

King's Hall Memories

Last updated: 27 February 2010

From its grand opening in 1933, it was the focal point for entertainment in Aberystwyth but in 1989 the King's Hall was demolished. Here, local people tell us what they remember about this striking seafront building...



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Anee Littlefield (nee Philips) got in touch with us in February 2010.

Ann: "Hi Wendy Bland, this is Ann Littlefield (Nee Phillips). I was dancing with Peggy Royston from the age of 3. My dad Bill Phillips was the stage manager and my mother Iris Phillips helped Heather Kellys mum sew costumes, put makeup on etc. It was a great time and I was with her until I was eighteen. We performed pantomimes every year at the Kings Hall, a fantastic stage to dance and act on. What a shame it had to go. I loved every minute of it. I finished up being principal boy."

Dave Jones from Telford got in touch to tell us his memories in January 2010:

Dave:"I have fond memories of the Kings Hall in the 1960s having played there numerous times with the group Chocolate Mist with whom i played drums.One occasion that is still vivid in my memory is the night i turned up with only broken drumsticks and the drummer of the Shakedown Sounds took me to a music shop who kindly opened up to sell me some,oh happy days.There were some super venues in Wales I would guess most are distant memories now especially Newtown Pavillion where we supported Amen Corner in 1969,wow that was one big place."

Jen Mathias from Llanybi sent us this comment in January 2010.

Jen:"I remember, when a pupil at St Padarns Convent, going to grand displays of dancing once a year (I think) - put on by all the local pupils of Miss Winifred Woolett who was our dancing teacher. The high light of these occasions was her rendition of "The Dying Swan". Does anyone else remember these occasions?"

Peter Henley from Bow Street would like to know more about 'Zip-Ahoy'.

"It's wonderful to read all the memories of the unforgettable Kings Hall. Two writers asked about posters. There are four

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in my book called 'Aber Prom' which was published last year. The promenade was a great place for entertainment for many years. Does any one remember what year the show 'Zip-ahoy' was held in the Kings Hall?"

Jon Finnegan sent us the following message in August 2009:

Jon:"Yes you are all so right, many an afternoon sat on the prom outside the King's Hall when Jonny Richards was boss, listening to Jimmy Leach tickling the keys of his organ to charm us all into buying a cornet from the ice cream kiosk...you can't make it up those were the days."

Roy Williams provides some information about when The Rolling Stones played The King's Hall.

Roy:"As I recall, it was Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones who didn't show. We thought they were rubbish and scruffy anyway. Best band there? A group called The Beatmen from Nottigham, and other good ones were The Leroys from London and Lance Harvey and the Statesmen/Kingpins. I have never seen bumper cars like the ones downstairs with their sprung metal rings around the car which meant that you could almost tip your opposition of the track! I got pretty good at this and was banned!"

Philip Hodges from Burton-on-Trent has fond memories of The King's Hall in the 1970s:

Philip:"I also saw Led Zep in the 70s in the King's Hll as well. I watched the Giant Haystacks Wrestling Tag Team. I also was in 3 of Peggy Royston's pantos in the King's Hall."/p>

Hazel Carr (nee Christopher) from Aldershot sent us this message in January 2009:

Hazel:"I don't remember the Kings Hall unfortunately though I have heard fond memories from family members. I just wanted to say in response to another comment about Blue being electrocuted that he isn't related to the Lucas'. His name was Malcolm Christopher, brother of Kevin Christopher (my dad), until he changed his name to Blue. I remember my nan showing me photos of it happening and I think my dad has it on video somewhere."

Chris Jenkins from Tynant, Mid Glamorgan shared his memories of the King's Hall:

Chris:"I grew up in Cardigan and I remember the odd day out to Aberystwyth and visiting the underground fair, dogems etc."

Derrick Spragg from Loppington Wem remembers his university days:

Derrick: "The Kings Hall Uni Balls in the late 60s are remembered well by a number of old friends of mine with whom I meet up every year in Aber for our football re union memories of Status Quo, Small Faces, Geno Washington - and of course the famous Prof Bowen lecture in Freshers' week.

Don't remember Shaking Stevens at the Kings Hall but did

see them twice or more at the Parish Hall late 60s & 1970-71 . My graduation ceremony was in the Kings Hall in 1970. We sat our finals in the Parish Hall."

Simon Hughes from Talybont decided to share his memories in November 2007:

Simon:" My grandmother used to take me to the cafe in the late 1950s, and from the mid 1960s until the mid 1980s it provided me with regular saturday night entertainment. I also remember a few Ardwyn eisteddfodau being held there. I rarely ventured into Tuson's, the wrestling or boxing bouts and the formal nights but I did see a whole host of bands - The Xenons, Nightriders, Unit 2+4, Shakedown Sounds and Smokestack. I also remember going to discos by Taurus and Spot On. I also saw Shakin' Stevens, Alvin Stardust and numerous punk bands. I was there when Blue nearly got fried on stage. Without doubt, the very best band that I ever saw in the King's Hall was Slade who performed stunningly to an audience that contained very few Aber' people.

When it was condemned as a dangerous structure, the clock was removed and taken to the museum. Only then did I realise that there had been a delightful "Palm Court" area on the roof. I am far from convinced that it was dangerous as I knew the demolition crew. It was very cold and damp in parts, the cost of repairs would have been greater than a new building and many felt that it symbolised past times. The Militia Barracks were demolished at about the same time.

Nobody seems to remember how rough it could get on a Saturday night. There was often graffiti on the blood donor posters " Give Blood - Come to the King's Hall Dance on Saturday Night."

Rebecca Yorke from Hebden Bridge is looking to hunt down some King's Hall memorabilia.

Rebecca:"Does anyone have any old posters advertising Kings Hall gigs from the 1960's? My mum and dad were in a band called Scarlet and I believe they shared the bill with Rolling Stones and Fleetwood Mac as well as other local bands. They are both 60 this year and I think some Kings Hall memorabilia would be a great present."

Wendy Hamdan, nee Bland, from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia asks if anyone shares her memories of the Hall.

Wendy: "Does anybody remember the Xmas pantos at the Kings Hall put on by Peggy Roysten and troupe? We're talking late 1950s. I live in Malaysia now and I was devastated when my parents told me about the King's Hall being pulled down. I go back to Aber when I can but the magic of the town is not there anymore something is missing."

Hersham boy, Steve Smith tells a salutary tale of why crime does not pay.

Steve Smith:"I just remembered how we used to get the slot machines to pay up. It took a bit of nerve as it was very uncomfortable. The technique was to play two machines at the same time, pulling on both handles simultaneously, not by the knob, but by the shiny metal part of the arms. You got an electric shock by doing this. But the three times I

managed to screw up the courage, BOTH machines paid up. Was it worth the haul of 2p coins? Obviously not!"

Maurice (Mo) Jones from Talybont remembers spinning the platters that mattered in the 1970s and sharing a pint with Britain's most successful chart act of the 1980s:

"I remember the Saturday night disco's at the Kings Hall with Jim Worrall as I was one of those who helped organise it. We called it the " The Taurus Disco Club " and great nights they were. I used to do a disco there myself under the name of " The Wild Knights Roadshow " also there was John Morris with " The Spot On Disco " and if I remember correctly " The Roe In Roadshow " as well. My best night as a D J there was doing a disco with the then " Shakin Stevens and The Sunsets " and having a pint or two over the road with " Shakey " and the boys in the old Blue Bell pub sadly long gone !!. Yes they were great days. It was fun up on the stage playing the records but more fun watching the local lads doing their best to pull a young lady and hopefully end up walking them home!"

Ceredig Davies from Aberystwyth has fond memories of The King's Hall:

"I moved to Aberystwyth from Capel Seion in 1972. Moving to live in Aber was a novelty, and living in Queens Road we were only 100 yds from the Kings Hall. Visiting the amusements was nearly a daily occurrence in the summer. Playing on the money machines was left to the tourists; us locals would rush down the steps and go straight to the pin ball machines. It took skill to push and shake those machines to gain the best advantage without tilting them and ending the game. There was also the football game; winner stays on, challenger to pay.

Then there were the discos upstairs. Jimmy Worrall, who ran the El Matador café at the time, was responsible for organising them. "Thanks Jim for some great memories". This was the place to strut your stuff, try and impress the girls and boast of all your conquests, (mostly wishful thinking). The music, Slade, Sweet, Osmonds, Jackson 5, Status Quo, Suzy Quatro etc etc. Remember all sitting on the floor in a line pretending to row a canoe whilst the Hawaiian Five O theme was being played, (you had to be there). John Morris used to put on some great discos, with psychedelic lighting affects; we thought that the oil projectors were great. He would sometimes also have a couple of go-go dancers on stage, Kings Hall answer to Pans people.

Was life gentler in those days? Yes there would be a few pushing and shoving fights but nothing to serious. A few pretending to be drunk from taking a few swigs out of a shared bottle but no drugs."

Carole Evans from Ipswich has fond memories of The King's Hall.

"I remember the dances there, the sea cadet ones where the carnival queen was chosen, Marion Lawson, then later the students saturday night dances which had previously been at St Micheal's church hall. I worked at the Edward Davies chem labs and went to the dances every Saturday, with Marion

Keeler who also worked at the labs, what great times. I loved the dances and remember tusons amuments and the strange smell! Happy days! I lived in Trefechan until I left to train as a nurse in London and never returned for many years but often holiday near Aber."

Richard from Liverpool remembers the great days of the 1970s:

"Great days in the 70s used to go every sat fortnightly in winter aber mach used to come and have fights with locals which were always broken up anyway great days."

George Rusiecki from Cold Ash has some fond memories of comedian and TV show The Golden Shot host, Charlie Williams

Don Shaw was the kings hall in the 1970's, and he ran the beach. He was a great man and I have many fond memories of him and knew his family well. Great poem Doug. I remember sitting with Don and Charlie Williams (probably the only black comedian of his time) sorting out what lighting he wanted for the show, but when he came on the spotlight (that I was running failed) Charlie just smiled and said to the audience, "Now you can see me" Thomas came and helped me get the ancient spotlight going again and the show was saved!! Great times. Great people.

John Anthony has happy memories of the King's Hall during the Swinging Sixties:

"I personally have very happy memories of the Promenade Bandstand and Kings Hall at Aber. In 1963 I played my first professional 16 week summer season with the Jimmy Leach Band as Guitarist-Entertainer and was invited back again to perform in 1965/7.

BBC Organist Jimmy Leach & His Organolians of 'Music While You Work' fame were a regular feature on the "wireless" in those earlier years. As young musicians, starting out in the business, Jimmy taught us the true meaning of professional entertainment. The experienced gained at Aber helped us all on our way and opened up wonderful opportunities ahead.

Thousands of holiday makers would be kept fully entertained at the Bandstand and Kings Hall. Guest stars such as David Hughes would play concerts. In 1963 the Jimmy Leach Organolian Quartet opened the first half of the show at the Kings Hall on a Saturday night. Closing the second half that night and making their first break into the music industry was a rock band simply called the Rolling Stones.

My wife and I called into Aberystwyth this summer 2006. The Bandstand was closed and people simply drifted by on the prom. Little did they realise perhaps, how this beautiful town of Aber played host to some of the countries finest musical talent in those bygone days.

Gwenda Mayers from Stockport grew up in Aber:

"I have loads of memories of the King's Hall. It was such an integral part of the Community. As a Guide, and later a cub leader, we always had our Remembrance Sunday service there. I remember how proud we were all in our uniforms to

remember all those people who had given their lives for our freedom. I remember being the flag bearer for our guide pack. I can also remember being part of the Gang Show in 1977. I remember the hard work we all put into it, but it was great fun all those guides, scouts, cubs and brownies all getting together to do a big show..such collaboration! I also remember taking my grandmother to see live wrestling and her getting so excited I thought she was going to have a heart attack - boy she loved it! I also remember as a teenager going to the amusements, seeing how much I could get out of the 2p falls and the one armed bandits. Paradise!!

Ffion Rhys is eager to make contact with people who have memories of the King's Hall and are willing to help her with a film she is making..:

"I am making a short film about the history of The Kings Hall and The Waterloo Hotel that went before it. The film will consist of stills, postcards and archive film footage. It will be projected onto the site where the Kings Hall once stood as part of an arts event called Interaction on Aberystwyth prom between Oct 1 - 7, 2006 I am eager to make contact with anybody that has contributed their memories to this site. Do you have any old photos, film footage, old tickets, newspaper cuttings that would help tell the story that I could use? Did anybody see the Rolling Stones or Led Zepplin there? Any information would be greatly appreciated, any photographs could be sent to me by email to kingshallaber@hotmail.co.uk. It would be great if you could give me permission to use the recollections you have already written as text in the film. Welsh and English versions are welcome. Please go to <http://www.blaengar.org> for more information.

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The King's Hall takes **Sue Contestabile (nee Prosser)** from Llandrindod Wells back to her childhood:

"I have many fond memories of Sunday school trips each year to Aber with my sisters. The King's Hall was one of our must visit places. We used to spend hours playing the machines, I remember the one where you had to sink a ship or submarine was my favourite. It felt like Las Vegas to me down in the Kings Hall ha ha ha. My sister Hazel and I used to love the place, and the night before going to Aber we would talk about going to spend our saved up pennies in the machines at Kings Hall. We would be so excited we couldn't sleep! I think it is a great loss to Aber, makes you wonder who took the decision to knock it down and was there any financial incentive to do it (Like A European great?) (I hope the councillors who voted to knock the Kings Hall down regret it now.)

Andrew Corish from Caterham found his future wife at the King's Hall:

"I produced the first Aberystwyth Scout and Guide Gang Show, celebrating 70 years of scouting in the spring of 1977. Don Shaw was a huge help in guiding a 2nd year uni' student into the wonders of backstage. I even married one of the guide leaders who was also in the show! My other memory of the Kings Hall is giving blood twice a year. Happy memories!

Patrick Walker from Aberystwyth raises a question about the King's Hall clock:

"My father rebuilt the King's Hall clock. His name was Gordon Walker. He was commissioned by the council to repair but found he had to rebuild the clock because of rust to the old one. He had to use gold for the hands because it would not rust. Where is the clock and gold hands now?"

- **Do you know?**

Ralph Tonks from Loughborough remembers Ardwyn Schools's operatic productions at the King's Hall:

"I was born in Aberystwyth 74 years ago the year before it was built. My abiding memories of it are the Gilbert and Sullivan operas put on annually by Ardwyn School in the early 1940's. I left Aber about 1953 but now still go back for short visits 3 or 4 times a year. We were there the day they were trying to knock down the clock with great difficulty! What an awful building they have put in it's place."

Mags from Ash Vale also remembers one of the last events to be held at the King's Hall (see Charlie Downes' comments below):

"I was at Lyn and Mandy's engagement party as I am Lyns aunt. Yes, it was very cold! I also used to work behind the bar on Sat nights - very busy."

Margaret Jones from Northampton recalls nights out at the King's Hall:

"I remember the days of queueing up on the steps - Saturday night at the KH was the highlight of the week, indeed, the only thing to look forward to! The girls toilets full of the smell of cheap perfume (Eau de Paris, I think? Purple bottle, available in Boots & James the Chemist, and we thought it so sophisticated), hair lacquered to wire wool proportions, white stiletto shoes -management not keen as they 'damaged' floor, and at one time tried to persuade us to wear plastic 'caps' on them, and pink, almost white, lipstick, oh and lots of mascara, not the wands, the little pots you had to spit into and apply with a mini brush. Waiting until the pubs closed so there would be some males available. And the inevitable Saturday night fight at the KH -which involved 2 males growling at each other while their friends 'held them back'. Occasionally, one would be let go, and an actual punch might be thrown.

Walking home with whoever asked you, because you didn't want to be the only one that didn't have an escort home - think these days it would be 'the only one that didn't pull'. Was at Aber during part of the knocking down of the KH - it was watched by quite a crowd, there were some faces from the past watching as well - we sort of nodded an acknowledgement to each other.

I saw the Rolling Stones there (Mick Jagger was ill and didn't perform), also remember Jess Conran and Unit 2 Plus 4. But loved the local Xenons and "Summertime Blues". Did anyone else take part in the 'conga' - which was designed to put the doormen at their ease, and as soon as it was viably possible, we would make a dash for the open door with the steps leading to the stage? I don't ever recall getting as far as the

stage.. I think one doorman was called Taff, and he was v good at catching you.

As for Tusons, spent many an hour there, just wandering around and eyeing up any 'talent', but was shy and usually made a quick escape if approached..."

Steve Hershman used to live in Aberystwyth and has upstairs and downstairs memories of the King's Hall:

"For me, the King's Hall will always be associated with the space-rockers 'Man' and the Jonathan Kelly band - and two bottles which flew past my head as if in slow motion. Downstairs, Tuson's Amusements which had a very odd smell, part disinfectant, part ozone created by electric sparks from the current collectors on the dogem cars."

Margaret Morgan from Rhayader first went to the King's Hall during the war years:

"I remember going to the King's Hall in the early 1940s in the wartime, with my family to see the "Ralph Reader Gang Show" and certainly many many times over the last 60yrs+ losing momey on the amusement machines underneath."

Gerald Yandell from St Neots remembers Blue getting electrocuted:

"I remember one of the boys from Blue getting electrocuted, it was a good night up until then, what a rock and roller he was, he was one of the Lucas brothers as I remember. I knew them all, them were the days. I was there on the last night of the King's Hall, Lyn and Mandy's engagement. It was very cold. Then the Day family had it. I remember going to the Bingo, the arcade and going to the Roller Disco."

Gary Thomas from Aberystwyth raises two queries:

"Does anybody remember seeing "Blue" getting electrocuted live on stage? Geoff Thomas Maesteg are you related to Ralph Thomas of Aberystwyth?"

• [Post a reply...](#)

Charlie Downes from Aberystwyth remembers one of the last events to be held at the King's Hall:

"As a matter of interest, the last private event held at the King's Hall was the 18th Birthday Party of Amanda Connors of Aberystwyth, 10th January 1984. It also combined with her engagement to Lyn Davies (but they never did get married.) There were over 200 guests present and with no heating in the massive auditorium, everyone had to keep dancing to keep warm as it was freezing hard that night. Has anyone got any memories of that night?"

• [Share your memories...](#)
• [Charlie's King's Hall demolition photos...](#)

John Wood from Pontrhydfendigaid saw one of the wrestling stars of the 1970s at the King's Hall:

"I remember as a child watching Big Daddy wrestling in the King's Hall. I also remember them knocking it down, and watching for at least 10 minutes as the large iron demolishing ball smashed into the building, but to little avail only knocking off small bits. The reason it "had to come down was it was not safe" obviously this was not the case. It was a sad day for Aberystwyth."

Brian Bottomley now lives in Seattle in the USA but he grew up in Ceredigion:

"I remember taken day trips in the late 50s from my home in Lampeter up to Aber and begging my mom to take us to the amusement arcade in the Kings Hall. I remember the Laughing Policeman machine and trying to grab a toy with the crane and the machine with all the pennies that if only I could roll one down and a whole row would fall off the edge. What fun and innocent days those were, life seems so much more complicated now. And I did miss seeing the Rolling Stones play there in the 60's, Pete Lambert's car broke down I believe. Oh, it is sweet to remember these things."

Neil Diack from Machynlleth cannot understand why the King's Hall was demolished:

"Just spent a little while reading all the fantastic memories people have of the King's Hall. Seems like it wouldn't have been the 'peoples choice' to demolish it - if they had been consulted!? I too am very attached to Aber. I started at University in Aber in 1994, and so never actually had the pleasure of seeing this Fabulous building they called the King's Hall. I still cannot understand why buildings like this, in any state of repair, are allowed to be demolished. Surely, the owners, or the local council should be obliged to maintain them. I feel that it is truly criminal that the King's Hall was replaced by the modern bland thing that is there in its place. Perhaps all todays architects could learn something by looking at buildings such as King's Hall?"

Tony Kelsey-Stead from Dunstable remembers playing at the King's Hall:

"I used to play drums in a band called the Shakedown Sounds which played regularly at the King's Hall supporting some of the big names at the time. I wasn't very good so changed to guitar shortly after leaving Llanon for University. Their regular drummer (Tubs) broke his legs so I got a chance to play in, what was, an excellent band. I loved playing the King's Hall. Ah, sweet memories."

Byrone from Aberystwyth says there's a shortage of dance venues in the town:

"The King's Hall should never have been demolished, I used to go to dances with my mates in those days, now where can you go? We now run a Line Dancing class, and can only use certain venues a couple of times a year. If we still had the King's Hall we could have held lots of social evenings for the Line Dancers. Not only line dancing but we cater for the 60s 70s 80s & Rock & Roll if you want it. But where can we go nowadays to have fun. If you can come up with anywhere please let me know.

Any suggestions...?

Pauline Bowen was one of the lucky few to see Led Zeppelin perform in the King's Hall back in the 1970s:

"My dream came true - my life's ambition to see Led Zeppelin. I can remember that concert as if it was yesterday - the most amazing rock group this world will ever see."

• **Pauline on Led Zepp's Mid Wales connections...**

Liberté Harries nee Clues from Aberystwyth was brought up a stone's throw from the King's Hall:

"As a young child, we lived in Bath Street behind the Kings Hall and when I got up for school, I would see the Kings Hall clock from my bedroom, which was ALWAYS 5mins slow. Our parents were "big" in local politics and would go to various "dos" in Kings Hall - especially in the 1950s! Our Mum had a fancy umbrella that she took to most places and she would return home with all sorts of goodies tucked into the umbrella! She would sneak them off the table and slip them into the open part of said umbrella! For me, this was a HUGE treat as a child."

Doug Shaw's father worked at the King's Hall for many years and wrote a poem about the demise of the building:

"My father Don Shaw was the manager (upstairs not the amusements) from the late 1970s until its sad goodbye. I worked there as a waiter, stage hand and gofer. Also a regular member of the public - what fun, pantos, dances, bands and so much more. My brother and myself were both deckchair attendants and life guards on the beaches.

Our dad passed away in August 1997 and I would like to share a poem he wrote about the King's Hall:

Lament for the Passing of the King's Hall, Aberystwyth By Don Shaw

Have you ever heard a building cry,
A cry which says why do i die,
They smash me with that ball and crane,
Save me and let me live again,
To provide a venue for the dances shows,
Thing to which the public goes.

The swinging ball crashes in again,
Why does it give me so so much pain,
Pain that brings back memories,
Of past functions and local reveries,
Big Daddy wrestling, the Rolling Stones,
Welsh National Opera or big band tones.

The Christmas panto every year,
With childrens voices ringing clear,
The L.V.A banquet that annual orgy,
Political meetings with the argy-bargy,
W.I. Rallies their groups in contest,
There's so many more but let them rest.

Have you ever heard a building cry,
A cry which is now just a sigh.
The time for saving is now past,

How much longer will the agony last,
With concrete fall, dust all around,
The only noise that thumping sound.

I know i'll be gone in a few more weeks,
Nothing but rubble piled in heaps,
An area available for who knows what,
What will fill my King's Hall spot.
A prime position as you can see,
Can anyone tell me what will i be.

Have you ever heard a building cry.
I have.
Just listen and hear
The King's Hall
Say
GOODBYE.

• **More poetry from Mid Wales...**

Geraint adds these anecdotes about the building:

"There is a story in the family about the Hydro burning down. My Great Aunt was Laura Evans, a mezzo soprano of note at the time and her concert party was staying there that night. The fire was so intense that they had to leave the building in a hurry in their night clothes and all their clothes and jewellery was destroyed. According to Wil Troughton's book of Aberystwyth and District postcards, the conductor of the orchestra escaped on the back of the tenor who shinned down a drainpipe!

The Kings Hall was quite a focal point of entertainment for Aber folk and the dance hall was the biggest for miles around. A friend told me how they would come down from Dolgellau in the 50's for the dances. That's about 35 miles away and if you remember the old Mach and Corris roads there were more bends than straights, so they must have been keen!"

Blondie from Paris recalls the time the building was being demolished:

"I grew up in Aber and remember the time when they pulled the King's Hall down. The reason was because it was unsafe. Typically it took them weeks to knock it down. Afterwards we had a great car park for a number of years!"

Graham from Stafford remembers the school Eisteddfodau which were held here:

"I lived in Trawscoed in the '50s and '60s and went to Ardwyn Grammer School and have fond memories of the excellent school Eisteddfodau held in the King's Hall .In the summer, we used to run down to the beach for a quick swim in the dinner hour and if the weather was inclement, we went into the amusements under the Kings Hall."

Beryl Williams from Aberystwyth remembers the King's Hall dances:

"I remember the Kings Hall dances with the Ralph Davies band. They were very well attended with a beautiful floor to dance on. That's where they chose the different Queens e.g.

R.A.F , seacadet, British Legion, 6 others ready for the summer carnivals."

Ray from Blackburn recalls one particular highlight:

"I remember when I was a kid, we looked forward to Christmas and we would have the Mayor's Christmas party at the King's Hall. There was entertainment for us on stage and Christmas presents and a free bus home. Things like this stick in your mind. "

Pete Williams from Swansea realised one of his ambitions at the King's Hall:

"It was always my ambition to play with a band in the King's Hall after watching local bands like the Xenons play. Eventually I made it with the Stretch Armstrong Band - a wonderful evening, now sadly never to be repeated."

Nick Kaptein from Holland poses an additional question:

"I saw memories of Ian Dury, Elvis Costello, the Stones and, for myself, a man called T.Jones - and all around the King's Hall. Well, we live now in another time and I'm really interested in Americana music. In these days - without the King's Hall - where do you all meet the stars of today?"

Richard from Skelmersdale says :

"I remember going to the Taurus disco on Saturday nights in the 70s."

Emma Isherwood from Aberystwyth remembers the Kings Hall rollerdisco:

"I used to love the Kings Hall, I used to go there as a child to the rollerdisco, play in the arcade downstairs and watch scooby doo there. Shame it had to be knocked down."

Peter Jones from Philadelphia met his wife at the Kings Hall:

"The Kings Hall was the place to go when I was a student at Aber 1973-79. I first met my wife there at a freshman dance and later went with her to see bands like Elvis Costello and Ian Dury. Sad to learn that it's gone. What did the song say *They paved paradise and put up a parking lot...*"

Roger Beaman from St Ives rode the Kings Hall dodgems as a student in Aber:

"During my first year at Aber (79-80) a group of us would sometimes have a ride on the Kings Hall dodgems during an evening pub crawl. The only place I know where you could legally drive with 6 pints inside you! Also the Kings Hall was the venue for the only wrestling I have ever seen for real. The standard of acting was hilariously bad and the little old lady at the end of the event hitting one of the wrestlers with her umbrella completely cracked us up. Made my local village pantomime look like the National Theatre."

Bill from Boston has one abiding memory:

"Led Zeppelin for a quid, 16th Jan 1973!!!"

• **More on Led Zep's Mid Wales' connections...**

John & Jennifer Reddy in Holland remember this focal point of the town:

"Remember all the great groups that they had in the sixties. Not to mention the graduation ceremonies - it was a real focal point for the town. Pity that the council at the time could not have made a bit more of it. By the way, it's good to see that finally they are making a real effort to renovate Alex!"

Patrick McNally from Birmingham was shocked at the loss of the hall:

"I remember the old place well ! I took my degree there in 1956. I think it is a great shame that it was found necessary to pull it down as it gave much wanted character to the Front and fulfilled an important function within the community. It should have been listed and kept. I was shocked to see that it had gone when paying visits to Aber."

Caroline Jones from Aberystwyth recalls the halcyon days of the King's Hall:

"What wonderful comments and memories people have of the King's Hall. I remember the dances and LVA Balls, the Police and Mayors Balls to mention but a few. Wonderful nights of music, dancing and dates with local boys. Ah! What nostalgia does for you."

Mike from Middlesborough says the King's Hall was an integral part of Aber:

"The Kings Hall was what most people will identify with Aberystwyth. It was an imposing building full of character and represented what Aber was all about....at least then, when many people used the area to holiday. The Kings Hall was to Aber what the Royal (not Royle) family is to the UK today, an ambassador for the place, an identity, something to remember a place by. The Pier was also a splendid structure in it's time....the seafront was an interesting collection of victorian and later architecture which gave Aber a quality look. Money is what keeps large interesting buildings standing...if the Kings Hall had been in London it would be a national Treasure and worth many millions. Wrong place Wrong time for the Kings Hall but thanks for the memories...a fond farewell (late)"

Ken Richards from Toronto was at the same concert as Ken Walton from Llanfairpwll (see below):

"I remember that Paul Tortelier concert as well. The unaccompanied Bach pieces were a 'Gigue' and 'Sarabande,' and I think that he conducted a Beethoven symphony that evening.

There were also annual performances by the university choral and operatic societies. Belated thanks to Cardiganshire Constabulary for providing a cadet uniform at short notice to one of the 'policemen' in the Pirates of Penzance."

Linda Redston from Oliva in Spain harks back to the swinging sixties:

"Yes I certainly remember the Kings Hall. This was the only place to go in the sixties for a fantastic night out dancing meeting boys, making dates, and we used to get some fantastic groups playing there such as The Troggs and guess what, The Rolling Stones! The worst and saddest time was when the Kings Hall was finally demolished."

Derek Thomas who now lives in Buckinghamshire says thinking about the King's Hall sparks off one particular memory for him.

"About 1972 when I was 8, HMS Glamorgan visited Aberystwyth and anchored in the bay opposite the Kings Hall. My father who was a town councillor was to be a member of the official party to go aboard and I was going as well. You can imagine my sadness, when meeting in the civic rooms in the King's Hall, to discover that the trip was cancelled because the weather was too rough. And again my elation when my dad decided to go over to the ship on the supplies boat. My father and I accompanied by more "Mothers Pride" than I had ever seen in my life were the only ones to visit the ship. To this day I feel sorry for the bored midshipman who took me around that wonderful vessel while my dad enjoyed the hospitality of the officer's mess."

David Jones from Toronto lived in Aberystwyth from 1955 - 1959:

"Tusons amusements played a big part in me & my brothers life during those times. I, along with my friend Dai Taylor, knew the dodgem car operator, who gave us free 20 minute rides. We attended a kid's Xmas party upstairs one year in the "hall". My lasting memory will be a halfpenny slot machine in the Portland street entrance at the top of the stairs, when the Hall was painted pink."

Pat Groves (née Bland) from Horsham recalls the demand for dance tickets:

"I lived in Aberystwyth 1958-84. I remember the wonderful Football Club dances with THE BIG DANCE BANDS. They were dances everyone wanted tickets for ."

Tracy from Machynlleth recalls the time when the building was painted in rather a distinctive colour:

"I remember the King's Hall being 'pink'. My dad used to take me there when I was young and I used to love the pinball machines!!"

Ken Walton, who now lives in Llanfairpwll in North Wales, says the King's Hall clearly means different things to different people:

"I lived in Llanbadarn from 1959 to 1970. I worked at the end of the Prom near Constitution Hill and ate in the King's Hall cafe during my first few weeks there. But my main memories are of splendid visits by what has now become the BBC National Orchestra of Wales."

I remember most fondly a concert that Paul Tortelier played in. Not content with performing with the orchestra, he pulled a chair up to the front of the stage, and set up his cello in his own very personal manner. He announced himself to the audience and played us unaccompanied pieces by J. S. Bach. What a bonus!

At the interval we stepped outside into the cool air of a summer evening, with the waves breaking on the shore and the music singing in our heads."

Richard from Skelmersdale says:

"i remeber going to the disco nights in the 70s on saturday nights when i lived in the town"

Vic Allen from Tregaron, who now lives in Irby on the Wirral, says the King's Hall used to be the place to go when he was younger.

"I remember the old Kings Hall back in the 50's and 60's as it was the first place we made a bee-line for off the train from Tregaron! What is still vivid in my mind is walking down the steps into the inner hall with the dodgems in the middle and the penny fruit machines along the side. It was a great place if the weather was a bit inclement.

When I was a male nurse at Tregaron Chest Hospital we had our annual dinner/dances there above, I had my engagement party there in 1961!!

We would spend time on the amusements and then dash around the corner to the Old Celtic Cinema. I have not been around the town for over 35 years. "R'oedd yn amser da iawn y dyddiau hynny pan r'oeddwn yn blant." (*Transl: We had good times those days when we were children*)"

Alun Jones from Cardiff used to enjoy going to the King's Hall's amusement arcade.

"I remember going to Aber on many a day trip when I was a boy and the best thing was the shooting gallery in the basement amusement arcade. A lot of the targets shot a jet of water if you aimed correctly, so when you were playing, you had to know the correct place to stand so that the water missed you but caught an innocent bystander who was just standing there watching the wonderment that was the King's Hall shooting gallery!"

Mr J Jackson from Willenhall has happy memories of the King's Hall :

"I knew the kings hall in the 1970s & 80s. A great amusement arcade in the basement and a handy toilet after a pot of tea in the milk bar opposite. Happy, happy summers."

David Clues from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea remembers going to the King's Hall to give blood:

"I was born and brought up in Aber (the hub of the universe); when it came time for the blood donor team to set up in the King's Hall an added incentive to rival the cup of tea, coffee or cordial was a bottle of beer (no doubt to bring

the large student population in to donate).

I was sixteen when I first gave blood and the St John's team of ladies were considerably older than that so when we had finished our beer we would get up and walk around the beds and screens in the Hall with our arms bent to hold the cotton wool pad, putting on something of a stagger as we rounded the last corner before coming upon a lovely, somewhat aged, St John's nurse who would say, "hello love, and what would you like?" My first time I had two beers... Ah, the King's Hall."

Russell from Liverpool has been visiting the area for more than 40 years.

"Kings Hall became a second home to me. I was first taken to Clarach Bay for our annual holiday at the age of 15 months. We always stayed in chalets, we have been back to the area every year since. I am now 43 and myself, my wife and two children went on the cliff railway in August."

Alun T Jones from Bridgend recalls the fairground attractions below the building:

"I remember the dodgems in the basement of the King's Hall, which was a wondrous place to a small boy. There were low pavement level windows that allowed a view of the basement from the outside. I remember Jimmy Leach and his Organolians performing both in the bandstand on the prom and in the King's Hall Theatre".

Geoff Thomas from Maesteg used to get free tickets to shows at the King's Hall:

"I remember spending two summer holidays in Aberystwyth when I was a child. At the age of six years old, in 1955 (doesn't time fly) and the following year as well, staying with my Mother's Aunty Voe who lived in King Street. I can't remember her surname, but she remarried after my Mother's Uncle died and her married name then was Collie. She used to rent rooms to some of the members of the band that used to play in the King's Hall during the summer season, so my brother, my sister and myself would get free tickets to the children's matinees held every afternoon.

The thrill of being called up onto the stage to 'help' the band by playing tambourine or gazoo or playing the snare drum while the drummer guided your hands with his remains with me now. Small beer, I suppose, for today's children but memories that have stayed with me for the last fifty years.

Other memories of Aber, riding up Old Consti on the funicular, walking down the other side to Clarach Bay, ice creams in the park, the once a holiday trip to Devil's Bridge, shopping in Machynlleth. Happy Days !"

Dylan from Cardiff has childhood memories of the King's Hall.

"I remember playing games in the arcade under the Kings Hall. Great days! Though there was always this feeling that the whole place was about to collapse on top of you. Which of course added to the sense of fun!"

Nick Kaptein from Alkmaar, Holland can recall his first visit to Aberystwyth and the King's Hall.

"In 1971, I visited Wales for the first time with some friends and went to "an evening with T.Jones" in the King's Hall in Aber. It was a great evening with dancing... I met 2 nurses there and it was the beginning of a friendship for life. Every year when possible, I come back to my second hometown - the one I've chosen.

In 1988, some time before they demolished the King's Hall, I took some pictures to make a drawing of it. I made a card of that drawing with the "paradise part" of Joni Mitchell's *Big Yellow Taxi* on it. Stupid - it's

not good to use copyright words - I've never published that card. But Ian Gomm (see below) saw the drawing of the King's Hall, and asked me to do the artwork for his *Rock 'n' Roll Heart* CD... the Hall is on the back of the booklet and in a two tower version on the back of the case. So even in Tokyo and Nashville they know the King's Hall!"



- Read more about [Ian Gomm](#) from Powys, who was a member of the band Brinsley Schwarz.

Skateboarders may now hang out on the site where the King's Hall once stood but when **John Dight** was a lad growing up in Aber, rollerskating was all the rage.

"I used to go rollerskating at the King's Hall. The floor was great for doing sliding stops. The King's Hall was also where I saw my First Concert. If you can call it that. A punk rock band, that I can't even remember the name of, played there and a bunch of us went to see them. One of the band smashed the drum kit and another did a moonie from the top of a stack of speakers. I guess that made up for how bad the music was! I remember walking down the steps onto the quiet of the Prom, after the concert, being quite taken aback that such a thing could happen in Aber!"

C.D.Lloyd from Hereford has fond memories of childhood summers spent in Aberystwyth when the King's Hall was a focal point.

"I always remember the King's Hall from my childhood, on our annual holiday in the industrial fortnight that was known as 'Brummy time' because of the volume of visitors from the West Midlands. The King's Hall became a permanent fixture for visits, to descend the stairs to play on the penny arcade machines with my Grandfather - always a wonderful time, full of awe and excitement. I was saddened to see it being demolished but still come to Aber as often as we can, bringing my own grandson now to enjoy the splendour of this fine coastal town of sitting by the marina and eating fish and chips for tea!"

Nigel Holloway remembers the last days of the King's Hall.

"Though I don't remember the heyday of the hall I remember how we as residents were told it was un-safe and falling down.....Oh how I smiled when it took twice as long to demolish because it was built and re-enforced so well!The new flats are ok but, the balcony covers are just so ugly!"

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King's Hall - 1 March 1989

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your comments

Steve Smith, Hershaw

King's Hall lives: Jonathan Kelly's band is still playing in my memory. So is South Wales' finest: The Man Band. On the average, experiences last longer than things eh?
Mon Apr 5 20:56:46 2010

Ruth, London

Not sure the new building is an improvement. Looks just a bit twee. I loved the old cinema in Aberystwyth, has that gone too? What happened to the old hillbillie dummy that used to sit in the rocking chair at the King's Hall?
Mon Aug 24 09:25:57 2009

Neil from Machynlleth

Few of us used to get the train from Mach every Saturday morning and go down to the Kings Hall. Couple of hours in the amusements downstairs then a Wimpy before getting the train back. Highlight of the week for us in the early/mid 80s.
Sun Nov 16 20:08:46 2008

Roger Parsons, Miskin, Pontyclun

My student digs for two years were in Mona House Bath Street, at the rear of Kings hall. Photo 5 shows the house next door! I remember the same saturday nights as anyone else! Sargent Evans was a very big man but he had a soft spot for students who were also members of the "Town" rugby club, so we got in Free! Saw all the major groups including Cream and went to the concerts by the Halle and

LSO. What a centre for entertainment! That was in mid 60's. Of course the specs are tinted rose but then it was 40 years ago and my memories are solid. To all of you who have lived the winter in Aber and sat exams in the May sunshine, will you ever forget this place?

Mon Jul 23 15:39:12 2007

I for from Aberystwyth

i will always remember Slade and Marillion playing there in the early 80's

Mon Feb 5 09:49:08 2007

Laura, Birmingham

I'm a 1st year student and pass these flats and the carvery which is called King's Hall Carvery, and many of us who have just started uni, all know where king Hall is, so even though the the place may not be called King's Hall Place, the name still lives on.

Thu Oct 26 09:35:16 2006

anon

Make you wonder why the Council gave planning permission to replace the kings Hall with those souless plastic flats that were put up in its place. The Kings Hall was a fine example of early 20th Century art deco design. Surely a bit of love and care should have been spent to renovate such a fine building.

Thu Mar 16 11:43:36 2006

Barbara Foster, Birmingham.

Every picture tells a story. I took a sequennce of pictures when the harbour was being built. They really tell the story of drastic change. Just like these of Kings Hall.

Dear Barbara. Many thanks for your message. If you'd like to see your harbour photos on the site, please email us at wales.mid@bbc.co.uk - Mid Wales Web Team

Tue Jan 17 14:37:32 2006

Brian from Stoke

We used to visit the Kings Hall as kids; it was a great building that should have been preserved. Its replacement is soulless and ugly, and has destroyed the sequence of seafront buildings. It's a blot on the landscape, badly designed and will last less than the 70 odd years the Kings Hall survived.

Thu Dec 29 14:24:58 2005

R.Daniel

they should never have got rid of the kings hall great in the 60s and 70s disco nights roe inn wild knights spot on etc

Wed Dec 14 23:42:22 2005

Pat Haskins from Nothampton

Just got back from Aber after spending a very enjoyable week there. What a shame to see that the King's Hall had been demolished. I passed it every day while I was there and every time looked up at the clock. I remember the dodgems and all the times spent there also at the dances that were held there.

Thu Nov 10 20:45:33 2005

David Thomas London

I was born and grew up in Aber. The King's Hall was the venue for Ardwyn School to hold our St David's Day Eisteddfod. The day started at 9am until 4pm with high competition between the school houses - Arfon, Powys, Ceredigion and Gwynedd. Essays were submitted for weeks

before and the recitation and singing was of a very high standard. Yes, adrenaline really flowed that day especially when Mr Beynon Davies would announce the points awarded. The day would end with chairing of the Bard. Wonderful days and memories.
Mon Oct 31 10:19:41 2005

Joy Edwards, Aber now Wolverhampton

I remember when they demolished the King's Hall. We were told it was dangerous and had to be knocked down but it took a lot longer to fall than they anticipated. It seems to me that the reason it was in a sad state was because no money was ever spent on it. The apartments they built in its place were too expensive for the local people. Is this still the case?

Thu Sep 15 11:41:59 2005

Dan from Aberystwyth

Whoever decided to demolish it must have been insane.

Mon Aug 8 11:04:04 2005

Tim Barnett

Could you put me in contact with Charlie Downes? I would like to ask him for copies of these photographs. Thanks.

Hi Tim. Could you send your request to us at wales.mid@bbc.co.uk along with your email address please? Mid Wales Web Team.

Sat Jul 23 14:31:42 2005

David Hankey, Great Easton, Leics.

First of all may I congratulate Charlie Downes for having the foresight in taking these photographs. I well remember the Kings Hall from 1950's through to its demise. It was a wonderful meeting place. Everyone knew where it was and it was sad to see the pitiful state it had become. The dodgems and the one-arm bandits are well remember and I guess a small "fortune" was spent there over the years. I wonder if the people who built this landmark building in 1930 had any idea that a mere 50 years on it would be razed to the ground - I doubt it. The new building does look the part, a shame they didn't name it Kings Hall Place or something of that ilk. Thanks for the memories.

Sat May 14 09:58:04 2005

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King's Hall - 1 March 1989

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The graffiti on the walls is a sign of the times. 'Nid yw Cymru ar Werth' (*Wales is not for Sale*) was one of the main slogans of the Welsh-language society Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg during the late 1980s.

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King's Hall - 1 March 1989

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Another graffiti slogan sets the date. The wrongful conviction of the Sharpeville Six became one of the cause celebres of South Africa's apartheid years.

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The demolition of the King's Hall in 1989

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King's Hall Demolition

Last updated: 24 November 2005

When it opened in the 1930s, the King's Hall was one of the finest buildings in Aberystwyth - but half a century later, the place had fallen into disrepair and a decision was taken in the 1980s to demolish it. As one of the town's landmarks disappeared, local man **Charlie Downes** took these photos for the record:



The demolition of the King's Hall in 1989

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

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A photo of the King's Hall site taken in 2005.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The site of the King's Hall is now known as Llys y Brenin. The development includes a restaurant and a row of shops with residential appartments above. Which do you prefer - the new or the **the old**?

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The King's Hall in the 1930s

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Which do you prefer - the old or **the new**?

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