the theatre were of an apple-green shade and gave a very
pleasing effect. The carpets were of “Rose-de-Barry” pink, the fauteuil stall
seats were of a new and luxurious design upholstered in “old gold silk
plush”, 700 new design seats in the circle were covered in rich crimson plush
and in the pit there was accommodation for 1,350 patrons with ample leg
room. In keeping with the French decorative art freely and originally
treated, the ceilings and the proscenium had been painted with illustrations
of allegorical subjects in which the Muses were represented together with
allied goddesses cast in high relief. All personified grace and beauty and had
been carried out with elegance and refinement.\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., The King’s Palace Theatre, Preston. No pagination.}
From this description it is possible to see how some of the original features of Broadhead’s houses were retained (indicating that his original ideals of quick, clean, smart and bright still underpinned the project) – the cream and gold decoration and the pit seats still taking the form of benches. However, the interior of the King’s Palace was far more in line with Matcham’s Blackpool venues than any other Broadhead site, and was also a close copy of the Preston Empire which had opened in 1911. There was a marked emphasis on luxury with the “Louis XIV” style of decoration, and tactile fabrics such as silk and plush, the colours and textures described in sumptuous terms, although Carlson notes that this style of furnishings were typical of auditoria at this time. The marble proscenium colonnades added to the spectacle, giving the stage the appearance of the entrance to a temple, accentuated by paintings of the Muses and “allied goddesses”. The auditorium was virtually unrecognisable from the early pictures of the Osborne with its hard edged, utilitarian furnishings and largely bare walls. This was also the first time that a tradesman in conjunction with another circuit owner was mentioned as well as a link with London. Broadhead generally preferred craftsmen local to his venues. A list of subcontractors for the Preston Hippodrome shows that out of seven firms, five were from the town itself, which would have helped to establish his reputation amongst the townsfolk, as well as securing an audience.

Although the exact details of Mr Bartlett’s work are not recorded, his presence marks the fact that Broadhead considered his theatre the equal to those of fellow proprietors. The King’s Palace can be said be to his exhibition piece, the

177 Hindle, David. Op cit., p. 50.
result of a long apprenticeship from builder to theatre builder, or in theatrical
terms, the last item on the bill that would linger in the mind of the audience after
they had left the house. With the gradual evolution of his theatre buildings,
Broadhead was now a serious threat to other theatre owners. In an echo of the
uproar over the Bury Hippodrome, the owners of the Theatre Royal, Princes
Theatre and Empire Theatre elected barristers to oppose the granting of a dramatic
license to Broadhead, pleading amongst other things that there were too many
theatres in the town centre and that a further venue would depreciate their own. 180
Despite petitioning for the license of the Preston Hippodrome to be revoked in
exchange for that of the King’s Palace, the rival owners were unlucky, and both
Broadhead houses stayed open into the 1950s.

Although the family had two venues in Preston, these were never marketed
as anything other than separate entities. However, due to their proximity to the
Princes and the Theatre Royal, they formed part of what Claire Cochrane describes
as an “entertainment quarter,” where different proprietors placed houses close
together to create an area recognisable to audiences. 181 Broadhead, however, was
unique amongst his contemporaries Moss, Stoll, Barrasford and MacNaghten in that
he operated large scale sites that comprised multiple amusements and advertised
them as such. I shall refer to them here as “entertainment complexes”, and they

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180 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., King’s Palace Theatre, Preston. No pagination. Further details in this
paragraph are from this source.
181 Cochrane, Claire. Twentieth-Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire. (Cambridge:
consist of the Hulme Hippodrome and Grand Junction Theatres, Broadhead’s self-styled “Ashton Amusements” and Morecambe Winter Gardens.

**Entertainment Complexes**

Entertainment complexes were nothing new to Broadhead. The Prince of Wales Baths, his first project, had been part of a complex, and he was also a shareholder in the Blackpool Tower Company. Although Frank Matcham contributed to both the Tower and the Blackpool Winter Gardens, he was not responsible for the complete design of either, therefore his Blackpool projects cease to be relevant here. Full entertainment complexes, however, were part of his repertoire, and whilst his theatres in Ashton-Under-Lyne and Morecambe were both dedicated to drama, the Regent Theatre, Salford (1895) that stood at the opposite end of Cross Lane to Broadhead’s Royal Salford Hippodrome (1904) serves as a good example.

The Regent Theatre was built for Messrs Hardie, Von Leer and Gordon as a venue for drama with a seating capacity of 2,500. The complex also included “shops, clubrooms and assembly rooms,” at a price of £14,000. Not only would Broadhead would have recognised that one of his Hippodromes could run alongside the Regent with little overlap in entertainment, but it is also likely that as the site

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184 See p.16.
185 Matcham designed the Theatre Royal, Ashton-Under-Lyne (1891) and the Royalty Theatre, Morecambe (1898). Walker, Brian. Op cit., Appendix 1.
186 Ibid., p.165. Information in the next paragraph is also from this source.
for the Salford Hippodrome was purchased around 1900, that the Regent provided inspiration for the Grand Junction Theatre and Hulme Hippodrome (1901-1902). Both Salford and Hulme were densely populated areas within close proximity to docks and heavy industry and had sufficient room to house large-scale entertainment facilities.

The influence of the Regent on the Hulme Hippodrome is evident from the exterior of the buildings.

![The Regent Theatre, Salford](image)

Fig. 25. The Regent Theatre, Salford. (Undated.)
The former was an imposing rectangular, red-brick structure, higher in the centre than on either wing (see Fig. 25). Although in the middle of a row of buildings, its frontage was grander than that of a facade theatre, and it stood out against its neighbours. It was flat-fronted apart from a central window which abutted the building and had a small, embellished balcony. The windows were in a variety of shapes; arched at circle level with smaller rectangular windows below, and circular ones to the left and right, all surrounded by the ochre stone also used by Broadhead. The exterior of the Regent, however, was much more striking, with a decorative pediment at roof level embellished by four small turrets and a heavily ornamented gable in the centre of the building. Interestingly, the name of the theatre and the words “assembly rooms” were picked out in individual letters above the windows – a possible indication of the influence of Matcham on the Broadhead circuit. The decorative iron canopy over the entrance between shops at ground level was also a familiar sight on Broadhead houses. To the left and right of the shops stood arched entrances to the different areas of the theatre and other functions of the building.

Broadhead’s first complex differed from the Regent in that it was two separate structures: the Grand Junction Theatre and the Hulme Hippodrome which were adjoined by a large rectangular conservatory known as the Floral Hall.

Fig. 26. Exterior Plan for the Hulme Hippodrome (Prev. Grand Junction) c.1904.

Although there is no photographic evidence of the smaller theatre, plans show the frontage of the complex to Preston Street as very similar to that of the Regent – a wide rectangular building, also with a raised central section and name picked out in individual letters (see Fig. 26). Although the roof was not pedimented or gabled, there were finials surrounding four small domes, reminiscent of the four turrets of Matcham’s Salford house. The structure was also in red brick, but with ten individual courses of white brick around the front and sides, whilst the arches over the windows were also white, providing a cheaper, but still eye catching alternative to Matcham’s embellishments. Like the Regent, the Hulme structure had entrances to the pit, stalls and circle of the larger theatre at ground level, next to four glass-fronted shops and two offices for the circuit.

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188 Plans for the Grand Junction Theatre, Hulme. Manchester Local Image Collection.
189 Photograph of Hulme Hippodrome site. Manchester Local Image Collection.
Although the Regent cost less than his contemporary Blackpool designs, Matcham’s interior is similar to those created for the Opera House and Blackpool Grand Theatre, described below:

The decorations in front of the stage are on a magnificent scale, being in cream and lavender, ornamented with gold. Each side is enriched by a life-size figure representing tragedy and comedy. A carved likeness of Shakespeare occupies the centre. At the entrance is a flooring of mosaic work. Three pairs of swinging doors lead into an inner vestibule, also floored with mosaic, and richly decorated.\(^{190}\)

Whilst not as opulent as the interior of the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, this account shows that Matcham created his design around the purpose of the theatre. Drama was represented by the bust of Shakespeare, and the figures of tragedy and comedy. As with Broadhead’s symbols of repose and silence at the Preston Hippodrome, these were strong visual signifiers for what the audience could expect onstage. The classical style of the house was also reinforced by the mosaic floor, giving the impression that the Regent was a place for serious, edifying and expensive recreation rather than the fun or relaxing environment that Broadhead strove for with his early venues. This particular house is also a good example of Matcham bringing in contractors from outside the area; the proscenium was painted by a Northants tradesman, whilst other decorations were done by Binns of Halifax, a Yorkshire firm.\(^{191}\) This indicates that with the amount of money at his disposal Matcham could still have reciprocal agreements with preferred tradesmen, but did not worry about forging links with the community, a practice that was one of Broadhead’s greatest strengths.

\(^{190}\) See note 166.
\(^{191}\) Ibid.
In terms of decoration, the Grand Junction was damned by faint praise, with the *Manchester Evening News* saying that Broadhead’s catchment area consisted of “a class of people unaccustomed from the nature of things to the degree of beauty attained at the principal city centre theatres [sic],” and that the internal features of the Grand Junction were “all that could be desired and more than might have been reasonably expected.”\(^{192}\) The following year, the Hulme Hippodrome fared little better: “perhaps not as extensively decorated as some Manchester theatres, the Hippodrome is chaste in design.”\(^{193}\) These comments provide testimony on middle class perceptions of Broadhead’s areas (that they housed a rough and uncultured population), and the same lack of knowledge displayed by Davis and Emeljanow’s West-End audiences on their East-End counterparts, that they were somehow ‘other.’\(^{194}\) However, they also serve to illustrate how Broadhead used his theatres to offer a largely working class audience a space to which it was usually denied. Their everyday experience of large buildings was restricted to places of employment, and whilst the design and decoration might not have approached the standards of the city centre venues, they gave a valuable space, much larger (and lighter) than a domestic residence, and one not given over to paid employment. Also, it can be argued that although the construction of the theatres and their subsequent profit allied them to capitalist modes of production, the above points illustrate that Broadhead’s social goals gave them use value (an example of how his endeavours can be viewed as Lefebvre’s concept of *oeuvre*) a concept that aids society rather than just making profit.

\(^{194}\) Davis, J & Emeljanow, V. Op cit., pp. 41-55.
Unfortunately, there are no further details on the decoration of the Hulme Hippodrome, but the Grand Junction is said to have plasterwork carried out by Messrs Alberti of Oxford Street, Manchester (the theatre heartland of the city) who was later employed by Broadhead on the Preston Royal Hippodrome.\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{The Hippodrome, Hulme}. Private collection. No pagination.} It appears that the scenery, like the general paintwork (Matcham-influenced cream and gold) was done by Broadhead in-house staff, as no locations were given after their names.\footnote{Ibid.} Like both the liminal area theatres and the town-centre sites, the Hulme complex was powered by a National Gas Engine in the basement, next to the well that powered the fly wheel.\footnote{Plans for the Grand Junction, Hulme. Op cit. All information in this and the following paragraph is from this source.} The area below stage contained the unusual feature of a large workshop, alongside a band room and dressing rooms. This meant that storage for the large theatre was taken to stalls level with four areas to the right of the stage, and also to gallery level, where the upstairs of the shops that lined the front of the complex, formed a series of stores in descending sizes.

Structurally, the interior of the Grand Junction resembled its immediate predecessors, the Osborne and Metropole, the main difference being that the stalls and pit were all bench seating, indicating the audience potential of Hulme. The only tip-up seats were in the centre panel of the seven-row circle, whose side seats were also benches. There was a box on each side of the stage at this level, one fewer than the town-centre sites. As with the Bury Hippodrome, a promenade ran round the back of the circle, which would have provided extra standing room if necessary and clear access to the sloping ramps to the exits, which were also present at
gallery level. Even for a building that held 3,300, lavatory accommodation was still minimal with two toilets for ladies and one for gentlemen on each floor.

By 1905, when the Grand Junction had turned into the Hulme Hippodrome, sanitary provision had not improved. However, the larger theatre, had undergone structural changes that allow some interesting conclusions.

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198 Plans for Hulme Hippodrome. Manchester Local Image collection.
Plans for the redevelopment illustrate that three of the stage-level stores had been altered, one into an electricity room that heated both houses (see Fig. 27). The main change at this level however, was the transformation of the entire stalls and
pit to tip-up seating. This would have reduced the number of patrons per performance, but meant that again, Broadhead was providing a level of comfort usually afforded to city-centre theatregoers to a working class audience, a direct statement that he felt them worth the investment, embodying Lefebvre’s thesis of right to the city. These were now the best seats in the house, the circle and gallery were both lined with benches, and the boxes were removed. This also meant that the more expensive seats were separated entirely from the cheaper ones.

Further changes that accompanied the transition between the two houses illustrate the family’s progress in reading both their locations and audiences. The emphasis was not on eliminating elegance or refinement, but making the designs of the houses more practical. A pass door was still available at circle level from the Hulme Hippodrome to the Grand Junction, which meant that the waiting rooms created from the re-working of the Floral Hall were accessible to all patrons. The original plans for the Grand Junction (1901) showed that the Floral Hall had been a rectangular structure the length of the auditorium, filled with plush seats, ornamental plants, daily newspapers and a refreshment area. However, as discussed with the Preston Hippodrome, it proved something of a white elephant, providing little more than a waiting area for auditioning artistes. The 1905 restructure saw the Floral Hall changed into additional office facilities which would become the Broadhead theatre headquarters, and the aforementioned waiting rooms, a less imposing prospect to patrons alienated by displays of ostentation.

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Although building on Broadhead’s second entertainment complex, the “Ashton Amusements,” commenced before the re-working of the Hulme site, the eventual shape of the development was very different to its predecessor. Ashton-Under-Lyne also marks the point where comparisons to Matcham cease to be pertinent as Broadhead was moving into different fields of entertainment such as roller skating and cinema. The “Ashton Amusements” comprised the Empire Hippodrome Theatre (1904), the New Picture Pavilion cinema (1908) and the Empress Skating Rink (1909). The buildings were placed on three sides of a rectangular block of land purchased by Broadhead in 1904. The site covered 7,377 square yards, of which 70 were sold for a Salvation Army headquarters and a further 525 square yards were sold to a Blackpool developer for a billiard hall. The plans for both of these venues had to be submitted to Broadhead for approval, presumably to maintain the overall appearance of the site, and each development was given a price cap, indicating that Broadhead did not want more extravagant or striking designs (unlikely as it may seem in the case of the Salvation Army) than his own. The role of the entertainment complex was to stand out, but after the debacle of the early Prince of Wales Baths, Broadhead would have realised that an incongruous element could affect the whole space. That the site was considered important, however, was reflected in the fact that building on the Empire Hippodrome commenced immediately after purchase; Broadhead was not willing to hold the Ashton land in reserve.

200 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Empire Theatre: Oldham Road, Ashton-Under-Lyne. Private collection. No pagination. All information in this paragraph is from this source.
Both the Empire Hippodrome and the New Picture Pavilion, Ashton-Under-Lyne’s first purpose-built cinema, were built from the customary “best stock bricks relieved with stone dressings and terra cotta facings”\textsuperscript{201} and thus resembled the Hulme structure. However, as did all Broadhead’s buildings, each had individual identifying features.

\textsuperscript{201} “Proposed New Hippodrome” Alfred Burt-Briggs Collection. Private Collection. No pagination.
The Empire Hippodrome was of an upright, rectangular design crowned with a forerunner of the inverted ‘B’ mentioned earlier (see Fig. 28). In this case the structure rose to a peak with a window, or possibly a date plaque in the centre. It also housed a shop on either side of its entrance, a standard feature for Broadhead at this time.

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202 Photograph of Empire Hippodrome. Tameside Local Image Collection.
The Pavilion was a similar shape and also bore the inverted B (see Fig. 29). Its exterior however was different with a single row of small windows in the centre of the building, the immediate left and right of which were most likely lavatories judging from their placement on plans for previous venues. Directly under these and above a cantilever canopy over the entrance, the name of the venue was spelt out in individual letters, differing from the Empire Hippodrome, which bore its name on a decorative cast-iron pillar canopy. Not only does this change highlight developments in architecture and technology in the four years between the buildings, it also helps to reinforce that different styles of entertainment were available within – traditional and established in the former, new and up-to-date in the latter. The exterior of the Pavilion is also interesting. Although it followed a Broadhead design, its actual construction was carried out by a firm of Ashton builders. There are two possible reasons for this change: that Broadhead wanted to establish links with the community, given that this was his second house in the area, and also the fact that 1908 saw the family finding their feet after the death of William Birch.

Although there are no clear pictures of the Empress Skating Rink, the plans for the structure and the writings of Burt-Briggs describe a very different building to those that had gone before. The Empress was the first Broadhead house not designed at Tib Street. It was contracted out to John Eaton Sons and Cantrell, who had designed Stamford Street, Ashton’s main shopping thoroughfare,
suggesting that Broadhead wanted harmony with the surrounding area in what was a new direction for the circuit. Unfortunately there are no records detailing if the Empress was built by Broadhead and Sons, or whether the firm that had constructed the Pavilion the previous year was again responsible. Whilst Broadhead opened two further Empress skating rinks around this time, both of these were within existing structures rather than purpose-built.  

Although the Empress was the final part of the Ashton complex, its building materials were very different to those of the Empire Hippodrome and Pavilion or any of Matcham’s elaborate exteriors. It consisted of “intermediate framing” and “rustic boarding,” both of which were fluted timber. This was applied in a double layer (outside and in) with the exterior layer thicker than the one inside.  

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206 Broadhead opened an Empress skating rink in Morecambe Winter Gardens (1909) and also operated another Empress rink in Preston, later to become the King’s Palace Theatre (1913).  
208 I am grateful to Jack Rhodes for this information.
Fig. 30. Exterior Plan for the Empress Skating Rink, Ashton-Under-Lyne c. 1908.

Broadhead’s new building was a structure with a curved roof, not unlike a modern day sports hall (see Fig. 30). Despite the disparity in architectural style, the Empress backed onto the Empire Hippodrome, to which it had an adjoining door, ensuring that patrons could move from one pursuit to another without going outside.

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Fig. 31. Exterior of the *Palais de Danse* (prev. Empire Skating Rink).

A photograph of the Empress during its incarnation as the *Palais de Danse*, shows a dome at one end of the structure, with wooden panelling painted in both dark and light colours (see Fig. 31).\(^{210}\) The decoration, coupled with the position of the venue, against rows of terraced houses, is reminiscent of the view from Adelaide Street, Blackpool, of the rear of the Winter Gardens.

The seaside elements of the Ashton Amusements (both in style and entertainment) were likely furthered by Broadhead’s acquisition of the Morecambe Winter Gardens in 1909.\(^{211}\) The complex was on the promenade at Morecambe and

\(^{210}\) Photograph of the *Palais-de-Danse*. Tameside Local Image Collection. Undated.

had opened in 1878, comprising a theatre, baths and aquarium, but it is the 1897 redevelopment that provides an interesting example of the exchange of both ideas and capital between seaside towns and the places that provided their visitors, illustrating how individual spaces form part of a larger whole. The architects for the redevelopment were Mangnall and Littlewood of Manchester, the directors included councillors from Halifax, and funding for the project was provided from banks in these areas as well as in Lancaster and Bradford. The venture attracted the attention of William Holland Junior, son of Broadhead’s Blackpool neighbour, and by 1898 he was manager of the Victoria Pavilion theatre at the complex. Holland was responsible for the alterations to the theatre which included white marble steps to the first gallery, modelled on those at the Palace Theatre, Manchester, and the reworking of the exterior balcony. In an interview with a local newspaper Holland provided an uncanny echo of his late father, telling how the red brick arches would be “filled in with glass, the ceiling and walls covered with handsome plastic work, and the floor laid with the finest Brussels...” Under his control, the reworked Victoria Pavilion was capable of holding around 7,000 people.

The extravagance of Holland and his fellow speculators, however, failed during the economic slump following the second Boer War (1899-1902). By 1909, Broadhead was able to purchase the Morecambe complex after a failed auction; a repetition of his acquisition of the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool. Although the

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212 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
property had cost in excess of £100,000 over the years, Broadhead acquired it for a sum between £20-25,000. According to Burt-Briggs

the purchase price included the house and shops at 3-4 Craven Terrace, Bath Cottage in Bath Street, [the rear of the complex], the house at 181 Lancaster Road and a former laundry in Bath Street, meaning a great deal of land at a knockdown price. As if to underline the severance between Broadhead and the Holland family, Broadhead’s first act was to change the name of the theatre to the King’s Pavilion, bringing the venue neatly into the twentieth century. The adjacent Oriental Ballroom was renamed the Empress Hall, and was promptly converted into a third roller skating rink for the circuit, highlighting the popularity of the pastime.

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217 “All for Sixpence.” The Heysham Chronicle, 2 March, 1910.
218 Ibid. Information in this and the following paragraph is from this source.
Structurally, there was little for Broadhead to alter. The exterior resembled one of his own constructions (see Fig. 32). It was built from red brick with shops at pavement level. To this, he added a terrace across the front of the building “so as to enable patrons to go from the King’s Pavilion to the Empress Hall.” The terrace formed a shelter to the shops below, which Broadhead embellished with a trademark cast-iron canopy. The interior of the Empress Hall was altered so that one half accommodated skating, the other billiard tables, and was supplemented by a “first class bar” at one end and a temperance bar at the other. There is no indication, however, that either of these bars sold food – the Empress rink in Ashton-Under-Lyne had a buffet area for patrons. However, the venue contained cafes for both indoor and outdoor entertainments.

The majority of Broadhead’s improvements to his last complex were on the land surrounding the original Winter Gardens building, thus, differing greatly from both the Matcham complex at Salford, and his own earlier sites. The Winter Gardens under his control represented a town in miniature, with its theatre, skating rink, billiard hall and refreshment rooms. Broadhead and Percy also remodelled the dilapidated fairground to the rear of the building (“by no stretch of the imagination could the place be described as a credit to the town.”)
Fig. 33. Plans for the Broadhead redesign of Morecambe Winter Gardens. Heysham Chronicle

3 March 1910.

Broadhead’s plans for redevelopment included ornamental gardens, hothouses and a bowling green as well as influences from Blackpool Pleasure Beach: a switchback, helter-skelter and an area for “American Novelty Shows” (see Fig. 33). The outdoor entertainments were illuminated at night by “a number of Golden Ray arc lamps,” providing not only “a gently diffused glow” but a respectable alternative to Blackpool’s notorious Raikes Hall Pleasure Gardens, mentioned in the previous chapter.222 The area was further updated by the remodelling of the Station Hotel

public house into a home for the manager (also ensuring he was on site night and day) plus a restaurant with its own kitchen garden.\textsuperscript{223}

To conclude, constraints of space within the thesis, and the sheer number of Broadhead’s venues have problematised a detailed reading of each building on the circuit. However, I have attempted to offer an introduction to the naming, design and architecture of the circuit during its period of construction (1896-1913).

Broadhead was unique, not only in having his own building firm, but in maintaining control of all his venues from their opening until his death in 1931. Both Barrasford and MacNaghten jettisoned less viable houses, whilst continuing to build and buy. Broadhead also stands out against the might of Moss and Stoll with his both his entertainment complexes and general ideology (offering a distinctive example of Lefebvre’s right to the city),\textsuperscript{224} inspired by the progressive ethos of Blackpool. How much the influence of the town impacted on the entertainment presented on the Broadhead circuit, and how it, in turn, relates to the production of space will be discussed in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{223} \textit{The Heysham Chronicle.} Op cit.

Fig. 34. The Manchester Programme of Entertainments & Pleasure. 27 July 1914.
Chapter 4

Repertoire

The image on the previous page (Fig 34) is an advertisement for Broadhead’s houses from the *Manchester Programme of Entertainment and Pleasure*.\(^1\) The *Programme* was a free periodical that ran from 1897 until 1933, a period covering the construction of the Broadhead circuit and the remainder of the life of William Henry Broadhead. The *Programme* was published by G. Hargreaves and Company of Market Street, Manchester and distributed to “hotels, clubs, cafes, libraries etc” throughout the North-West of England, including locations as far afield as the Isle of Man, Morecambe and Blackpool.\(^2\) From its earliest issues, Broadhead and Sons placed advertisements on an almost weekly basis,\(^3\) presumably due to the wide catchment area for distribution. This frequency has allowed me, with additional help from programmes and playbills, to compile a detailed record of productions for the circuit that spans thirty-six years. This data not only enables me to emulate the mapping of “performances and their potential spectators against the geographical landscape... as well as the social and cultural contours existing within it,”\(^4\) it also helps to present a more three-dimensional picture of the Broadhead circuit and provides scope for further study. No similar resource is yet available for the theatres of Edward Moss and Oswald Stoll, or the smaller chains, such as those of Thomas Barrasford and Frank MacNaghten.

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\(^1\) *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure*. 27 July 1914, p.19.

\(^2\) *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure*. 18 January 1897.

\(^3\) The first Broadhead advertisement is in the issue listed above.

The listing of productions and venues, however, is not without problems, especially within the context of a single chapter. By 1914, the Broadhead circuit had seventeen houses in operation which meant seventeen separate programmes per week. Like the advertisements in the *Programme*, this thesis does not have the room to record all the productions, even those of Manchester and Salford, for which there are the most comprehensive records. Broadhead and Percy provided an astounding range of popular amusements that included boxing, roller skating, dancing, billiards, pleasure gardens and funfair rides. Thus, this chapter will provide a summary of the three main types of entertainment that the Circuit provided: melodrama, variety and cinema (although, as with previous chapters, some overlap with incidental forms will occur) rather than critique individual productions or styles. The background against which Broadhead was working, one of middle class reform in working class areas, will be established in advance of this overview and referred to throughout ensuing pages, building on the content of the previous chapters to establish a rounded picture of his use of space for the benefit of his patrons. The ideas of Henri Lefevre, including the right to the city and the production of space will also be referred to here.

During the course of the chapter, I shall again make use of a wide range of materials. The advertisements placed in the *Programme* are not exhaustive; there are gaps in library holdings for the periodical, and certain theatres are seldom mentioned. Yet, there are sufficient issues and advertisements to recognise patterns in the distribution of plays, variety acts and films over a sustained period.

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5 There are scant references to the Liverpool Pavilion, the two Preston houses and Morecambe Winter Gardens.
which helps to explain Broadhead’s business practices, allowing for future comparative study with other circuit owners. Individual programmes and playbills spanning the duration of the circuit add to this procedure, as does the writing of Broadhead’s grandson, Alfred Burt-Briggs, a recipient of oral testimony passed down through the family and in the communities where Broadhead had theatres. These documents, both public and private allow for an intertheatrical methodology, articulating “the mesh of connections between all kinds of theatre texts, and between texts and their users,” which, in this case, means the relationships between both Broadhead and the material shown on the circuit, and the implications of this for his audiences.

Intertheatricality permits an open, in-depth reading of the advertisement that opens this chapter. Initially, it provides a summary of what was shown at eight of the Broadhead houses on a given week (I will return to the date of the image later) and emphasises the family’s use of melodrama, variety and cinema. The Grand Junction, Osborne, Salford Hippodrome and King’s were all showing productions reminiscent of the ‘bad girl’ melodramas written by Frederick and Walter Melville, although none are actual Melville titles. Similarly lurid fare was on offer at the Empress, with *In the Wolves’ Fangs, The Crucible of Fate* and *A Rural Demon*, but these productions were films rather than live theatre, as were the “animated pictures” of the Crown, Queen’s Park Hippodrome and Metropole, which were shown alongside variety acts.

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6 Burt-Briggs had contacted several regional newspapers asking for peoples’ memories of his grandfather’s theatres. The results are within his writings on individual theatres.


What is omitted from the advertisement, however, is also useful. This specific document only provides details for the Broadhead houses in Manchester and Salford, those referred to in the previous chapters as ‘liminal area’ venues, and, not all of them.9 The largest Manchester house, the Hulme Hippodrome is not listed here, but an additional advertisement informs the reader that *Mind your own Business* was showing there on the same week.10 Broadhead often placed individual notices on separate pages of the periodical ensuring that if readers missed it in one particular place, another could catch their eye. Splitting the venues over multiple pages may also have been a necessity. The *Programme* contained a large amount of content on current productions and their stars as well as actual theatre buildings, public transport timetables and the adverts that funded the periodical’s survival. To list the ten liminal area theatres together would have meant that the bill was cramped, thus offering the possibility of being avoided. Although the *Programme* was distributed throughout the North-West of England, it is likely that Manchester was its main area for circulation, explaining why only occasional adverts for the Liverpool Pavilion and Morecambe Winter Gardens were placed by the family.

From the heading of the advertisement, all the houses on the bill are described as theatres, even if they are cinemas, or hippodromes, the name that Broadhead gave to his variety houses. Such a change is partly due to the passage of time. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Broadhead only used the name ‘Hippodrome’ over a period of two years (1902-1904), and never in its true

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9 See Chapters 2 and 3.
context. However, by 1914, the circuit had been complete for over a year and the heading “The Broadhead Theatres” marks a shift in the family’s description of themselves from builders to theatre proprietors, as well as reinforcing the family brand locally. Regular readers of the *Programme* would also recognise the name of Harry Winstanley, secretary to the circuit, who had first worked for Broadhead at the Prince of Wales Baths. By the time of the advertisement, Winstanley’s career with his employer had spanned almost thirty years and various roles, including manager of the Osborne Theatre. His longevity as an employee highlights the good relationships Broadhead maintained with his staff, which further cement his reputation as a force for good in the community. Broadhead’s social entrepreneurship will be discussed throughout the chapter.

The date of the advertisement is also important. The newest theatre, the King’s Palace, Preston had opened in February 1913, whilst the long-established Osborne had been a going concern for eighteen years, illustrating that the circuit was a solid and well-managed business. 27 July 1914, however, was the day before the start of the First World War. The advertisement does not reflect a strong sense of the political and social unrest of the time, although in the world of entertainment, this was not uncommon. Although the first bill to show plays related to the times was 27 April 1914 when *A Soldier and a Man* played at the King’s, this was one of a series of war dramas that had been in existence for many years previous to the current conflict. It was not until 12 October 1914 that such

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11 See Chapter 3.
13 *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure*. 27 April 1914.
productions became a regular feature on the circuit, \footnote{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure. 12 October 1914.} with the Salford Hippodrome showing *A Soldier’s Honour*, ‘the domestic military drama’ and the King’s *The Soldier Princess*. Neither title questioned the contemporary fervour for joining up, and the Broadhead houses were used for recruitment drives throughout the war, illustrating a political standpoint from the family’s Liberal patriarch. It is unlikely, however, that Broadhead would have stood against the prevailing ideology of his audience – his social conscience and indeed, livelihood, simultaneously permitted and depended on recognition of their feelings.

As a final point, the placement of the advertisement in the *Programme* is significant. This is on a literal level – showing that the belief in local advertising that Broadhead adopted in Blackpool never wavered.\footnote{See Chapter 1.} The regularity and consistency of his place within the *Programme* invites speculation to a possible financial interest with its publication, as do the dates of its existence (1897-1933) which mirror those of the circuit. Over the years, Broadhead advertisements grew larger as the venues increased and were often supplemented by photographs of family members, actors and productions, with accompanying articles, thus placing them at the heart of the entertainment network, even if their theatres were physically removed from it. By 1906, the block format that opens this chapter had become the norm, although it was still located in and amongst the main body of the magazine, rather than at the back with the public transport timetables.\footnote{The first instance of Broadhead’s advertisement with a public transport map is Monday 26 June 1906.} During the period 1910-1920 the family were the only theatre promoters to make use of this later space. Broadhead,
however, would have viewed it as advantageous. In the details surrounding the advertisement that opens this chapter, there are tram and bus listings that serve seven of his theatres, meaning that patrons could plan their evening’s entertainment and transport home without turning a page. Post 1920, trade and retail advertisements had crept onto the page, but Broadhead & Son remained the only theatre proprietors to advertise there. Like the theatres in liminal area locations, the advertisement was more noticeable because it was in a place not usually given to such things.

The style of the bill was consistent throughout the Programme’s duration – clear, large fonts that stood out against the smaller type of surrounding material (A Man’s Best Pal, The Sin of her Childhood). Although there were different fonts within the advertisements, none were overtly masculine or feminine thus not prohibiting a mixed audience. Ornate calligraphy, like ornate architecture ran the risk of alienating Broadhead’s audiences and was also more difficult to read. Also telling are the smaller type descriptions of the melodramas such as “The Great Human Play” How Girls are Brought to Ruin, showing at the Osborne. The dual typefaces signify an audience with varying levels of education, those who would choose to go to see a play from the title alone and those who would justify their choice by the small-print explanation, indicating Broadhead’s catering for “a largely working-class audience with the needs of a smaller middle-class clientele.” As such description does not extend to variety or cinema (only “Animated Pictures” at

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the Metropole warrant bold type) it will be used here to facilitate discussion on melodrama and Broadhead’s working class audiences.

**Reform and rational recreation**

G.J. Mellor proposes that “Broadhead offered productions ‘of an uplifting moral nature’ to a working class public at prices they could afford,” and there is more than an element of truth in this statement.¹⁸ Burt-Briggs writes that his grandfather wanted to give something back to the audiences that had visited the Prince of Wales Baths.¹⁹ However, it is likely that Broadhead was equally aware of a large percentage of the population of Manchester, who, in not having fixed employment and its resulting income, “were struggling to find the money for a day out at Belle Vue let alone the excursion fare for a day trip to Blackpool.”²⁰ (Trips were often organised by, and saved for, within individual firms.) One of the failings of the movement for rational recreation, “an important instrument for educating the working classes in the social values of middle class orthodoxy,”²¹ was that it failed to recognise the problem of endemic poverty, despite aiming to make working class leisure time improving and useful.

During the mid nineteenth-century there were countrywide attempts by employers, magistrates and politicians to curtail rowdy or unregulated

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entertainment, where crowds of employees often gathered with their out of work
neighbours, such as the old ‘wakes’ holidays: weeks throughout the summer when
travelling fairs, mummerly, prize-fights and sporting events took place.22 These were
all events that represent Henri Lefebvre’s theory of “fete,” or festivities, which he
regarded as the best aspect of agrarian society, lost with the advancement of
urbanization and industrialisation. Lefebvre urged for fete to be revitalised by new
forms of life in the city.23 During the first half of Broadhead’s life (c. 1848-1890),
however, such events were problematic. They “involved not only drinking and
gambling, but also excited the worst lusts of mankind – violence and cruelty to
fellow-men and to animals.” 24 In addition, they led to the problem of St Monday,
absenteeism from work due to heavy drinking on the proceeding day, and thus
became targets for middle class reform.

Manchester, famed for its rapid expansion as an industrial city, was by no
means exempt from proponents of rational recreation. Hugh Cunningham writes
how as early as 1802 the Whit Walks were developed “in an attempt to lure
children away from Kersal Green [horse] races.”25 As the century progressed, the
city grew, and by 1901, 2.1 million people inhabited Manchester.26 Consequently,
the slum areas described in Chapter 2 began to emerge, inflating middle class
anxieties of communal living, disease and crime. Thus, the areas where Broadhead

22 Reid, Douglas A. “Interpreting the Festival Calendar: Wakes and Fairs as Carnivals”, in Storch,
23 Lefebvre, Henri. Writings on Cities. Trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. (Oxford:
24 Cunningham, Hugh. Leisure and the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-c.1880. (London: Croom Helm,
25 Ibid. p.41.
chose to place theatres were magnets for middle class reform, particularly Ancoats, Miles Platting and Openshaw, which came under the umbrella heading of East Manchester. Improving activities ranged in scale and concept. Local church groups proliferated, including St Andrew’s, Ancoats, which boasted both a musical and entertainment society.\textsuperscript{27} However, due to the sheer number of competing churches and their conflicting beliefs, they did “little more than scratch the surface of specific social problems.”\textsuperscript{28}

Large-scale institutions fared little better. Charles Rowley’s Ancoats Recreation Committee, founded in 1882, aimed to “reform working class taste” through art and music, and “counteract the hold which alcohol had on the poor.”\textsuperscript{29} Rowley was the councillor for New Cross Ward, Ancoats (which would later be represented by William Birch Broadhead) and had grown up in the area. In spite of this, however, his system was as flawed as that of the church. Rowley and his fellow reformers often hand-picked their audiences, and at open meetings where refreshments were served, it was not unusual for “some 800 people” to be present. When refreshments were cut due to escalating costs, the attendance figures dropped, indicating that the food and drink were the real attraction.

Somewhere in the middle of church and high-minded philanthropy stood the lads’ club, the stalwarts of the rational recreation movement, and an alternative to the mechanics’ institutes, which had been populated by the “middle and

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Kay, Audrey. “Charles Rowley and the Ancoats Recreation Movement, 1876-1914.” Ancoats: the First Industrial Suburb, ed. Kidd, Alan & Terry Wyke, spec. Issue of Manchester Region History Review 7 (1993) p.47. All further quotations in this paragraph are from this source.
respectable classes.”

Lads’ clubs were present in the Broadhead districts of Ancoats, Openshaw, Hulme and, most famously, Salford. The Clubs offered religion, education and handicrafts, but their most successful area was that of sport. They launched “football, rugby and cricket teams, and actively promoted gymnastics, athletics and swimming,” in a desire to rid the city of the Scuttling gangs and offer an alternative to the violent or bloodthirsty recreations of the old fairs and wakes. The movement was successful, with Andrew Davies hailing it “one of the most profound changes taking place in the slum districts of Manchester and Salford.” However, it too had its drawbacks, notably, that women and girls were excluded (as they were from Rowley’s circle) and that it appealed more to white-collar workers than labourers or the unemployed.

Thus, whilst rational recreation went some way to addressing the problems of working class leisure opportunities and gang delinquency by providing alternatives to the inexpensive, yet often rowdy pursuits of Broadhead’s audiences, it did not offer a definite solution. Part of the reason for this failure was the element of worthiness, which was thinly disguised middle class control. Whilst some responded to the idea of social betterment (Broadhead himself acted against the poor example set by his father) others would have regarded it as interference from those who knew nothing of their way of life, or the circumstances that arose

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31 Salford Lad’s Club was immortalised by modern day band the Smiths on the inside cover of their album The Queen is Dead (1986).
33 Ibid. p. 337.
34 Ibid. p. 343.
from the growth of the “shock city” of the Victorian age.³⁵ It was this kind of coerced, patronising recreation to which Broadhead provided a non-intellectual and satisfying alternative. Not only did he create public spaces for improving recreation, free of the negative connotations of his areas and their inhabitants, he also provided entertainments that offered his audience self-representation; a tripartite model of place, performance and spectator. Like the policing of holidaymakers in Blackpool, the first of these entertainments, melodrama, was administered, “with a light touch.”³⁶

Melodrama

By showing melodrama in his theatres, Broadhead illustrated the same acuity in reading his potential audiences that he had already displayed with his locations and buildings.³⁷ Not only was melodrama the prevailing form of expression during the time the circuit was under construction (1896-1913), it also addressed problems that were relevant to Broadhead’s patrons, including the disparities between both town and country and the rich and the poor, and the emergent role of working women.³⁸ However, the genre also permitted Broadhead a kind of didacticism in accordance with his personal creed of progress: that decency could be found in those perceived as being the lowest echelon of society, and that morality and hard work promoted virtue that money alone could not hope

³⁶ See Chapter 1.
³⁷ See Chapters 2 & 3.
to achieve. This and the following part of the chapter will examine how Broadhead took melodrama and variety and personalised them, not only to the needs of his audience but also to his social and political agenda.

According to Rohan McWilliam:

> Melodrama was a sentimental form of theatre that laid bare the struggles between good and evil through tales containing heightened emotions and deep passions. Plays frequently featured scenes based on elaborate coincidences and scenes of peril. They employed stock characters who were defined as essentially good or bad with little attempt to explore any further complexity of motivation. Melodrama was based on a contact between stage and audience that narratives would offer moral absolutes and foreground romantic love. At the end of the play, order or harmony is usually restored, the neatness of the ending providing a form of catharsis for the audience, a soothing narrative closure.  

Importantly, however, he admits that melodrama is “difficult to define and defies standard forms of categorization,” sub-dividing, and borrowing features from contemporary affairs and absorbing them “like a sponge.” It is this process of constant osmosis that has ensured that melodrama “confidently continues to this very day in motion pictures, indifferent to criticism and objection.”

From such interpretation it is possible to compare the evolving nature of melodrama to that of Broadhead’s theatrical career, beginning with his borrowing of successful elements of Blackpool entertainment, such as circus acts, and their subsequent incorporation into the programmes of the Prince of Wales Baths (c.1885-1896). At this time, although the style did not stretch to full productions, certain elements were incorporated such as the use of music, comedy and pathos.

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40 Ibid.
These features were exemplified in the sketches penned by William Birch Broadhead. Whilst the doomed sailor ("I’ll go down in the angry deep/ with the ship I love")\textsuperscript{42} mentioned in Chapter 1, provided amusement with his ‘ship’ a piece of stage machinery and his watery demise lasting only as long as it took William Birch to swim to the side of the pool, he also stood as an example of loyalty, steadfastness and respectability, qualities that the family circuit embodied.

Broadhead eased his Manchester audiences into melodrama gently. His first theatre, the Osborne, opened in April 1896, with \textit{The Priest Hunter}. Although details on this production are scant, the \textit{Manchester Evening News} reveals it was a comedy, with Mr Hubert O’Grady of the Queen’s Theatre, Dublin, causing “endless amusement” in the leading role.\textsuperscript{43} However, it stood as an example in a number of ways. Not only was Broadhead breaking away from the template of Moss and Stoll by placing his theatre in a working class area, he was providing a production that catered to a very different audience to that of Manchester’s Theatreland. Ancoats and Angel Meadow, which surrounded the Osborne, were regarded as “an environment of cultural and economic insecurity” due to their large Irish population.\textsuperscript{44} In showing an Irish play, performed by an Irish company, Broadhead was, in effect, showing the city as a script written by a working class minority group, and indicating that his theatre was truly for the people of the surrounding districts, a people regarded as ‘other’ in everyday existence, let alone theatregoing habits. The productions thus stand as examples of what melodrama “might signify

\textsuperscript{42} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{The Wriggling Fish}. Private Collection. No pagination.
\textsuperscript{44} Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.122.
inaccurately to English eyes while being instructed how to read it with Irish awareness.45

Two weeks later the Osborne showed another Irish play, Sons of Erin, illustrating the gradual segue into melodrama.46 Sensation served as a hook for potential audiences (who may have been alienated by an obviously ‘improving’ repertoire) in much the same way that Broadhead’s photographs of women in bathing costumes lured customers into the Prince of Wales Baths. (The Osborne, for example, started 1897 with Secrets of the Harem.) Melodrama proved to be popular in the Oldham Road area with certain plays returning at almost identical slots throughout the year – Against the Tide, first shown in April 1897 was reprised by the same company a year after its initial run.47 Repetition of successful plays was not unusual for Broadhead and changes in the producing companies also allowed for variation in the script, providing the audience with an alternative picture. During the first couple of years of construction, when the Osborne was the only theatre, repeating dramas also proved an effective way of testing if they would stand to tour a large circuit.

At the same time that Broadhead opened the Metropole Theatre, Openshaw (1898), two brothers commenced a playwriting career that flanked that of the Broadhead Circuit, and would offer many of its long-term staple productions. Frederick and Walter Melville were the third generation of a theatrical family, and alongside their siblings they maintained “the tradition of acting in, managing,

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46 The Manchester Evening News, Monday 27 April 1896.
47 The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure 28 February 1898.
directing, producing and writing plays” established by their father and
grandfather. In addition, they were in conjunction with their father, Andrew, the
proprietors of a number of venues, but used London as their base, expanding into
the provinces. Andrew Melville had been a lessee of the St James’s Theatre, Oxford
Street, Manchester during the 1880s, the time that Broadhead was making his
initial foray into a career in entertainment.

The business relationship between Walter, Frederick and their father would
have provided an attractive template for William Birch Broadhead. Through
previous chapters, his role in the construction of the Broadhead circuit has been
documented, from starring in the Prince of Wales aqua shows to selecting the
locations, and designing the actual theatre buildings. Whilst only speculation, it is a
logical consideration that his aim was to move the circuit forward on such a model
as that set by the Melville family. In this case though, there are indications that the
boundaries would have been reversed, with the Broadhead move being into the
capital city from the provinces. Burt-Briggs tells how in February 1907, the car
journey that resulted in the death of William Birch had been a trip to London to
view particulars on the sale of the Palladium. Whilst this information is
questionable (the Palladium did not open until 1910) it does not preclude William
Birch negotiating with, or surveying other London theatres. However, a more
plausible reason for the trip could have been the Music Hall Strike of 1907, a theory

48 The Melville Family.
http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/theatre/melville/biography/index.html
Accessed 5 February 2014. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph are from this source.
50 Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p. 51.
reinforced by Peter Honri, who situates his great-uncle, William Birch in arbitration meetings.\textsuperscript{51}

It is likely that William Birch also intended collaboration with his younger brother Percy (who would later form the Broadhead repertory company) under the aegis of their father. The former had developed his skills as a writer, moving from the sketches performed in Blackpool to fully-fledged plays. \textit{Manchester By Day and Night}, first performed at the Metropole, Openshaw, in 1900, was written by William Birch and produced by his brother.\textsuperscript{52} The production was a clever adaptation of some of the predominant titles of the day. Melodramas such as \textit{Lost in London} were common fare on the Broadhead tour, continuing long into the 1920s and 1930s. Their popularity is apparent from the supplementation of adaptations with similar titles and plots. Between 1901 and 1909, the Osborne showed \textit{The Great World of London, How London Lives, Rich and Poor of London, A London Actress, A Country Girl in London and Her Life in London}.\textsuperscript{53} On occasion, the physical setting of the title was altered to appeal to a local audience – for example, Dion Boucicault’s \textit{The Poor of New York} was adapted as far afield as “Dublin, Liverpool, London or any other suitable location.”\textsuperscript{54} It was 1905, when \textit{The Streets of Manchester} opened at the Metropole,\textsuperscript{55} meaning that William Birch’s play had pre-empted a specifically Mancunian melodrama by five years. Broadhead and Sons, like the Melvilles, recognised what was popular (and thus profitable) and such

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure} 1901-1909.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure} 9 January 1905.
titles also show they were unafraid of producing alternative versions of plays that would run in city centre theatres, suiting the pockets of their audiences, and depicting spaces that they could view as their own.

_Manchester by Day and Night_ is crammed with specifics of contemporary melodrama: physical action, a calculating and immoral female lead, bigamy, a mix of recognisable (and seamy) city-centre settings and working class common sense. Stella Frean has married an elderly man for his money, and, with her associate Gustave Lisle, plots to murder him and simultaneously frame George Fairburn, suitor of her husband’s daughter, Doris. Stella and Lisle implicate Fairburn with Isaacs, the moneylender, but it is in fact Lisle in his debt. An argument over who is financially compromised leads to Stella stabbing her husband and forcing his handkerchief into his mouth to stifle his cries. Before his demise, Frean sits up and points to Fairburn; this action coupled with the fact that his initials are the same as those on the handkerchief in the corpse’s mouth leads to Fairburn’s arrest. Sprung from Manchester’s Strangeways prison by Doris and her enterprising butler, Smart, there is a comic interlude where both Fairburn and Smart dress as Doris’s (fictitious) ailing grandmother, before Fairburn is captured and tried for the murder of Frean. In a clever, self-referential advertisement, Fairburn passes crowds waiting to enter the Metropole to see the play, whilst travelling from Manchester Royal Infirmary to Strangeways (despite this route being geographically impossible). On his acquittal, Stella and Lisle plan to murder Fairburn, but are again thwarted by Smart, who allows a fellow customer of Isaacs into the Frean household. The newcomer is Stella’s estranged father, who reveals that she is already married to Lisle. Knowing her new found inheritance is lost, Stella, in a twist worthy of _Grand_
**Guigonol**, attempts to throw acid in the face of Doris. Fairburn knocks the bottle aside, and Stella herself is disfigured. The play ends with her and Lisle’s arrests.

Although there is no evidence to link William Birch to the Melville brothers, it is apparent that he was aware of them, most likely from the initial consideration of theatre locations. A reading of the list of plays exempt from the ‘Bad Woman’ title given by the University of Kent library, and by which the work of Frederick and Walter is generally known, provides a mirror to the principal dramas that appeared yearly on the Broadhead Circuit.⁵⁶ These include *East Lynne*, *It’s Never too Late to Mend*, *Maria Marten*, *The Shaughraun* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Some appear to be scripts lifted verbatim from the work of the original authors, including Baroness Orczy and Charles. Others though are the work of Andrew Melville, or fellow touring company proprietors such as F. A. Scudamore, whose production of *Against the Tide* was mentioned earlier.

*Against the Tide*, however, did not prove to have the longevity of other melodrama stalwarts, with no listings for Broadhead houses after 1900. By comparison, variations of *East Lynne* (possibly Andrew Melville’s own adaptation) first appeared at the Osborne in October 1898 and recur throughout the advertisements in the *Manchester Programme* until June 1926, illustrating a constant appetite for the form within Broadhead’s areas over a period that spanned more than a generation. During this time, a sub-genre known as ‘Bad Woman’ or

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⁵⁶ Melville Collection.
http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/theatre/melville/overview/plays/play-list.html
Accessed 5 February 2014.
‘Bad Girl’ melodramas had arisen\(^5^7\) (Stella Frean is a grossly extended version of such a character), and would continue to feature in advertisements for the circuit until the end of the run of the *Manchester Programme*.

In 1898, Walter and Frederick Melville began to carve their own specific niche of the family business and commenced writing a series of plays that appropriated implicit aspects of melodrama; the fear of poverty, the deadening everyday routine of the working class, unhappy marriages and the allure of the city.\(^5^8\) The central characters of Bad Girl plays, however, refused to submit to the doom visited on their dramatic predecessors (I will return to this point shortly), and as Sos Eltis points out, acted as a fusion of the seduced maiden and the resourceful maid to produce a modern heroine, financially self-supporting, quick-witted and strong-armed.\(^5^9\) By 1918, thirty scripts had been produced by the Melville brothers, at least twenty-one of which appeared at Broadhead houses, many such as *A World of Sin* (1900) in the same year they were written, illustrating that the family were aware of new titles. As with established melodrama, the plays were also supplemented by cheaper imitations. The last official Melville production listed in the *Manchester Programme* was *The Bad Girl of the Family* in March 1914, which was showing at the King’s Theatre, Longsight,\(^6^0\) but homogeneous pieces litter advertisements until the end of the periodical’s run. The bill that opens this chapter lists three examples, *How Girls are Brought to Ruin, The Sin of her Childhood* and

\(^5^7\) “Bad Woman Dramas”


\(^5^9\) Eltis, Sos. Op cit., p. 197.

\(^6^0\) *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure* 3 March 1914.
Her Night of Temptation.\textsuperscript{61} None of these plays are listed amongst the University of Kent’s Melville Brothers collections, so it is difficult to ascertain whether or not Walter and Frederick had any input into the writing or production. Here, however, this question is of secondary importance. What is interesting is that the dramas served to uphold Broadhead’s social concerns, yet in a way that was uncomplicated and titillating, a way that would have been easily followed by the audience.

A good example of the difference between established and “bad girl” melodrama is presented by Eltis, who describes Nelly Armroyd, heroine of Watts Phillips’ \textit{Lost in London}.\textsuperscript{62} Nelly ends her days far from home, abandoned by her metropolitan lover “in an ill-furnished attic,” a far cry from the luxurious life she dreamed of, as the wife of a northern miner. By contrast, in the Melville brothers’ re-working of \textit{Lost in London} (\textit{The Girl who Wrecked his Home}) their heroine, Bertha, once seduced and abandoned, shows no sign of quietly pining away. Instead, she “seizes a gun and fires at the first man to proposition her.”\textsuperscript{63} A woman such as Bertha was far more likely to resonate with Broadhead’s female audiences than the passive, fatalistic Nelly, or the heroines of escapist musical comedies such as \textit{The Gaiety Girl} and \textit{From Shopgirl to Duchess}, a style that ran concurrently with both other melodramatic sub-genres.

Many women in Broadhead’s areas would have been employed in some form of paid work since childhood, in townships dominated by mills, markets and heavy industry. Admittedly, “the age of mass shopping had begun” in Manchester

\textsuperscript{61} See note 1.
\textsuperscript{62} Eltis, Sos. Op cit., p.19
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p.197.
by 1885,64 but this meant that more girls and young women were in jobs with high aspirations, but low wages compared to their less glamorous counterparts. Whilst the protagonists of musical comedies implicitly highlighted some of the problems faced by female shop workers, such as sexual harassment, long hours and demeaning work,65 it is likely that in the sub-districts of Manchester where Broadhead placed his theatres (very different in themselves from suburbs) their troubles would seem facile, and the result of getting above one’s station. Melanie Tebbutt has written that areas comprising a mass of back-streets were usually female-dominated, with any attempt at breaking away from the status quo seen as conceit and disloyalty.66 Although the motivation behind these sentiments was one of envy or insecurity, the idea prevailed. In addition, Broadhead’s areas had also been home to female Scuttlers, who along with their male counterparts, frequented music halls.67 To these young women, the idea of the Gaiety Girl would have been a world away from reality.

The “Bad Girl” of the Melville dramas, however, was not representative of a female gang member, and seldom reached the lows perpetrated by William Birch’s character, Stella. Eltis tells how even the capable Bertha of The Girl who Wrecked his Home is re-absorbed into the family structure by the end of the piece, being forgiven by her estranged husband.68 It is conclusions such as these that have led to debate that the plays form a backlash against “unruly New Women and a

67 Davies, Andrew. “‘These Viragoes are No Less Cruel than the Lads’: young women, gangs and violence in late Victorian Manchester and Salford.” British Journal of Criminology 39(1) 1999: 72-89.
patriarchal society in consequent disarray. In the case of the Broadhead Circuit the question ultimately remains unanswerable. The most likely explanation is that Broadhead showed all three types of entertainment: melodrama, ‘bad-girl’ dramas and musical comedy, because they were popular at the time, especially in the provinces, and were easy viewing. His listings in the Manchester Programme show that his choices of plays, whilst thought-provoking, were not fodder for intellectual discussion, as were those of George Bernard Shaw, or Ibsen. Each central character would strike a chord with certain sections of his audiences, whilst each sub-genre adhered to specifics of the master, providing resolution by the end of the play. Melodrama, for Broadhead, provided “a metaphor through which to approach disturbing subjects temporarily,” providing a light relief from the restrictions of everyday life. Thus, no single point of view was expounded and no expectations were placed on the audience other than good behaviour within the theatre.

By the time the Osborne opened, Broadhead was a Liberal Councillor in Blackpool and a noted churchgoer, a reputation that was strengthened by the similar work of William Birch in Manchester. The social profile of both father and son lent weight to Geoffrey Mellor’s argument that Broadhead wanted a repertoire that would simultaneously entertain and instruct his audience. However, it was equally important that families could be reassured that these were not the rowdy halls, such as the Star, Ancoats, or the People’s Music Hall, one-time haunt of the Scuttlers. Broadhead and William Birch would not risk damaging their reputation by tolerating disorder. In return, their place in society gave the circuit a dignity that

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p.151.
was lacking from those of Moss and Stoll, both of whom were knighted for their work,\textsuperscript{72} or smaller-scale entrepreneurs such as Thomas Barrasford, “the born hustler.”\textsuperscript{73} Although all of these proprietors insisted on respectability within their houses, none had the position at grassroots level in their communities as did Broadhead and his eldest son. The bigger theatre chains were more concerned with profit than improving the day to day plight of the urban masses and the subsequent creation of use value. Broadhead and William Birch, by comparison could not afford to limit their audiences to “the more affluent and educated sections of the community,”\textsuperscript{74} nor did they wish to.

As a final point on Broadhead’s use of melodrama, the sheer volume of Melville-originated work, both ‘bad girl’ dramas and otherwise, can be taken as an example of him working in conjunction with touring companies. It was not until after the First World War that Percy Broadhead, having taken over the mantle of social benefactor from his late brother, formed the Broadhead Repertory Company. Until this time, Broadhead, keeping abreast of current circuit practice, engaged a separate company for each venue that showed melodrama, including those mentioned previously, such as F.A. Scudamore and Hubert O’Grady. This was an astute decision – it gave the touring company several weeks of paid work, whilst proving cost-effective for Broadhead. As Tracy C. Davis has noted, music hall and variety provided optimum returns “when several venues are run in conjunction.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.136 & p.154. Moss was knighted in 1905, Stoll in 1919.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 169.
\textsuperscript{74} Davis, J. & Emeljanow, V. Op cit., p.62.
\textsuperscript{75} Davis, Tracy C. \textit{The Economics of the British Stage, 1800-1914}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.268.
By 1911, Broadhead’s use of single companies touring with a handful of plays had begun to change, with the rise of the Combination Company. Facilitated by the growth of the railway, these companies, which originated around 1870, had grown in popularity in the United States, and showed specifically American-themed dramas.\(^{76}\) The first to appear in the *Manchester Programme* on the Broadhead Circuit was *His Indian Wife*, which showed at Salford Hippodrome, in May 1911.\(^{77}\) The following year provided a profusion of similar titles, such as *The Cattle Thief*, *The Pet of the Ranch*, *The Prairie Outlaw*, *The Cowboy’s Revenge* and *An Indian Girl’s Devotion* alongside several Mormon plots including *At the Mercy of the Mormons*.\(^{78}\) Whilst these plays reflect the old conditions of melodrama; sensation, spectacle and the conflict between different creeds and races, they also showed that Broadhead had grasped the importance of intuiting changes of both time and space, for the good of the people.

On a basic level, combination companies that appeared in Britain were often a single venture of management and capital which employed both traditional actors and actresses, as well as variety turns.\(^{79}\) The plot of the drama, as in the case of *An Indian Girl’s Devotion*, was often facilitated by new inventions (an important feature for the entrepreneurial Broadhead) such as the treadmill, created by actor, Neil Burgess, which, along with a moving backcloth provided the impression that a horse was galloping across the stage. The Red Indian plays or Wild West dramas, as the Broadhead bills referred to them also included interludes of dancing, singing


\(^{77}\) *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments & Pleasure* 1 May 1911.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., January-December 1912.

and the playing of musical instruments, thus providing a blend of melodrama and variety, exploiting the best of the two predominant forms of theatrical entertainment.

**Variety**

Of the eight theatres listed in the Broadhead advertisement that opens this chapter, half were variety houses. This figure, however, is misleading because, in truth, all Broadhead playhouses were home to variety as melodrama combination companies had brought with them their “speciality” acts. It is a further fact that all those theatres identifiable as full-time variety houses were just that: variety theatres, not music halls. None sold beers, wines, or other alcoholic spirits on their premises, or allowed drinking in their auditoria, indicating a different kind of social space to the public house. The proof of this claim lies in the complete absence of Broadhead “wet money”—refreshment tokens stamped with the name of the theatre – which were acquired at the door as proof of admission and, later, exchanged at the theatre’s bar toward the price of the entrant’s first beverage.80 Even though many licensed premises were in close proximity to the theatres, they stand as examples of Lefebvre’s analogy of houses within a street. Although they all comprise to make a larger whole, with energy flowing in between them, each individual building is also separate and contained.81

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Looking at the advertisements from the *Manchester Programme*, it would appear that variety was not offered on the Broadhead Circuit until 1901, when a “Grand Variety Co” appeared at both the Metropole and Osborne. ⁸² However, Broadhead had been experimenting with the form for much longer. As early as the 1891 refurbishment of the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool, variety had featured on the bill, with the incorporation of acts such as “Martello and Olenze” on the high wire, and the musical sketch “A Swim for a Wife.” ⁸³ The use of the former shows that Broadhead was influenced by circus entertainments, as presented by his business neighbour, Thomas Sergenson, a fellow entrepreneur who ran a circus on the site of the present day Grand Theatre. Sergenson, a member of a theatre syndicate and lessee of the Prince of Wales Theatre was representative of a ‘caterer’, someone who knew “how to compile a programme of the widest appeal.” ⁸⁴ The anticipation of changing taste was something that both the caterer and Blackpool town council took pride in, and the sheer amount of amusements clustered over the limited area that became known as the “Golden Mile” encouraged movement between different styles of entertainment, acting as a forerunner of the variety stage.

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⁸² *The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure*. 16 September 1901 & 21 October 1901.
By 1892, variety was well established at the Prince of Wales Baths, with the *Blackpool Gazette* telling that water farces included comedians and displays of synchronised or “ornamental” swimming.85

85 “The Prince of Wales Baths,” *The Blackpool Gazette* 3 June 1892.
A flyer for the venue, \cite{princeofwalesbathsflyer} which pictures the redeveloped interior, reads exactly like a playbill, “the most important cog in the variety publicity machine.”\cite{doublebenjamin} (see Fig. 35). Although all entertainment comes under the heading of “Grand Water Shows”, a closer look reveals that there were variations in the performance at each of the four daily showings, giving some of the artistes chance to rest. The earliest house, at 9.30 a.m. comprised only a swimming display and a water pantomime; “Merrie England or as it was 100 Years Ago”, appealing to nostalgia for the days pre-industrialisation and their attendant festivals such as the wakes and May-day-revels described by Cunningham.\cite{cunningham2002} Significantly, the prices for admittance to the Baths, at 6d, 1s and 2s, were comparable to those of the Osborne, which opened five years later.\cite{osborneprices} Whilst the price may have reflected the quality of the entertainment on offer, it is also likely that Broadhead realised that excursionists would be willing to spend more than their counterparts at home, as part of the holiday experience.

There is no indication on the bill that any presentation was more expensive than another, for example, that an evening performance cost more than the early morning show. Accordingly, there is no hint as to which acts would appear at performances subsequent to the water pantomime, leaving the remaining names on the bill, including the “Comic Skaters”, “Court Athletes” and “Human Enigmas” listed as appearing “twice daily”.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{princeofwalesbathsflyer} Prince of Wales Baths Flyer. Cyril Critchlow Collection. Blackpool Local Studies Library. All further quotations from this flyer are from this source.
\bibitem{doublebenjamin} Double, Oliver. \emph{Britain Had Talent: A History of Variety Theatre}. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.27.
\bibitem{cunningham2002} Cunningham, Hugh. Op cit., p. 60.
\bibitem{osborneprices} Prices for the Osborne in 1896 were: gallery 3d, pit 6d, stalls/side circle 1s, dress circle 2s and £1, 1s for a private box.
\end{thebibliography}
Like the advertisement from the *Manchester Programme* that opens the chapter, an intertheatrical reading of the flyer reveals further unwitting testimony, mainly that Broadhead was unfamiliar with, or was forgoing, the layout of a traditional variety or Vaudeville bill. His line-up consists of eleven ‘turns’, midway between the established nine in the US and the thirteen that Oliver Double provides as a London example, and there is no description as to what many of the acts actually do. Whilst Professors Simpson, Cartwright et al and Miss Murray are likely to provide demonstrations of swimming, with Professor Manillo an echo of Marquis Bibbero, Jonathan Read’s headline attraction, the Sisters Foulds, Sisters Sylvie, Zelda, Baby Tom and Little May have no sub-title attached to their names. In addition, the acts are not numbered, making it difficult to establish whether or not Broadhead and William Birch had yet strategised their entertainment; not putting two singers or comedians next to one another, or giving any idea of which acts opened and closed the programme (although this may have been indicated in the performance by musical cues or signature tunes).

This particular layout, although presented in a more attractive manner does not differ greatly from the block advertisements for variety performances at individual Broadhead houses in the *Manchester Programme*. As with the latter, different fonts and sizes of lettering are used (again with nothing too elaborate, or difficult to decipher) and these provide the only indication as to what, or who, is

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90 Page, Brett. *Writing for Vaudeville*. (Springfield, Mass: Home Correspondence School, 1915) pp 6-12. Although Vaudeville was an American form of entertainment, with slight differences from variety, Page’s book applies to a UK audience as it offers a model of writing for international use.
91 Ibid., p.9. Also, Double, Oliver. Op cit., p.20.
92 See Chapter 1.
94 Double, Oliver. Op cit., p. 18.
top of the bill. The Freres Dianta have the biggest lettering, “important because of its publicity value, but also because it indicated an act’s position in the backstage hierarchy.”\footnote{Ibid., p.28.} As a final point, in common with other variety or music hall bills, there is no mention of an interval on the Prince of Wales flyer. In the case of this particular venue, this is also due to the fact that no refreshments were sold, and that stage scenery would have been kept to an absolute minimum, with productions taking place on, or over the swimming pool itself.

Despite the differences between a traditional bill and that of the Baths, variety proved successful for Broadhead in Blackpool. His own business sense, coupled with the bravura attitudes of Sergenson and Holland,\footnote{See Chapter 1, p. 40.} allowed the business to flourish to the extent that he and William Birch believed their ideas would be popular elsewhere. Although planning for the Broadhead Circuit was underway, an advertisement in the Visitors’ Guide to Blackpool shows that the family were in a position to produce their water shows in other people’s venues: “theatres, music halls, sea, lakes or baths.”\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool. Undated image for Prince of Wales Baths. No pagination. All further quotations in this paragraph are from this source.} Billed as “the most refined and artistic performances offered to places of amusement,” the aquatic entertainments preceded both Blackpool Tower Circus, and the Hippodrome boom made popular by Moss and Stoll, by nine years, illustrating Broadhead’s superior understanding and innovation of space.

As will be recalled from the previous chapter, aqua shows had been part of the original plans for two of the Broadhead theatres; the Hulme Hippodrome,
(1901) and Salford Hippodrome (1904). These plans, however, did not come to fruition, and by this time, the demand for variety performances was well and truly established in Manchester, with two of Oswald Stoll’s venues, the Hippodrome and the Ardwick Empire also opening in 1904. Nevertheless, Broadhead had not been slow in noticing the trend. The first “Grand Variety Co” listed at a Broadhead house was at the Metropole in September 1901, with the Osborne following suit in October of the same year. The popularity of this decision in Openshaw was evident – the Metropole went on to stage variety once a month thereafter until the end of the year, whereas the Osborne remained faithful to melodrama.

Unfortunately, lacunae in the holdings of the *Manchester Programme* at Manchester Central Library mean that statistics for variety on the Broadhead Circuit during 1902-1903 are, at present, unavailable. However, by 1904, the Metropole had moved almost exclusively to this style, with only two exceptions this year; a production of *Round The Clock* in October and *The Life that Kills* in December. The Osborne at this time was still showing full-length dramas. 1904, however, was the year that the family surged ahead with their building programme, opening Hippodromes in Bury, Harpurhey, Salford and Ashton-Under-Lyne. Each of these houses launched with, and continued to show variety, with only occasional (bimonthly) plays. *Round the Clock* also appeared at Salford Hippodrome in October 1904. The family now had a functioning circuit, dominated by variety, in line with Edward Moss, Oswald Stoll, and other smaller-scale entrepreneurs; Thomas

98 See Chapter 2.
100 See note 75.
102 Ibid., 31 October 1904 and 19 December 1904.
103 Ibid., 24 October 1904.
Barrasford and Frank MacNaghten. The insight behind this choice, on the part of Broadhead, was cemented the following year (1905) with the exchange of names and styles of entertainment of the two Hulme theatres, the smaller of which was relegated to showing full-length plays.\textsuperscript{104} Variety, however, had also appeared on the newly-commenced Broadhead Circuit before the introduction of full bills. This was in the form of pantomime, a genre, like melodrama, that offered audiences “immediate and specific comment on the issues, major and minor, of the day,” without resorting to an intellectually demanding format.\textsuperscript{105} The first pantomime shown by Broadhead and Sons was not the re-imagining of a rural idyll seen some years earlier at the Prince of Wales Baths, but still had roots in a folkloric culture. \textit{Dick Whittington} opened on 5 December 1896 at the Osborne and ran until Boxing Day.\textsuperscript{106} The length of the run, although tying in with the traditional Christmas season, was doubtlessly due to the fact that the pantomime was produced by William Birch. In the years up to 1910, pantomimes on the circuit took place, typically, in February, for a one or two week period.\textsuperscript{107}

By 1896, the family were old hands at producing, having created the water pantomimes at the Prince of Wales Baths, where early scripts had been written around William Birch’s skills as a swimmer and performer. \textit{Dick Whittington}, however, was a logical choice for the first Manchester theatre. The same title had been showing at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Manchester, the week that the

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{The Manchester Evening News}. 5 December 1896. P.1.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure}. 1897-1910.
Osborne had opened, illustrating that Broadhead and Sons kept an eye on current productions.\textsuperscript{108} As with melodrama, they offered cheaper alternatives to contemporary pantomimes, sometimes even showing the same title at the same time as city centre theatres. For example, in February 1897, \textit{Babes in the Wood} ran concurrently at the Osborne and the Princes Theatre.\textsuperscript{109} The story of \textit{Dick Whittington} was also close to the Broadhead ideology and that of social entrepreneurship: a young boy from an impoverished background rising to great heights by his common sense in helping the community, skill with money and steadfastness in the face of risk and pressure. (With hindsight, there is also an attractive similarity between Broadhead’s own three proposed terms as Mayor of Blackpool and Whittington’s as Mayor of London.)

The water pantomimes, however, had introduced William Birch to the specifics of the genre, which had been recognised from its inception as “a blend of drama, sport, dancing, gymnastics, singing and orchestral accompaniment.”\textsuperscript{110} All of these elements were incorporated in the Prince of Wales bill, discussed earlier. However, at this time, variety had begun to play a much larger part in pantomime; from 1860, legitimate music hall entertainers had been cast in specific roles to display their acts,\textsuperscript{111} and by 1896 the Broadhead family had employed many variety and circus artistes, around whom a performance could be built. Lesser aspects of the form were also drawn on, including satire. Burt-Briggs tells how as early as 1888, William Birch named four horses for a comedy race “‘Income Tax’, ‘Wheel

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{The Manchester Evening News}. Wednesday 15 April 1896. P.1.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure}. 1 February 1897.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p.321.
Tax’, ‘Inhabited House Duty’ and, ‘Industry Tax.”112 Interestingly, pantomimes were not shown at any of the Hippodromes in their early years, indicating that Broadhead and William Birch viewed the form as a piece of full-length theatre rather than a series of turns, a kind of bridge between melodrama and variety. However, this does not preclude the use of filmed pantomime as part of a variety bill, described on an advertisement as “the bioscope” or “animated pictures.” From 1905, many variety theatres, in order to reduce costs and staging, had started to buy film versions from France, with producers such as Pathe, doubling their import numbers “in November and December in anticipation of sales... for the Christmas holiday season.”113

Pantomime also served as an introduction into the theatre for audiences who may have baulked at a performance that took a whole evening to tell a single story. Variety was already familiar to Broadhead’s Manchester audiences through their own modes of free or low cost entertainment, and it echoed working class traditions, such as the diverse acts that made up a fair. It has been well documented how this type of recreation, “deplored by authority and reformers,”114 had been under attack from the late eighteenth –century. Concerns were due to attendance by large and often unruly crowds and the fairs’ reliance on drinking, gambling and often bloodthirsty sports such as dog-fighting and bare-knuckle fights,

113 Mayer, David. “Victorian Pantomime on Twentieth Century Film,” in Davis, Jim. (Ed.) Victorian Pantomime: a Collection of Critical Essays. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p. 206. There is a possibility that Broadhead and Sons may have bought filmed versions of pantomimes or “fairy plays” from Pathe or Gaumont, both of whom had offices in Manchester, as did many variety proprietors at this time. Although I have not found evidence of this practice, neither have I found any indication that the circuit’s pantomimes were written, costumed or rehearsed locally.
even though the latter events were simultaneously viewed as patriotic and masculine.¹¹⁵

Rational recreation and reform prevailed, however, and although some sporting activities (including boxing) filtered down into the Lads’ Clubs, described earlier, fairs, races and large-scale prize-fights were gradually forced out of existence by a mixture of local magistrates, churches, temperance campaigners and the newly established police force.¹¹⁶ Peter Bailey tells, how during the mid-nineteenth century in the North-West of England, home to all of Broadhead’s theatres, restrictions were even forced down to a minute level, with “players of street games” such as football and pitch and toss being prosecuted for “obstruction, trespass, breaches of the peace, vagrancy and desecration of the Sabbath.”¹¹⁷ Such attempts to curtail recreation on a day-to–day, rather than holiday basis may have even led to the formation of gangs such as the Scuttlers, in a bid to reclaim working class territory. However, certain customs did survive, two of which centred directly on Broadhead areas, and are reflected in his style of entertainment; the monkey parade and the Saturday night market.

The monkey parade, or monkey run as it is known locally, was “a way of passing the time, something of a display, a catwalk and courtship ritual in one.”¹¹⁸ Although the activity had started around 1870, with Oldham Street and Market

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.
Street, in Manchester city centre being the main route, according to Dave Haslam, by the turn of the century, each subdistrict of Manchester had its own route, which was usually walked two or three times a night, boys on one side of the street, girls on another. Whilst the motivation behind the run was to meet members of the opposite sex, it also provided free or low cost amusement (possibly the price of a hot drink, or a bag of chips), looking in shop windows, at new buildings and at fellow pedestrians; a series of ever-changing images that were mirrored by the variety stage, and eventually by cinema. It also provided an up-to-date echo of the processions of wandering players mentioned by Marvin Carlson, claiming individual areas “as their setting... for the involvement of every citizen that went even beyond that of the great spectacles in the marketplace,” and thus can be read as an independent act of working class youths exercising their right to the city.

The run had particular significance on the Broadhead landscape. In his seven Manchester areas, there were five recognised monkey runs: Stockport Road in Longsight, Hulme, Cross Lane in Salford, Oldham Road and Harpurhey. This meant that every Sunday evening (the traditional night for the activity) varied groups of young people would pass at least one Broadhead house several times. Although the theatres were not open on Sunday, their position ensured that they could not be missed, and with posters and announcements plastered to the sides of the buildings, they served as a permanent advertisement for a different leisure

interest that would last as long as a run, provide the same opportunities, cost little more, and protect from the Manchester weather.

Another form of entertainment that was popular in Broadhead’s Manchester was a Saturday night visit to the market. Two of the most popular, the Shudehill Market and the more impoverished Flat Iron Market, Salford\textsuperscript{122} were less than ten minutes walk from Oldham Road (location of the Osborne and Empress) and Salford Hippodrome, respectively. Part of the rationale behind these excursions was poverty-driven – at the end of the night, any remaining foodstuff would be sold for a fraction of its usual price as Sunday trading was prohibited and refrigeration still in its infancy. However, Andrew Davies tells that as many people visited the markets as much for recreation as for necessity, citing couples and young families as well as groups of adolescent boys and girls (not dissimilar to those who populated the monkey run) as an audience.

In this instance the market becomes comparable to the fair, with Davies revealing that “the stall holders were performers in their own right.”\textsuperscript{123} As well as a source of food, Shudehill and the Flat Iron sold second-hand clothes, crockery and various items for the home, with the vendors inventive in ways of displaying their wares, and using practised patter “to draw and hold a crowd, some of whom might eventually fall for the goods on offer.”\textsuperscript{124} In addition to the stallholders, there were itinerant fairground acts; quack doctors, stilt walkers and booths selling ice-
creams. Such acts, however, were not a new practice. Carlson reveals that “medieval and early Renaissance companies set up their booths in the fairs and marketplaces alongside those of the purveyors of vegetables, chickens, clothing and gingerbread,” all of which are reminiscent of the varied entertainments offered to Blackpool excursionists. The night market acted as a temporary solution for those whom the once a year holiday was not enough, or others who had never had the money or opportunity to make the trip. In his Salford memoir The Classic Slum, Roberts, Robert talks of a woman who had never “been more than five minutes’ walk from her home in eighteen years of married life.”

In placing his theatres a stone’s throw from the mass of back streets or in the centre of heavily populated areas, Broadhead was giving his audiences the means of a journey, on an emotional, if not physical level; something comparable to the reduced-price meat, to sustain throughout the week. Like the monkey run and the markets, his venues provided a location for a crowd to gather and be entertained, for a few pence, within walking distance of their homes. Although variety was becoming the norm for theatregoing at this time, Broadhead recognised the place in which it originated; the streets. His theatres, however, fulfilled another requirement – that of respectability. Unlike the travelling shows or the parading teenagers of the Monkey Run, they were solid physical structures that formed part of the topography of the sub-districts of Manchester. In this respect, there was no

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125 Ibid.
126 Carlson, Marvin. Op cit., p. 98.
opportunity for flight if events turned sour. The theatres were a commitment of accountability to the areas where they were located.

A crucial part of both the monkey run and the night markets was that each allowed for interaction on the part of the audience. The monkey run was primarily “a potent, improvised courtship ritual”¹²⁸ that encouraged conversation and self-promotion, whilst the markets provided an opportunity for spectators to engage with the stallholders. These aspects of local entertainment were recognised by Broadhead and Sons, who, from the turn of the century, incorporated them into their repertoire, with audience challenges, a common music hall practice during the late nineteenth century. The first recorded instance at a Broadhead house was in 1903 at the Grand Junction, Hulme.¹²⁹ During the pantomime *Aladdin*, Vansart, a strongman, challenged audiences to replicate his feats of strength, with a £25 reward.¹³⁰ The vastness of this sum to a working class audience can be measured by Robert Robert’s statement that “at the end of the Edwardian period [some seven years later] an adult male industrial worker earned £75 a year.”¹³¹ Although Vansart’s (or Broadhead’s) money stayed in his pocket, the success of the enterprise led to a flurry of similar schemes throughout the circuit, including a “go as you please night” every Friday in the second house at the Hulme Hippodrome.¹³² Would-be acts submitted their names, performed their pieces and were judged on the basis of audience applause, an early form of the talent contest. Variations on this theme also occurred at the Osborne, where, from 1906, a series of

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¹³⁰ Ibid.
competitions took place inviting the audience to emulate established acts. These proved popular with local youths, doubtlessly due to the £2 prize. However, such competitions also allowed for natural clowning, or letting off steam – some comprised boxing, martial arts or rifle-shooting, in a controlled environment. Like the eyes of the factory or street on the young holidaymakers of Blackpool, the gaze of the audience could easily turn censorious if things were taken too far, yet simultaneously providing space and time. Lefebvre theorises that time eludes the masses, working as they do “under pressure from many constraints.” By giving them space to express and view themselves, Broadhead was signifying that their time and talents had value, other than as part of a Capitalist system.

The influence of the seaside, however, was never too far away. When the Bury Hippodrome opened in 1904, the family exhibited a series of photographs of the town on the bioscope screen, offering five shillings to any patron who spotted themselves, similar in style to the factory gate films developed around this time. As Vanessa Toulmin notes, the temptation of seeing oneself on the screen would have provided “a ready-made paying audience,” whilst the reward would have given a lottery-style feel to a visit to the Hippodrome, with recompense for everyone in the form of the evening’s programme. This particular type of entertainment was not limited to the working class, however. Burt-Briggs recounts how at the Morecambe Winter Gardens, high-profile boxing matches were

133 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Royal Osborne Theatre: Oldham Road, Manchester. Private collection. No pagination.
134 See Chapter 1.
138 Ibid., p.118.
accompanied by a painted backdrop that portrayed “local personages in the town sitting on the front row,” a ruse that became so popular that people used to book specific seats to mirror their image on the backcloth, reinforcing filmmakers Mitchell and Kenyon’s claim that “Nothing is so great a draw as A Local Subject [Sic].” Broadhead had grasped the symbiosis between pride in the community and making the individual feel important, a relationship that had been established during ancient times when Greek theatres accorded “privileged spaces in the first row to public officials and priests, who were provided... with stone seats bearing their names.” However, Carlson also tells that Greek theatre was democratic, just as Broadhead’s methods transgressed boundaries of class.

Additionally, the degree of audience participation in Broadhead’s theatres echoed not only the fairs, but the original music-halls. However, the new theatre-style auditoriums that the family provided (in keeping with the times) meant that problems with rowdiness would have been minimised. More research is needed into whether Moss and Stoll offered similarly interactive entertainments, which may have been viewed by city-centre venues as too low-class.

Audience participation within performances may also have gone some way to offsetting the lack of top line acts on the circuit. H. Bracken, author of the unpublished memoir, Playing the Gardens (Morecambe Winter Gardens) reveals that “all the important touring shows went to the much smaller but more intimate

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Tower theatre... many of the ‘real’ stars of the day appeared at the tower.” A preliminary glance through the advertisements in the *Manchester Programme* confirms that Broadhead did not employ contemporary celebrities. There is no mention of Marie Lloyd, Dan Leno, Little Tich, with only occasional appearances by Percy Honri, who had married Broadhead’s eldest daughter Annie (Nan) in 1902. The lack of stellar names gives evidence that the Broadhead purse was not as deep as that of Moss, Stoll or even Barrasford, but was used more prudently than that of the repeatedly bankrupt Edward Garcia, as will be recalled from Chapter 2.

Broadhead did not abandon any of his less profitable venues, as did Frank MacNaghten, or speculate foolishly. However, nor did he offer the kind of wages to his artistes that his other contemporaries could afford. For this reason, the Broadhead Circuit became known as “the Bread and Butter Tour” offering payments that balanced the cost of living. Such an action is also an example of Broadhead’s social entrepreneurship; keeping costs low meant that charges to the public would not be extended beyond their means. There is also evidence that, in line with other circuit managers, the family operated a sliding scale for payment depending on the quality of the act. Burt-Briggs tells how one artiste revealed that he had been engaged by a Broadhead manager for five weeks at a pound per week less than his normal fee (note the lack of agent for the performer here). After his first performance, he was approached by William Birch, who paid the full wage for his time on the circuit and offered the remainder of the tour on the performer’s

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143 Honri, Peter. *Op cit.*, p. 64.
145 Burt-Briggs, Alfred. *Theatre Monarch*. Private Collection. No pagination. All subsequent information in this paragraph is from this source.
own terms. Although Broadhead and Sons used acting managers and scouts, they were fair-minded, and the ultimate decision rested with themselves.

Fair-mindedness was one of the key characteristics of the Broadhead Circuit, and father and sons were “always ready to give a helping hand” to new talent and ideas. In some cases, this proved controversial, as with the use of amateur performers. At the Crown, Eccles, the system worked well, with the town’s amateur dramatic society staging its productions in the Broadhead theatre. In return, should an understudy be needed at short-notice for a professional production, a member of the society would oblige, usually without payment. Conversely, at the Metropole, there was dissent when Nell Gwynne, a local amateur actress, was given the lead in a musical revue, with criticism about her being paid a low wage and thus “putting members of the theatrical profession out of work.” The practice of using talented amateurs was not uncommon, however, with Burt-Briggs telling how Oswald Stoll used amateurs alongside professionals at the Empire Holloway. On a similar basis, Frank MacNaghten also made a feature of his ‘Trial Matinees’, a system to discover new acts, at the Foresters Music Hall, London, circa 1908.

Indeed, it was through systems such as these, that many big names made their start, with Gracie Fields, one of “Haley’s Juveniles”, eventually taking the lead in the revue “Yes, I Think So”, which premiered on the Broadhead circuit in 1915. Giving roles to little known performers though, was not the only way in which the

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146 Ibid., p.18.
150 Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.182.
151 Mellor, GJ. Op cit., p. 104.
family supported development through their theatres. In some cases, they actually funded specific people, including Max Erard. Burt-Briggs tells how Erard, an organist, wanted his own travelling show. Broadhead agreed to finance him, and “a huge travelling organ was built in the workshops underneath the stage at the Hulme Hip [sic].” The circuit then acted as Erard’s producer, simultaneously helping a new venture, whilst adding to the Broadhead portfolio. I have been unable to trace any details of Moss, Stoll, Barrasford or MacNaghten doing similar.

Cinema

From the end of the nineteenth century, film ran alongside both melodrama and variety on the Broadhead Circuit. However, there is significantly less material on this style of entertainment, partly due to a lack of writing on early cinema in general, and partly because Broadhead’s initial use of film was to supplement his variety programmes. Until September 1912, when the Empress Electric Cinema opened in Miles Platting, advertisements for the circuit listed “animated pictures” or “the bioscope,” but did not give details of individual titles or acts, as provided with other genres. Thus, the final section of the chapter will, by necessity, situate Broadhead against a context of early film in Manchester, and amongst his contemporaries, both large and small scale: Moss, Stoll, Barrasford and MacNaghten.

Cinema in Manchester was regarded as the logical progression of popular culture which could be “traced from the very earliest days of the city.”\footnote{Haslam, Dave. Op cit., p.4.}

Like variety, it had origins in working class entertainment, with William Shenton telling how “many people would see their first films in a tent or sideshow,”\footnote{Shenton, William. “Manchester’s First Cinemas 1896-1914.” \textit{The Manchester Region History Review} Autumn/Winter 4(2) (1990-91) p.3.} an image reminiscent of the “novel forms of amusement”\footnote{Davies, Andrew. Op Cit., “Saturday Night Markets in Manchester and Salford 1840-1939” p.4.} found on the fringes of Shudehill Market, such as receiving “a shock from a galvanic battery,”\footnote{Ibid.} or the “exhibitors of phonographs, kinetoscopes, picture views, stereoscopes and telescopes” on Blackpool sands.\footnote{Walton, John K. \textit{Blackpool}. (Edinburgh University Press; Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, c.1998) p.77.} Influential on the whole of Broadhead’s career, Blackpool also provided his first foray into optical entertainment. A “Grand Continental Exhibition” was established in the upper gallery of the Prince of Wales Baths.\footnote{Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{The Wriggling Fish}. Private Collection. No pagination. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph are from this source.}

This consisted of a cyclorama, a large backcloth, which was illuminated by electric light to represent assorted scenes including “sea bathing at Biarritz, the grottoes of Iceland and the Eiffel Tower,” at different periods of time throughout the day. Burt-Briggs also describes further titles; “Temptation, Lovers, and Behind the Scenes,” which he feels were probably “the forerunner of ‘What the Butler Saw,’” indicating that Broadhead was also using an early version of the mutoscope, or coin-operated peep-show machine, often found at the seaside. Cinematograph productions of this
kind of title were available soon after, with Ann Featherstone telling how Sydney Race witnessed such at the Nottingham Goose Fair in 1897.159

By this time, film in a more sophisticated form had arrived in Manchester, with Richard Flanagan, the original owner of the Crown Theatre, Eccles, one of the first to capitalise on the new trend. Flanagan premiered the Kineoptikon at the St James’s Theatre, Oxford Street, on 4 May 1896160 (approximately two weeks after the opening of Broadhead’s Osborne Theatre), showing films that included the 1895 Derby, labourers drinking and the apprehension of a pickpocket.161 The Kineoptikon, however, was regarded as an inferior form of projection than the Cinematographe, devised by the Lumiere brothers, which was in use at the Free Trade Hall.162 Here, the animated pictures were accompanied by variety acts (a tradition in which Broadhead would follow). The growth of the Cinematographe in Manchester was rapid, with Lewis’s department store in Piccadilly adopting the device for their afternoon “Penny Concerts.”163 However, as established in the previous chapters, these were locations that excluded working class audiences. By 1898 things had changed, and the form was widespread, ranging from the more expensive theatres; “the Grand, Palace, Hippodrome and Tivoli,” to the Wesleyan Mission on Oldham Street, for their Saturday night concerts.164

According to advertisements in the Manchester Programme, it appears that the Broadhead family began showing “animated pictures” or bioscope.

161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
presentations at the Metropole in 1905, as part of a variety bill.\textsuperscript{165} However, it will be recalled that gaps in the run of the periodical, and the lack of listings for out of town sites, render an accurate reading problematic. Burt-Briggs reveals that bioscope productions were shown in 1904 at both the Empire Hippodrome, Ashton-Under-Lyne, and the Bury Hippodrome, with titles such as “Boys will be boys” and “A trip to Blackpool.”\textsuperscript{166} Nevertheless, the progress of the bioscope in Broadhead’s inner city houses was slow at first, with only three more showings at the Metropole listed during the summer of 1906.\textsuperscript{167} By the following year this had accelerated, and from 1907-1912, the bioscope made weekly appearances at Broadhead’s Hippodromes, the Metropole and the King’s, Longsight, leaving only the Osborne and Grand Junction almost exclusively to melodrama.

In this respect, Broadhead fits within the general pattern of Edwardian circuit entrepreneurs. Only Edward Moss had any real background in optical entertainments. At the time Broadhead was learning his trade as a builder, Moss was “playing the piano to accompany the Franco-German War scenes” in his father’s travelling diorama business.\textsuperscript{168} Like the Broadhead circuit, there is little published information as to what was shown in the Moss theatres as regards early cinema, but the latter was using “cine-variety” to boost the ailing Liverpool Olympia from 1905.\textsuperscript{169} Two further cine-variety theatres were acquired by Moss Empires in 1913 (the year after Broadhead opened the Empress) but both of these venues

\textsuperscript{165} The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure. 24 July 1905.
\textsuperscript{166} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. The Empire Theatre: Oldham Road, Ashton-Under-Lyne. Private Collection. No pagination. and Op Cit., The Hippodrome: Garden Street, Bury. No pagination. Film titles from The Empire Theatre.
\textsuperscript{167} The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure. 28 May, 25 June and 30 July 1906.
\textsuperscript{168} Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.121.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p.161.
were opened after the death of their founder and it is unclear whether they were built by the company or purchased from other circuits.\textsuperscript{170}

On a less prominent level, neither Frank MacNaghten nor Thomas Barrasford owned any purpose-built cinemas, though both made use of the medium that had become “central to the existence” of the working class.\textsuperscript{171} During the years 1908-1910, MacNaghten continued his policy of taking over existing halls and relinquishing less profitable ones, turning to pictures to aid the fortunes of such venues as the Britannia, Hoxton, acquired from Barrasford in 1908.\textsuperscript{172} At the Carlisle Palace, from 1909, “an arrangement was made with the Gaumont Company for the regular supply of ‘Palace Pictures,’\textsuperscript{173} illustrating that MacNaghten recognised the importance of the form, even though, like other entrepreneurs, he still used it to run alongside variety. 1909 was a significant year for both the building of cinemas and showing of film, as the Cinematograph act was passed, which “required licenses and strict fire regulations” on the part of circuit owners.\textsuperscript{174} Broadhead’s existing houses were found to be sufficient for the requirements, and the same year, licenses were issued to himself and Percy for “the King’s, Longsight and the Hulme and Queen’s Park Hippodromes.”\textsuperscript{175} The license for the 1908 New Pavilion

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\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p.137.
\textsuperscript{171} Haslam, Dave. Op cit., p.54.
\textsuperscript{172} Mellor, G.J. Op cit., p.163.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p.188. MacNaghten was by no means unusual in this respect. After 1908, suppliers such as Gaumont would provide, weekly, a reel of film which would play for approximately thirty minutes and would include a mixture of subjects (comedies, melodrama, travelogues etc). Manchester proprietors who didn’t have a regular supplier could take their films to the Film Exchange on Quay Street (1905) and swap their reel for that of another proprietor. As films became longer and better known, individual titles were exchanged, bought or sold. David Mayer. Personal Conversation. 7 April 2014.
\textsuperscript{174} Kidd, Alan. Op cit., p.129.
\textsuperscript{175} Shenton, William. Op cit., p.10.
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cinema, built by the family in Ashton-Under-Lyne, would have fallen under a
neighbouring local government body.

Thomas Barrasford showed a more practical interest in film than his
contemporaries, actually patenting his own projection apparatus, “the
Barrascope.”176 Although Barrasford is more likely to have financed the project
rather than had a hand in the design, “an idea of a Leeds photographer… with
assistance from an engineer,” the finished product bore his name and was shown in
his houses from 1902, when the first machine was installed in the Tivoli, Leeds.177
According to Mellor, Barrasford was certain of “the future for pictures,”178
converting the Brighton Coliseum into a cinema, again in 1909, at the expense of
variety.179 It is likely that had Barrasford lived, his passion for film and his desire to
best Oswald Stoll in the entertainment business would have led to more intense
competition between the two. (Barrasford was already incensed that Stoll’s use of
the bioscope in the Manchester and Ardwick Hippodromes had put his own venue,
the neighbouring Grand Theatre, Peter Street out of business.)180 Stoll, by
comparison, was a relative latecomer to the world of cinema. Mellor tells how,
after an initial foray with bioscopes, despite “great interest” it was after the First
World War that Stoll began to open his own cinema venues, and, went on to invest
in London film studios.181

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177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid., p.166.
180 Ibid., p.166.
181 Ibid., p.149.
182 Ibid., p.154.
Whilst Broadhead undoubtedly kept a close eye on the activities of fellow circuit proprietors, he was content to forge his own path. Closer to home even than the city centre sites that showed film, a number of new cinemas had sprung up. Shenton tells how,

established in 1908-10 were the Longsight Picture Palace on Stockport Road... the Alhambra, Higher Openshaw; the New Temperance Hall, Newton Heath; the King’s Hall, Hulme and the Imperial Picture Palace on Ashton Old Road, all of which were areas where Broadhead had houses. Rather than compete with these new venues, however, the family moved away from the cluster of new cinemas, and placed their own in an out of town site, Ashton-Under-Lyne, following the pattern established with the placement of their early theatres – away from designated centres of entertainment.

Ashton was a tried and tested location for Broadhead. His eighth theatre, the Empire Hippodrome had opened in the town in November 1904, showing bioscope presentations from the earliest performances. As will be recalled from Chapter Three, the New Picture Pavilion was built close to the Empire Hippodrome. In addition, the two venues had the same manager, indicating that the cinema served as a kind of adjunct to the variety programmes shown at the Hippodrome. The Empress skating rink that completed Broadhead’s Ashton Amusements opened in 1909, meaning that the family could also capitalise on the trend running concurrently with cinema, roller skating. Although the New Pavilion was built a year before the Cinematograph Act came into force, the emphasis on

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183 See Chapter 3.
safety due to the “highly-inflammable nitrate stock” on which films were printed was adhered to strictly.\textsuperscript{185} The projection equipment was at the rear of the circle and the building, as with Broadhead’s other theatres, contained numerous exits,\textsuperscript{186} offering not just class segregation but the means of escape should a fire occur. According to Philip Williams, the New Pavilion “was able to empty more quickly in an emergency than any other public building in Ashton.”\textsuperscript{187} In this case, the quality of Broadhead’s designs and building materials speaks for itself. Whilst all of the newly-built cinemas mentioned by Shenton had closed by 1918, “overtaken in standards of comfort and presentation,”\textsuperscript{188} the New Pavilion continued to show pictures until 1966,\textsuperscript{189} and is still standing today.

In Ashton-Under-Lyne, Broadhead chose to supplement his pictures with “comedians and dancers as against the pictures supporting the variety artists as before,”\textsuperscript{190} in the tradition established at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, rather than taking a chance on cinema alone. The popularity of the form within the town was also in its infancy, with only one other cinema, the Picturedrome, which had also opened in 1908.\textsuperscript{191} For this reason, Broadhead and Percy used old methods such as the Friday night talent shows to entice viewers to the New Pavilion – an advertisement from 1910 shows a “Great Competition for the Best Amateur Vaudeville Turn.”\textsuperscript{192} The building was fitted with pit, stalls, circle and a stage,\textsuperscript{193} a

\textsuperscript{185} Shenton, W. Op cit., p.3.
\textsuperscript{186} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., \textit{The New Picture Pavilion}.
\textsuperscript{188} Shenton, William. Op cit., p.9.
\textsuperscript{189} Williams, Philip Martin & Donald L. Williams. Op cit., p.93.
\textsuperscript{191} Williams, Philip Martin & Donald L. Williams. Op cit., p.11.
feature that would be absent from the plans of the family’s second cinema, the Empress Electric, some four years later.\textsuperscript{194} Further evidence of Broadhead choosing to hold onto methods that he knew and trusted is provided by the twice nightly showings at the New Pavilion, 6.50 and 9pm respectively.\textsuperscript{195} Burt-Briggs tells how the programme, consisting of “short comedies, topical budgets and news items followed by the big film,” was changed on Monday and Thursday. Prices were 2d-6d, proving that a night at the cinema was cheaper than a night at the theatre, a factor that would have appealed to a working class audience, which Broadhead and Percy almost certainly recognised.

By the time the Empress Electric opened in 1912, times had changed. Broadhead had moved back to his old territory, Oldham Road, Miles Platting, probably due to the rapid rise and fall, or changing of hands in new cinema venues, an echo of the start of his theatre building career, sixteen years previously. According to Dave Haslam, by 1913, “Manchester had 111 licensed cinemas serving a population of 714,000; this was a larger number of cinemas per head than any other area of Britain.”\textsuperscript{196} To cater for the huge demand in motion pictures, the city had also built a reputation for being a major centre for film rental, with areas specific to the trade such as Deansgate, home to overseas suppliers Pathe Freres and Gaumont.\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Plans for the Empress Electric Theatre. Manchester Local Image Collection.
\textsuperscript{195} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., \textit{The New Picture Pavilion}. No pagination. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph are from this source.
\textsuperscript{196} Haslam, Dave. Op cit., p.59.
\textsuperscript{197} Shenton, William. Op cit., p.4.
The increased availability of film titles meant that screenings could change more often than once or twice a week. From 1910, at the New Pavilion, Broadhead began to exhibit a different picture at each nightly showing, posting a daily bill to let audiences know the programme.\textsuperscript{198} Meanwhile, the Empress opened showing several short films. An advertisement for 9 September 1912 is headed by “A little daughter of the West,” seven other titles and the obligatory Pathe Animated Gazette. At the bottom of the announcement, a sentence reads “All changed except news by next week.”\textsuperscript{199}

There were also differences in the style of the buildings of the New Pavilion and Empress Electric, with Broadhead, as ever, adhering to safety regulations, emphasising that the Empress was “an entirely new building, constructed of steel, stone, brick and concrete,”\textsuperscript{200} to offset fears that a substandard building had been converted hastily to cash in on the cinema boom.


\textsuperscript{199} \textit{The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure}. 9 September 1912.

Although the stage and dressing rooms present at the New Pavilion are absent from plans of the later venue, there is provision made at the front of the building for a music room, and a piano is present on the diagrams, illustrating how the performances were accompanied (see Fig. 36). The later design also shows the bioscope box has been moved to the exterior of the building, a further safety precaution. Whilst Broadhead, unlike Barrasford, showed no inclination to develop his own projector, he used good quality equipment, with the plans mentioning the “Latest type of Kamm Bioscope with all safety appliances.”
firm of Leo Kamm had been founded in 1892 and manufactured “projectors and cameras.”  

As with the remainder of the circuit, Broadhead’s good judgement in selecting films ensured that the New Pavilion and the Empress Electric stayed open and within the family’s control until the time of his death, in 1931. His influence was felt until a late stage – Burt-Briggs tells how Percy (like contemporary cinema owner, Jakie Innersfield of the Palace, Moss Side, Manchester), felt that there was no future for talking pictures, and had to be persuaded by his father to adopt the form. Advertisements from the Manchester Programme show similar titles to the circuit’s melodramas, such as “Unmerited Shame,” “Tempting Providence,” and “Rendezvous Interrupted,” and a reliance on sporting events, harking back to the holidays of the pre-industrial calendar and the origins of variety. As late as October 1923, the Empress showed a recent boxing match, which resulted in police attendance “to control the traffic as the crowds approaching the ‘Empress’ overflowed into the road and hindered free movement.” This is very much an image that mirrors the photograph of the early days of the Osborne at the start of this thesis, and is thus a fitting way to close the last chapter.

In conclusion, the three main forms of entertainment provided by Broadhead, all of which were influenced by his time at the Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool, lifted his audiences from their daily routines. Although his programmes

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207 The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure. 27 January 1913.
209 See Introduction.
may not have given concrete solutions for the problems in life, for an evening, or part of it, an escape was offered “for the ordinary people,”\textsuperscript{210} who lived and worked in the areas where the family placed theatres. In addition, these were spaces in which they felt comfortable and at home, which would not have been possible in the city centre venues, or those of contemporary circuit owners. Melodrama provided an experiential, yet, non-threatening representation of difficult situations and exposed the character flaws of all social classes, whilst variety gave a sense of nostalgia and validation to working class viewers; that their traditional and familiar pursuits, in this form, were both acceptable and popular. This sentiment was echoed with the growth of cinema, an inexpensive, yet inventive medium that “met the needs and dreams of the masses like nothing before it.”\textsuperscript{211}

Thus, pinpointing the most popular forms of amusement allowed Broadhead to aid the sub-districts and towns where he placed his venues. Help, however, was also presented on a more practical level. Building his theatres in neglected, liminal areas contributed to economic regeneration. Travelling theatre companies and variety artistes needed accommodation as they toured, which led to the growth of local businesses. (Burt-Briggs tells of an entrepreneurial Salford landlady who would “peer through the front door windows” of the Hippodrome, look who was forthcoming and contact them through their address in \textit{The Stage}, offering her services.)\textsuperscript{212} As the circuit grew, staff were needed for each venue, with loyal and hardworking employees rewarded with continuous and varied work, such as Harry Winstanley, inherited from the Prince of Wales Baths, who eventually became the

\textsuperscript{210} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. Op cit., \textit{The Prince of Wales Baths, Blackpool}. No pagination.

\textsuperscript{211} Haslam, Dave. Op cit., p.55.

\textsuperscript{212} Burt-Briggs, Alfred. \textit{The Royal Hippodrome, Salford}. Private Collection. No pagination.
general manager for all of Broadhead’s houses. Members of the same family were often employed (including the father and son Raymond and Arthur Furniss, at the Bury Hippodrome), simultaneously protecting Broadhead interests against theft or absenteeism, but also bestowing dignity and responsibility on workers, and ultimately, raising the morale of the community.

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Fig. 37. St George’s Community Centre mural, Oldham Road, Miles Platting.
Conclusion

The photograph that opens the conclusion to this study is of a mural painted on the side of St George’s Community Centre, Miles Platting, Manchester, less than a few hundred yards from where the Osborne and Empress Electric Theatres used to stand. Both are featured in the lower right of the photograph (emphasised with a black outline) indicating the importance of their presence to the area. At the time of the mural they were landmark buildings, worth re-representation in the painting.

The mural, now painted over, existed from c.2002, the year that the Commonwealth Games were held in the city, until 2012, and was part of a bid to improve the areas that surrounded the Commonwealth Stadium, the Broadhead locations of Openshaw and Miles Platting. Decorated in bright colours, the quirky design lent a cheerfulness and celebratory aspect to the history of Miles Platting that had been lacking. A previous St George’s mural, displayed throughout the late 1980s and 1990s was painted in muted greys and maroons and depicted a giant figure of a teenage boy leaping over Oldham Road and the back streets that surrounded it in a bid to escape the confines of the community. The Osborne and Empress were also clearly visible in this incarnation of the mural.

Nowadays, St George’s Community Centre presents a blank wall onto Oldham Road. Although the building has been renovated, and is structurally more sound than before, something of the character of the community has been lost. In

1 Photograph of St George’s Community Centre, Miles Platting Manchester. I am grateful to Diane Johnston for permission to use this image.
addition, Broadhead’s visual presence in the areas where he had theatres is gradually diminishing.

This thesis is a timely act of reconstruction, whilst he is still embedded in the collective memory of his chosen city and surroundings. During the course of this study, five of my six work colleagues told how they had been to at least one Broadhead house, in various incarnations, and their memories (particularly those formed in childhood) were shaped and lasting. A childhood neighbour recalls auditioning (unsuccessfully) for a Broadhead scout at the Oldham Empire Theatre, offering yet another opportunity for further research – did the family’s ownership spread to more theatres than previously imagined, under the aegis of Percy Broadhead, or were local venues used for tryouts that would then go on to the main tour? On a personal level, growing up during the 1970s, my grandmother often used to refer to other people by characteristics that identified them with the music-hall acts of her youth. Thus, the little girl across the road was Gertie Gitana, (“What’s Gertie Gitana doing today?”) or in later life, “the Girl of the Golden West,” a play by American dramatist David Belasco, that was later adapted into both an opera and a film.

All of these reminiscences of the Broadhead era, in some cases directly influenced by himself and his empire, are examples of Jacky Bratton’s theory of intertheatricality, “uttered in a language, shared by successive generations, which includes not only speech and the systems of the stage... but also conventions,
genres and, very importantly, memory.”\textsuperscript{2} They are instances of “more of the web than was written down by the dramatist and the critic,”\textsuperscript{3} thus providing an important first step in a fully intertheatrical reading of the Broadhead family and their circuit. The thesis also has considerable value in that it is the first piece of academic work on Broadhead, drawing together many of the available sources on both his personal life and his work and making new connections between them.

Whilst the focus of the thesis has largely been on Broadhead himself, as head of the circuit, it is not merely a biographical record mapping the activities of one man, or dynasty. On a micro-history level, it has also identified other key figures in the development of the business such as William Birch Broadhead, and Percy Baynham Broadhead, both of whom are worthy of detailed research. In terms of a wider reading, it is an act of theatre history and historiography, using a theoretical framework underpinned by Bratton and Carlson that has discovered lacunae in the study of theatre circuits nationwide. To the present time, there are no works of comparable length or depth on Moss, Stoll, Barrasford or MacNaghten, or indeed on theatre circuits in general, an area for future investigation to build a more complete understanding of the practices of theatre management and popular entertainment at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Alongside the theorists mentioned in the previous paragraph, the use of the writings of Henri Lefebvre has provided an extra dimension to the thesis, linking the most important areas in the study of the Broadhead Circuit with philosophy, sociology and urban geography. The preceding pages have provided a unique

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
spatio-temporal reading of the circuit described as “Quick, Clean, Smart and Bright,”⁴ through role of family, and the influence of Blackpool, the choice of locations, design and construction of buildings, and the repertoire that was provided for audiences. These themes have been applied, as does Joanna Robinson with provincial pantomime, as a series of superimpositions:⁵ a map of location over influence, structure over location and entertainment over structure, ultimately offering a social and cultural overview of Broadhead’s use of space for the advantage of his audiences, providing a clear picture of his belief in their right to the city.

As a final point, the importance of this work is reinforced by the fact that only a handful of Broadhead theatres remain, with the trajectory of the circuit changing after Broadhead’s death in 1931, when several venues were sold to avoid death duties. Around this time, Sonny Broadhead began to take a hand in the running of the family business, which was under threat from the development of radio as well as its earlier predecessor, cinema.⁶ To ensure survival, he turned to current modes of popular entertainment, predominantly striptease revues, which alienated the family audience that his grandfather had struggled to provide for.

Today, the Osborne and the Empress are not the only venues to have been demolished. Of the seventeen theatres that comprised the circuit (excluding the Prince of Wales Baths) only seven survive. The liminal areas are represented by the Crown, Eccles, purchased from the creditors of Richard Flanagan in 1907, an

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⁶ Sonny was the son of Percy Baynham Broadhead.
imposing structure that dominates the road to the docks. The building, however, is now derelict. The Liverpool Pavilion, despite being damaged by fire, is also still standing, with recognisable sections of Broadhead design features and brickwork. It now functions as a bingo hall.

Interestingly, none of Broadhead’s town centre sites (Longsight, Bury and Preston) have survived to the present day, and civic redevelopment has changed these areas significantly. However, the large-scale entertainment complexes have fared better. The Hulme Hippodrome and adjoining Grand Junction still overlook Preston Street, although they are known locally by the name of the larger house alone. Photographs from the Manchester Local Image Collection show that the building, once home to the Broadhead circuit headquarters, was used by the BBC during the 1960s, a testament to the size and quality of the building. Despite campaigns for refurbishment, it is in disrepair and provides a home to small local groups on short-term lease, but the auditorium is unused.

In Ashton-Under-Lyne, even with the loss of the Palais de Danse (formerly the Empress roller-skating rink) the Hippodrome and the Pavilion still form two sides of a block of one of the town’s main streets. The Hippodrome, now abandoned, was used as a theatre until 2008, although, like its sister sites in Hulme and Morecambe, it has been granted Grade two listing, which prevents demolition. The Pavilion, its appearance little changed since its heyday as Ashton’s first purpose-built cinema is now a carpet warehouse. The Morecambe Winter Gardens have been reduced in size, with only the main building still remaining. Its exterior has been partially restored, and a dedicated group of volunteers are campaigning to
have the interior, already used for paranormal events, boxing matches and occasional plays and opera performances, refurbished to that of a working theatre once more.

As well as talking of the construction of a successful chain of theatres, this thesis has also referred to employment patterns in mid to late Victorian England and the value gained from a continuing education. This is not just the learning provided by schools or in the study of a trade, but in the reading of a business landscape and networking with like-minded individuals. Not only did Broadhead’s time in Blackpool allow him an alternative route into a profession that differed significantly from his own, it also gave him social standing which, in turn, allowed him to give back to the community in a model of social entrepreneurship. Although this was done through local politics as well as the lesseeship of the Prince of Wales Baths, it was through entertainment that Broadhead made his name, building in sub-districts of Manchester, areas where previous attempts at reform had limited success.

The education of Broadhead and William Birch continued through building in the in-between spaces, neither the best nor worst areas that the city had to offer, and in materials sympathetic to their surroundings. As with the repertoire of the Prince of Wales Baths, father and son borrowed from existing styles, in this case, those of theatre architecture, and the influence of Frank Matcham. Ultimately, however, they followed their own path, providing buildings designed with a functional simplicity that fit with their locations, the result of careful analysis of potential sites and the particular requirements of the neighbourhood. (Both the
King’s Theatre, Longsight and the Queen’s Park Hippodrome, Harpurhey are good examples of this perception.) As the family established their reputation in the sub-districts of Manchester they became involved in a kind of dialogue with their audiences, and were unafraid to make alterations to suit them, changing the interior fittings of theatres, and even the names and functions of the Hulme Hippodrome and Grand Junction.

Communication and understanding of the public was also recognised in the entertainments that Broadhead, William Birch and Percy provided. The popularity of variety echoed traditional working class pursuits such as the fairs and festivals of the pre-industrial calendar (Lefebvre’s fete) which the family emphasised by a series of talent shows and audience challenges. Melodrama reflected the problems encountered in everyday life, but the sensational aspect of the plots offered experiential solutions in a non-threatening or overly didactic way. Broadhead’s move into cinema was the logical extension of a lifetime’s adherence to the creed of ‘Progress’, the motto adopted by Blackpool, and the enduring belief in new invention, a characteristic of the social entrepreneur that has been established during the preceding chapters.

Ultimately, neither Broadhead nor William Birch used their position in society to enforce their political or religious standpoints on their audiences, although respectability was expected at all times. Throughout the course of my research I have not found any ill spoken of either man, nor of Percy, who continued to run the circuit after the death of his father. Consensus was that Broadhead
“loved to do good and to do it by stealth”\textsuperscript{7}, and avoided the trappings of fame, beloved by contemporaries such as William Holland, or those of ambition expressed by Thomas Barrasford, who eventually destroyed his own health in his contest with Oswald Stoll.\textsuperscript{8} Unlike Stoll, Edward Moss and Frank MacNaghten, Broadhead was content to remain in just one area – the North-West of England, and whenever possible tried to use local business contacts and tradesmen. This gave him a strong and successful position in the community that was never matched by his fellow promoters. As Lefebvre comments, such action “overcomes conflicts, at least momentarily, even though it does not resolve them; it opens a way from everyday concerns to collective joy.”\textsuperscript{9}

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- All maps used within this thesis are derived from Digimap Historic: Ancient Roam. [http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/ancienroam/historic](http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/ancienroam/historic)

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• The Lancashire Observer
• The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire
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• The Manchester Evening News
• The Manchester Guardian
• The Manchester Programme of Entertainments and Pleasure
• The Manchester Times
• The Morecambe Visitor
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• The Morning Post
• The Morning Times
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## APPENDIX 1

### The Broadhead Circuit, 1896-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue Name</th>
<th>Location &amp; Map Reference</th>
<th>Type of Entertainment</th>
<th>Audience capacity</th>
<th>Date opened</th>
<th>Date Closed</th>
<th>Special Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royal Osborne Theatre</td>
<td>Miles Platting, Manchester</td>
<td>Melodrama, variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>April 1896</td>
<td></td>
<td>Originally to be called the Olympia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropole Theatre</td>
<td>Openshaw, Manchester</td>
<td>Melodrama, variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>April 1898</td>
<td>Sold to HD Moorhouse after death of WH Broadhead,1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Junction</td>
<td>Hulme, Manchester</td>
<td>Melodrama</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
<td>Also contained the Floral Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hulme Hippodrome</td>
<td>Hulme, Manchester</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exchanged names &amp; styles of entertainment with the Grand Junction in 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Opening Date</td>
<td>Fate/Notes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salford Hippodrome</strong></td>
<td>Salford, Lancashire</td>
<td>Variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>Apx 3,000</td>
<td>March 1904</td>
<td>Sold in 1955 on death of Percy Broadhead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Queen’s Park Hippodrome</strong></td>
<td>Harpurhey, Manchester</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>April 1904</td>
<td>Sold c.1933; Press concerns over rowdyism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bury Hippodrome</strong></td>
<td>Bury, Lancashire</td>
<td>Variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>October 1904</td>
<td>Broadhead redeveloped an existing building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empire Hippodrome</strong></td>
<td>Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire</td>
<td>Variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>Apx 2,000</td>
<td>November 1904</td>
<td>Sold in 1932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Royal Hippodrome</strong></td>
<td>Preston, Lancashire</td>
<td>Variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>Apx 2,000</td>
<td>January 1905</td>
<td>Sold c.1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>King’s Theatre</strong></td>
<td>Longsight, Manchester</td>
<td>Melodrama &amp; variety</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>October 1905</td>
<td>Sold to HD Moorhouse, 1932; Originally named King’s Opera House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crown Theatre</strong></td>
<td>Eccles, Manchester</td>
<td>Melodrama, variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>October 1907</td>
<td>Sold to HD Moorhouse, c.1932; Opened as Richard Flanagan’s Lyceum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Pavilion</strong></td>
<td>Toxteth, Liverpool</td>
<td>Melodrama, Variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>2,050</td>
<td>February 1908</td>
<td>Sold to Jack Brennan, c.1932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The New Picture Pavilion</strong></td>
<td>Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>December 1908</td>
<td>Sold to Alfred Jepson, c.1932; Broadhead’s first purpose-built cinema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter Gardens</strong></td>
<td>Morecambe, Lancashire</td>
<td>Melodrama, variety, roller skating, dancing</td>
<td>Apx 3,000 in Broadhead’s King’s Pavilion theatre</td>
<td>April 1909</td>
<td>Also included outdoor entertainments and boxing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress Skating Rink</td>
<td>Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire</td>
<td>Roller Skating</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>July 1909</td>
<td>Sold to Ashton Entertainments, c.1931</td>
<td>Converted by Broadhead in 1919 to the Palais de Danse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress Electric Theatre</td>
<td>Miles Platting, Manchester</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>November 1912</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s Palace Theatre</td>
<td>Preston, Lancashire</td>
<td>Melodrama, variety &amp; bioscope</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>February 1913</td>
<td>Sold after death of Percy, c.1956</td>
<td>Originally owned by Broadhead as the Empress Skating Rink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>