

Theatre and Cinema

Background

From serving as the background for Hollywood blockbuster franchises, such as Harry Potter, James Bond, and Star Wars, to having some of the West End's finest on the county's stages, including Ellen Terry and John Gielgud, Gloucestershire has a rich history of theatre and cinema. The records held by Gloucestershire Archives document not only the buildings and organisations involved in theatre and cinema, but also the people, performances, and communities that supported entertainment across the county.

With a range of theatres, including Cheltenham's historic Everyman and Gloucester's volunteer-run Kings Theatre, the county offers examples of both long-established professional venues and community-driven performance spaces. The Everyman Theatre first opened in 1891 as the New Theatre and Opera House. It later operated as a cinema from 1929 and served as a Garrison Theatre during the Second World War, before reopening under its current name in 1960. The Kings Theatre was developed from a former Salvation Army Citadel and has been maintained by local volunteers and amateur groups since the 1980s, illustrating the strong tradition of community performance in Gloucester.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

This list is by no means exhaustive. It should be used to identify the major sources of information about theatre and cinema in the county. See 'How to Find the Records' below for instructions on how to search the online catalogue for related records.

Council records

- Council records provide insight into the legal proceedings regarding venues and companies, such as building planning applications and licenses.
 - Gloucester Borough Records (GBR)
 - Stroud Urban District Council Maps and plans, outside schemes submitted for approval (DA16/5/2)
 - Gloucestershire County Council, Theatres and Cinemas Licensing Committee (GCC/5/4/1)
 - Cheltenham District Council - Planning Applications (K884/1)
 - Stroud Urban District Council records (DA16)

Solicitor's records

- Solicitor's records can provide legal and financial documents regarding the theatre and its staff, including correspondence, petitions, and leases.
 - Ticehurst Wyatt and Co of Cheltenham, solicitor's collection, for information on John Boles Watson junior, theatre manager (D2025/Box73 and D2025/Box55/Bundle11)

Personal collections

- These collections include research into Gloucestershire's cinema and theatre history, including theatre ephemera.
 - Eleanor Smith, amateur actor of Cheltenham (D8782)
 - Research papers of John Thornell into the history of Gloucester and Cheltenham's cinemas and theatres, as well as county and a few out-county cinemas (D16509)
 - Alan Moore Collection, Gloucestershire cinemas and theatres (D14592)

Venues and theatre groups

- These collections contain a variety of records, including theatre and cinema ephemera, publicity material, administrative records, and press cuttings.
 - Kingsbarton Theatre Limited (D14361)
 - Tewkesbury: New Theatre (D2047)
 - Cheltenham Everyman Theatre and Cheltenham Everyman Theatre Association (D6978 and D6540)
 - Gloucestershire Cinemas (1920) Limited: papers relating to the floating of the company (D2202/5/8)
 - The Cotswold Savoyards (D14702)
 - Gloucester Operatic and Dramatic Society (D4655)

Architectural records

- Architectural records provide insight into the theatre buildings, including plans and their associated planning applications.
 - Healing and Overbury of Cheltenham, Architects (D5587)

Programmes

- For research into productions, theatre programmes are held at Gloucestershire Archives from across the county, including both amateur and professional productions.
 - Stroud: theatre programmes (D10916)
 - Vernon Morse of Cheltenham, drama teacher & accomplished amateur actor, director and producer (D13908)
 - Robin Morris Cinema and theatre programmes (D16181)

Newspapers

- Newspapers can provide information on all aspects of local theatre and cinema. Gloucestershire Archives holds the Citizen Photographic Collection, which covers 1958-c.2000s, with records available as photographs or as microfilm, available to view on site at the Heritage Hub. The collection has the reference D10638. Examples include:
 - Gloucester theatre festival ball (D10638/1/1961/24/57)

- County youth theatre (D10638/1/1971/28/42) (D10638/1/1971/28/4) (D10638/1/1971/28/40) (D10638/1/1971/27/21)
- Mason, Alan, Gloucestershire cinema pioneer remembered (microfilm)
- Stroud, plans for a new cinema (microfilm)

How to Find the Records

To view a list of records in a collection please use our online catalogue, which can be found on our website at: <https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/> For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs or watch our YouTube tutorial.

Use the references given above as your search terms if you are trying to locate these examples or explore these collections further. If you want to search for other documents or collections relating to this topic, try using key words such as theatre, cinema, or search by specific venue names. You may then add further terms to further specify your search. You can also refine or sort your search by other search categories, such as date created.

Further resources and websites

You may find the following [National Archives](#) research guide helpful:

- [Film, television and performing arts records held by other archives](#)