



Maurice Myer Greenside Prince (1899 - 1991)

Entertainment entrepreneur and co-founder of the Strand Cinema, Kingsley Road, Bideford

Volunteer researcher: *Louise Rands Silva.*

Note to readers:

Our research files have been compiled by a committed and diligent team of volunteer researchers.

Please be aware that while our volunteers have received training in basic research skills, they are not professional historians.

We welcome further use of our research-files (with due credit). However, we encourage you to perform your own fact-checking / research processes before relying on any of the information contained here.

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Did you know that an imposing, rather industrial-looking 1930s cinema used to stand overlooking the Pill (meaning a tidal creek) in Bideford? The owner and Managing Director of the Strand Cinema was Maurice Prince. Living nearby, I am curious about the ever-changing townscape of Bideford, where I have brought up my British/Brazilian sons. Maurice Prince also had the art deco Regal Cinema built on the Strand in Barnstaple, which is still there but in need of restoration. It is also interesting to reflect on the ways that rapidly changing media technology has influenced our lifestyles, behaviour, leisure time and community spaces. Today we view via the internet You Tube, Netflix, 'box sets' and social media platforms. However, the appeal of the big screen remains and we can still enjoy an evening out for a film with the Bideford Film Society at Kingsley School or Bideford College, and at The Plough in Torrington. At the Boat Café, there are uplifting 1950s Hollywood musicals courtesy of Captain Bob and Annette from Lithuania. Indeed, in terms of diversity and learning about other ways of life, whilst realizing we have so much in common with other societies, the documentaries and films we watch are an emotionally absorbing way of understanding and celebrating the wider world and its myriad cultures. It's a chance to look beyond our everyday lives as we escape into other worlds.

An artist's impression of the soon-to-be-built Strand Cinema in December 1937. (Courtesy of Torridge District Council)



Illustration in Peter Christie, Secret Bideford, 15 June 2015, Amberley Publishing Limited

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The Strand Cinema on The Pill in 1980:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/oldcinemaphotos/4496855475/>

Here is the site now, Strand Court retirement flats next to the horse chestnut tree. As I write in early spring, there are a new generation of rooks repairing their 10 annual twiggy nests, some sitting in pairs amongst the sprouting sticky buds. Residents aged in their 80s and 90s who may live here now would have been children when the Strand Cinema opened in 1938.



Strand Court retirement flats on the site of former Strand Cinema, Kingsley Road, The Pill, Bideford

Editha Pearce and Ken Roe contributed the following to the website:
<http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/28705>:

'The Strand Cinema was opened on 21st July 1938. The cinema had a modern brick façade, and was set in formal gardens with trees surrounding it. The auditorium had a 40-foot wide proscenium. I did some summer relief work in this cinema in the early 1960s. In those days you could travel from Swansea to Bideford by train. Whilst I was there it was a very busy cinema catering mainly for summer holiday visitors. Staff told me that the winter business was always very poor but this was made up for by the strong summer trade. The projectors were the dreaded BTH machines which most projectionists hated. I did not enjoy the experience and was happy to leave at the end of my agreed time. The management offered me a permanent post as a second, but there was no way I would have taken it if it meant living with those machines.'

The Strand Cinema was independently operated throughout its life, and was closed on 2nd May 1981, a sign of the times as television and home videos had replaced cinema as the main form of viewing entertainment. After a few years as a discotheque, it was demolished in January 1992, less than a year after Maurice's passing in February 1991 at the ripe old age of 91. I recall the nitrate film-ignited inferno that destroys the Paris cinema, 'Emmanuelle Mimieux', in Quentin Tarantino's 2009 film 'Inglourious Basterds'. The owner, a young Jewish woman called

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Shosanna Dreyfus, decimates the high-ranking Nazi audience during the premiere of Joseph Goebbels' propaganda film 'Nations' Pride'. The Strand cinema was a victim of the wrecking ball, along with so many others in the 1980s and 1990s, but many of those that survived went on to become places of worship, bingo halls or nightclubs.

Gordon Chapman in his book Devon at the Cinema (Halsgrove, 2000, p.117) writes:

'The Strand must have been the last cinema to have been built in Devon before war-time building restrictions put a stop to all such enterprises. ... It was a simple, almost utilitarian structure, brick built throughout, and one that was sorely missed when it was demolished. The Strand, with formal gardens and trees around it, must have had one of the prettiest settings of any cinema in Devon.'

In Peter Christie's 2011 *North Devon Journal* 'Looking Back' Column, he mentions that in 1986 Halley's Disco at the old Strand Cinema in Bideford had 600 attend the first night. Hawkwind played there on 17 July 1986.



<http://www.littleham-landcross.org.uk/gallery/cpg15x/displayimage.php?pid=798>

From the Derek Clark Collection, November 1984

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BARNSTAPLE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

A Brauntion Statement: Sanitary Inspector Replies

Additional Spring Supply for Brauntion

Reference to a statement made at Brauntion Parish Council...

A TENDER

The tender only was received for the work to be done at Brauntion...

MARWOOD WATER

A communication was read from the Ministry of Health...

BATHS AT BRAUNTION

Mr. Alton, a farmer at North Brauntion, Brauntion, writes to the Council...

THE BRAUNTION STATEMENT

The Clerk reported that further samples of water had been taken at Brauntion...

The Sanitary Inspector, Mr. S. P. Smith, said he was pleased to refer to the report of a recent meeting of Brauntion Parish Council...

Mr. G. A. Drake (a member of the Brauntion Parish Council) said that the remark as to which Mr. Smith referred was regrettable...

Mr. W. Moon said that he was present at Brauntion Parish Council and congratulated the Sanitary Inspector and the Water Inspector...

Mr. W. T. Buckingham, J.P., said that the objection could not rest upon their other business but was on the spot...

The Chairman said as far as he could gather the representatives of Brauntion were more than satisfied with the action of their Inspector...

BIDEFORD BOROUGH NEW JUSTICES



Philip Dyke

Three new Justices of the Peace have been appointed for the Borough of Bideford. They are: Mr. Norman Chapp, Mrs. Edith Hancock, and Mr. J. I. Baker.

THE STRAND, BIDEFORD

New Cinema Opened: Mayor and Power of the Film

Costing over £25,000, and seating over 500 people, Bideford's new Cinema, The Strand, was officially opened on Thursday evening...

The cinema is the last word in modern cinema and appointment, and the scheme of decoration and white for the major portion, is extremely effective.

The first performance was in every sense a gala one, the cinema being packed, and an air of festivity prevailing.

The Mayor, Mr. H. W. Greenwood, said the title of the play of Bideford was full of the promise of good things. Life was made up of things both good and bad...

There were two points he would like specifically to mention. The first was that the cinema had the opportunity of appealing through the eyes...

During the interval the Band of the 6th Battalion Devonshire Regiment, under Bandmaster H. Payne, and by kind permission of Lt.-Col. D. H. Bullock, rendered selections...

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WOMAN'S THEFTS AT BIDEFORD

Pleads "Guilty" to Three Charges

Before Bideford County Magistrate on Thursday, Mary Catherine Whiting, a postwoman, pleaded "Guilty" to three charges of theft.

The charges were: On June 21, at Westward Ho, stealing a diamond-encrusted alarm clock, two white stockings, blouse, and one box of four pencils...

Sergeant Gannon said in the case of the alarm clock, the property was valued at £1 10s, the property of Miss Lucy Elizabeth Ross, of 1, North Street, Northam...

Whiting said she had nothing to say in respect of the charges.

The Bench announced that the girl would be bound over to her own recognizances of £5 to be of good behavior for three years, and for that period she would be sent to the care of the Good Shepherd at Cardiff...

ALLEGED THEFT OF CANOE

Bideford Boy Charged

Before a special sitting of Bideford Juvenile Court, magistrate Thurston, on Thursday, a boy named "Tom Gully" is alleged to have stolen a canoe...

Sergeant Gannon, prosecuting, said that a life and white canoe was left several days at the river bank and was subsequently missed by the owner...

Regarding the canoe, he said that it was made of sheet metal, and two of which were being the track, and subsequently the canoe was found in the boy's house...

The owner of the canoe said that when he left it he covered it freely with a strong piece of rope, and when it was interfered with he did not expect it to be damaged...

In reply to the presiding magistrate (Mr. R. W. Fiddell), the boy said it did not occur to him to mention about the canoe when he was in court.

The boy's father said his son had a boat of his own, and practically lived in and on the river, and he obtained permission on which his son had found articles and returned them to the police...

PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

At a meeting of the Tax and Tonnage Pilot

ATTRactions AT THE REGAL BARNSTAPLE

At a meeting of the Tax and Tonnage Pilot

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The luxurious new Strand cinema is opened in Bideford at a cost of £20,000, *North Devon Journal*, July 28, 1938 <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DEV/NDJchronology>

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STRAND BIDEFORD
T. E L E P H O N E 7 0 *cinema* ★ ★

To-day (Fri.) & Sat., June 12 & 13

**THE
CORONATION**
in Gevacolor
(at 2.50, 5.25, 7.59) Plus—
FULL LENGTH
CORONATION NEWS REEL
(3.08, 5.50, 8.32) Plus—
RAYMOND LOVELL in
**TIME GENTLEMEN
PLEASE**
(at 3.36, 6.18, 9.0) (U)

Monday, June 15th, three days

ROBERT TAYLOR and
ELEANOR PARKER
in the dramatic story behind the
dropping of the first Atomic bomb
**ABOVE AND
BEYOND**
(A) (at 2.54, 5.35, 8.16)
A truly great picture. Plus—
"The Land of the Ostriches" (U)
"Casinova Cat" Cartoon (U)
and "Movietone Newsreel"
Programmes 2.15, 4.56, 7.37

Thurs., June 18th, three days.—LANA TURNER, KIRK DOUGLAS,
WALTER PIDGEON in "THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL" (A).
The story behind the bright lights of Hollywood.

The *North Devon Journal* reported the showing of Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation in 1953. Note the precise start times!

After establishing the art deco Regal Cinema on the Strand in Barnstaple, in 1937, Maurice initiated the building of the Strand Cinema in Bideford, designed by Westminster architect David Evelyn Nye. It reminds me of Battersea Power Station, built around the same time. Nye had just completed the building of the Embassy cinema in Fareham, Hampshire in the spring of that year, shortly before my grandfather Bertram Rands moved with his young family from Coalville in Leicestershire to begin working as Deputy Town Clerk in the council offices opposite. Bideford Entertainments Ltd was managed by Maurice Prince, HW Fulford, Mrs Dora Meyer (his

aunt) and Mr OW Ward. He also owned with HW Fulford the Victorian Gothic-fronted Palace Theatre in Bideford (1930-1962), which is now the site of the popular 'Rose Salterne' in Bridgeland Street, owned by Weatherspoons. It had previously been a Music Hall that showed films as well.



The Palace Theatre in Bridgeland Street, in Secret Bideford (2015), Peter Christie

In his book Devon at the Cinema (Devon Books, Halsgrove, 2000), Gordon Chapman is assisted by Peter Christie to locate cinemas that once existed in Bideford. They are:

- Bijou, Lower Gunstone, open c1914-18, now Stallones night club (p.15)
- Electric Palace, now the Palladium night club; its entrance was where Patt's greengrocers shop is (*Eat More Fruit*), open c1919-1926 (p.56)
- The Gaiety, 109, Irsha Street, Appledore, c1920s-1950s (p.66)

There are close parallels between Maurice Prince and his famous contemporary, the founder of the iconic Odeon cinema empire, Oscar Deutsch (1893-1941). He was the Birmingham-born son of a Jewish scrap metal worker who had emigrated from Hungary. In a prolific partnership with architect Harry Weedon, he had built 257 state-of-the-art cinemas across the UK before his

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untimely death aged 48. He opened the Odeon Exeter in 1937, along with 32 others that year. The name Odeon is an ancient Greek word meaning 'singing place', but in the advertising it also stood for 'Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation!' (See <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/mar/11/closing-credits-the-battle-to-save-1930s-odeon-cinemas-photo-essay>). Not only were these radical new cinema buildings often the most modern and exciting structures in their communities; they also provided a hugely valuable public amenity during a time of national crisis. Oscar Deutsch wrote in 1937:

'It was always my ambition to have buildings which were individual and striking, but which were always objects of architectural beauty ... we endeavored to make our buildings express the fact that they are specially erected as the homes of the latest, most progressive entertainment in the world today.' (p.122)

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The Strand

SUPER CINEMA
BIDEFORD

JULY . . . 1938

SOUVENIR

PROGRAMME

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Souvenir Programme cover of the Strand Super Cinema

The glamorous shiny silver and green souvenir opening ceremony programme gives a flavour of the 'silver screen', Hollywood comes to Bideford, and the studios like Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer where the movies were created.

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YOUR HOUSE

You are more than a guest within our portals.
Your visit honours us with a welcome obligation.

For the time, this is your house. Its customs and
ways, we trust, may measure
up to your own standards.



M. PRINCE
(Managing Director)

We hope to anticipate
many of your desires.

Merely to make your
wishes known is to
confer a favour.

Many loyal and
willing hands
are beneath
this roof—
eager to
increase
your comfort;
seeking your
convenience; hoping
to be of service to you.



H. W. FULFORD
(Director)



Should the spirit of this house
be misinterpreted, please do us
the kindness to make it known, no
matter how trivial you may regard it.



Mrs. D. MEYER
(Director)

Our one ambition is that
you shall be
"at home"
here;
undisturbed
in your enjoyment,
and that you will
find pleasure in
the recollections of
your visits.



O. W. WARD
(Director)



FOR THIS IS YOUR HOUSE

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In the Foreword, customers are courteously assured that

'Every care has been taken to ensure your comfort from the moment you enter the main entrance doors until you leave the building. The furnishings and seating provide luxurious accommodation together with an absolutely clear view of the screen ...

We hope that the result of our efforts will afford you many happy hours of entertainment and that regular visits to the Strand will take a natural place in your weekly arrangements.'

Opening Programme

21st DAY OF JULY 1938, at 7-30 p.m.

1. NATIONAL ANTHEM
THE BAND OF THE 6TH BATTALION DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT
(by kind permission of Lieut.-Col. D. A. Bullock)
2. OPENING CEREMONY BY
His Worship The MAYOR OF BIDEFORD
(H. W. GREENWOOD, Esq.)
3. NEWS & TOPICS OF THE DAY
4. "CHARLIE CHAN AT MONTE CARLO"
Based on the character "Charlie Chan" by Earl Derr Biggers.
A 20TH CENTURY-FOX PICTURE DIRECTED BY EUGENE FORD.
5. "DON DONALD"
A WALT DISNEY MICKEY MOUSE IN COLOUR.
6. "THE PRISONER OF ZENDA"
Based on EDWARD ROSE'S dramatization of ANTHONY HOPE'S Novel.
Produced by David O. Selznick. Directed by John Cromwell.

— THE CAST —

Rudolf Rassendyll - RONALD COLMAN	Bernini - RALPH FAULKNER
King Rudolf - MADLEINE CARROLL	Master Johann - BYRON FOULGER
Princess Flavia - DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, Jr.	Josef - HOWARD LANG
Report of Hentzau - MARY ASTOR	British Ambassador - BEN WEBSTER
Antoinette de Moulon - C. AUBREY SMITH	British Ambassador's wife - EVELYN DERESFORD
Colonel Zapt - RAYMOND MASSEY	Master of Ceremonies - BOYD IRWIN
Black Michael - DAVID NIVEN	Lord High Chamberlain - EMMETT KING
Dr. Franz - MONTAGUE LOVE	Orchestra Leader - AL SHEAN
Kraftstein - WILLIAM VON BRINCKEN	Passport Officer - CHARLES HALTON
Lonergan - PHILIP SLEEMAN	Luggage Officer - OTTO FRIES
Cook - ELEANOR WESSELHOFF	Porter - SPENCER CHARTERS
Duenna - FLORENCE ROBERTS	Porter - ALEXANDER D'ARCY
Black Michael's Butler - TORREN MEYER	De Gazette - HENRY ROQUEMONT
Marshall Spinkwice - LAWRENCE GRANT	Man of Station - LILLIAN HERMER
Cardinal - IAN MACLAREN	Two Guards at Lodge - PAT SOMERSET, LESLIE SKETCHLEY

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS AT THE STRAND

FREDRIC MARCH in "THE BUCCANEER"
 JACK HULBERT & PATRICIA ELLIS in "PARADISE FOR TWO"
 JOHN LODER & MARGARET LOCKWOOD in "BANK HOLIDAY"
 DEANNA DURBIN in "MAD ABOUT MUSIC"
 BARRY K. BARNES in "THE RETURN OF THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL"
 JESSIE MATTHEWS in "SAILING ALONG"
 OTTO KRUGER & DIANA CHURCHILL in "THE HOUSEMASTER"
 SHIRLEY TEMPLE in "REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM"

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Opening Programme

The three 1937 films shown were 'Charlie Chan at Monte Carlo', 'The Prisoner of Zenda' (set in a fictional small country in central Europe) produced by David Selznick and directed by John Cromwell, and the Walt Disney film 'Don Donald'. The cartoon follows Donald Duck attempting to woo a female Mexican duck named Donna. So quite a multi-cultural choice of films!



Theatrical release posters found on Wikipedia pages.

A more traditional form of local entertainment, the Hartland Church Fete, was opened by the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, giving a speech in Amharic, shortly after in August 1938. Emperor Selassie was staying at Hartland Abbey with the Stucley family during his five-year exile in Britain following the invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini in 1935. Peter Christie writes about the story in the *North Devon Gazette* p.18, 22 April 2020.

(<https://www.northdevongazette.co.uk/news/haile-selassie-opens-hartland-church-fete-1-6623063>)

I emailed Phil Wickham, the curator of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum which is housed at Exeter University, www.bdcmuseum.org.uk. There you can 'explore the history of the moving image through toys, artefacts, images and memorabilia'. This collection was donated by Bill Douglas and his friend Peter Jewell, the other major donor, and is one of the foremost museums and research facilities on the moving image. They met during their National Service. To my delight, Phil put me in touch with Peter Jewell, who lives in Barnstaple! So we met up at the café of the newly renovated Barnstaple Museum, together with his friend Gwyneth from the Facebook Barnstaple History Group. Peter told us about his father, Geoffrey Jewell, who came to know Maurice Prince well because they often met up in the Bell Hotel next to Maurice's Regal Cinema in Barnstaple. Peter remembers Maurice chatting to him and his father. They were both

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local businessmen and sometimes Peter's mother asked Geoffrey to look after Peter for a couple of hours. They would head to the Bell Hotel and Peter remembers being 'placed in the care of' the cinema during that time. He vividly recalls being scared by and having nightmares about two particular films he watched (presumably without parental guidance!).

'Nazi Agent' was a war propaganda film made at the time of Pearl Harbor in 1941, starring Conrad Veidt and Ann Ayars. The other film was an Agatha Christie murder mystery in which jury members were murdered one by one by the man they had sent down. Peter also has happy memories of visiting the Strand Cinema in Bideford years later with Bill, to take the children of their families to watch the 1970 film 'The Railway Children', rather more suitable for the younger viewer!



Another striking memory was that Peter's father had once brought home for him a poster of the 1946 Disney film 'Song of the South', personally signed by the American lead actor James Baskett (1904-48) who played Uncle Remus (singing 'Zip-a-dee-doo-da') and the voices of animated Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit. He was the first black male performer to be awarded an Oscar in 1948 – a controversial issue in the film awards world at the moment.

"'Song of the South' came out in 1946 and there was no balance of media images ... African American performers often portrayed comic roles where their characters were described as lazy, slow-witted, easily scared or flustered, subservient and worse. That image was what the American public was seeing and accepting as the norm for African Americans." Jim Korkis, "The Sad Song of the South", USA Today (accessed 24 August 2013)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Baskett

So Peter likes to imagine the small international group of his father, James Baskett and Maurice Prince chatting together in the bar of the Bell Hotel, North Devon in the 1940s.

When Peter and Bill were looking for a home for their cinema collection, they considered the then unused Regal Cinema and got in touch with Maurice to ask for his views. Peter

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remembers Maurice being a very kind and generous man. Maurice drove to collect his guests and entertain them for tea at his home in Ashford. Maurice wisely advised them that the Regal was probably not the best location as he doubted its sustainability as a home for the museum in the long-term. They are pleased that they chose Exeter University instead as a permanent home. Peter remembers Maurice's fascinating archive in his home office, with the original architect's plans for his cinemas. He was particularly excited to find that as a child Maurice had collected many rare labels from tins of film in the 1910s. However he doesn't know what became of them, since he would have loved to have added them to the museum collection.

It was a great pleasure to meet Peter and Gwyneth, who were so lively and enthusiastic. He also brought me the original *North Devon Journal* family announcements page of February 28, 1991, with the sad news of Maurice's death. Fortunately, it was right on the top of the pile when Peter started looking. It is a shame that no obituary seems to exist - we would love to have read it.



Tea with Peter Jewell and Gwyneth Faye at Barnstaple Museum Café

Maurice Prince's wartime responsibilities and civic contributions

The Strand Cinema was frequented by the American GIs who were welcomed to Bideford in 1942, stationed at a camp at Handy Cross/Bowden Green. Maurice Prince provided his cinema for training and information films and light entertainment. Sunday nights at the Strand Cinema held 'Forces Night' shows. You can read more about the GIs in Bideford on the website of Bideford 500: <http://www.bidefordheritage.co.uk/life-in-bideford-during-ww2/gis-in-bideford/>.



The Bideford Wikipedia page states: 'at first they were there to work in radar stations across North Devon and work on experimental things. More American troops began to arrive as the war progressed. Experiments nearby, including The Great Panjandrum, were said to have been viewed at the Strand Cinema in secret by Dwight D. Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill. Maurice's papers include a booklet on the Combined Operation Experimental Establishment (COXE) project which was based in Westward Ho!'

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bideford#cite_note-30 World War II. Anti-aircraft guns were mounted on the flat roof of the Strand Cinema.

The archive collection of Maurice Prince's publications, cinema materials and documents is stored at the North Devon Records Office under reference B/200. It was donated by Maurice's executor and friend, Gordon Coward. There are several interesting booklets and letters relating to the American GIs stationed in the local area. The originals will be kindly lent for the project exhibition to be held later in 2020.

For example, in 'Meet the US Army' written by the Irish poet Louis MacNiece, at page 14 he writes:

'There are many Negro soldiers now in this country, and those Britons who have met them have been very favourably impressed by the pleasant manners and their readiness to be pleased ... Any American Negro who comes to Britain must be treated by us on a basis of absolute equality.'

And at page 15:

'... the 'Yankees' who beat the 'Red Sox' on April 24, 1941: Rizzuto, Rolfe, Henrich, Rosar, Selkirk, Di Maggio, Keller, Gordon, Dickey, Priddy, Russo.' There are two points to notice in such a list: first, the diversity of the names, but second, and more important, the fact that the owners of these names have come together into a team.'

An excerpt from 'Meet the Americans', no.22, July 18, 1942, British Army Bureau of Current Affairs, at the section 'Unity under the Skin', portrays a rather more cautious attitude by the British author:

'... all nations (whether they live on islands or not) are inclined to an insular outlook. They think of themselves as 'the tops' and they rather look down on all other nationalities ... The Americans and the British will find plenty to make fun of in each other, plenty to feel superior about. That doesn't matter so long as we also find how much there is to respect in each other.'

And some amusing tips for the Americans in 'Britain, for all members of American Expeditionary Forces in Great Britain', page14:

'You are higher paid than the British 'Tommy'. Don't rub it in. Play fair with him. He can be a pal in need.'

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If you are invited to eat with a family don't eat too much. Otherwise you may eat up their weekly rations.

Don't make fun of British speech or accents. You sound just as funny to them but they are too polite to show it.

Don't criticize the food, beer or cigarettes to the British. Remember they have been at war since 1939.'



Maurice Prince (far left) at the tree-planting by American servicemen 'of diverse faiths' in Braunton churchyard, 5 June 1944, the day before D-Day.

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Commemorative plaque and 76-year old tree in Braunton churchyard.

We are indebted to North Devon-born historian and author Dr Helen Fry, for uncovering the life of Maurice Prince and many Jewish families and individuals in her outstanding book Jews in North Devon during the Second World War. The escape from Nazi Germany and the Establishment of the Pioneer Corps, Halsgrove (2005), ISBN 1 84114 437 1.

At pages 149-151, Dr Fry describes Maurice's significant efforts to welcome and assist Jewish refugees, his war time responsibilities and his roles in local civic organisations throughout the rest of his long life in North Devon.

'... 'MP' was immensely active during the Second World War in civil defence and intelligence, as well as in helping Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany. In respect of the latter, his cinemas became vital places for sheltering Jews for one or two nights. By 1936 he had already begun to help Jewish refugee organizations in their efforts to get Jews out of Germany. He had many contacts in that world and was related to the Sieff and Laski families (owners of Marks and Spencer), who were active on the boards of many Jewish refugee committees. He was also a lifelong member of the West London Synagogue, which held meetings about the refugee situation and worked with the refugee committees. Of those who were approached or volunteered to act as guarantors for Jews leaving Nazi countries, many were Christians, especially Quakers. ... Mr Prince used the dressing rooms of his cinemas to shelter Jewish refugees, both adults and children, but, because of the risk of public opposition, opinion being mixed on the question of German refugees, the work remained largely secret. It appears that, apart from his immediate family, only two people were told about his work – the chief projectionist at the Regal Cinema in Barnstaple, Joe Trapnell, who aided Maurice in this work, and his doctor. Mr Trapnell's niece, Mary Curry, recounts:

"... I saw a lady holding the hand of a little girl. She wore a felt hat and feather. She was not local. Most women who came to market in the 1930s wore cloche or 'flower-pot' hats. Her hat

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and style was very different. That is when I was aware of people in the town who could speak no English. Mr Prince would give money to help them out. These must have been the German-Jewish refugees who were often around the town. Joe asked my mother to keep the matter secret, which we did. (Interview, July 2002)”

It is chilling to reflect that shortly after the opening of the Strand Cinema, on 9-10 November 1938 the terrible events of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, saw the widespread destruction of synagogues and Jewish businesses across Germany and Austria. Whilst Bidefordians were enjoying light-hearted Hollywood movies, European Jewish communities were being systematically destroyed by Nazi fascism.

Helen Fry describes at page 11 how after Kristallnacht, a transit camp was built for 3,500 Jewish refugees: Kitchener Camp, near Sandwich, Kent, ‘For the purpose of enlisting, equipping and training men for the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC) ... The total number of men who enlisted ... numbered 5,840, with over 3,000 enlisting in North Devon ... In 1940 the AMPC were moved to the desolate Willsworthy Camp on Dartmoor, where weather conditions were awful. After two weeks, the men were moved to Hilltop, a holiday camp in Westward Ho! They were soon joined by ‘enemy alien’ Jewish troops evacuated from Dunkirk in June 1940 (p.13). ... Werner Cohen recalls that his company were billeted in tents at the sportsground behind the Strand cinema in Bideford (now the Robins’ football ground).’



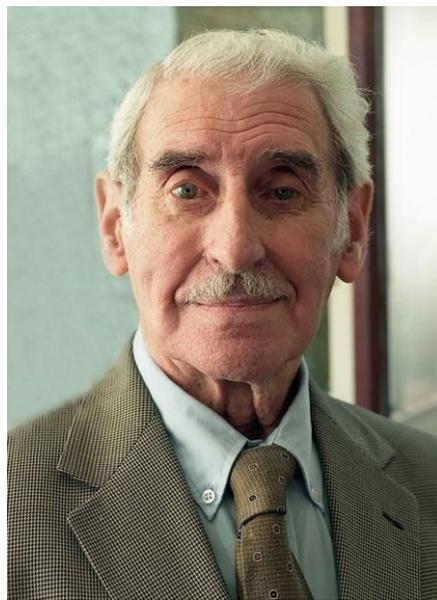
Hilltop camp <http://www.westwardhohistory.co.uk/top-camp/>

Harry Rossney, born in Koenigsberg, Russia in 1919, wrote in his memoirs, quoted by Helen Fry at p.19-20:

“We were in luck. Lord Reading’s strong protests had got us moved to a former holiday camp, high on a hill overlooking Westward Ho! and Bideford Bay. We were in seventh heaven. Huts, bunk beds, a dining hall and a bath, not those awful bucket-showers. Everything was rationed,

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so two chaps had to share a bath at, I think, 6 inches water level – what a luxury. The general mood in the camp was one of apprehension, to say the least. Four companies of the Pioneer Corps had already been shipped to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. The fifth company, the 137 AMPC, was about to leave. I was in that company by now. We were training hard, but still without weapons. Only Non-commissioned Officers and Officers were armed, most of these were British. We were also guarding the area against agents being dropped or invasion forces taking advantage of good landing beaches. Bideford Bay was one. I remember one dark stormy night being alerted to rush to my post overlooking the bay. My weapon a pickaxe handle. With tin-hat, gas mask and gas cape, I flew as fast as my legs would carry me. Running up the dunes at 3 am, pitch-dark, I was challenged: ‘Halt, who goes there?’ Breathless, and with a strong German accent, I tried to explain who I was and what I was doing there. I did not get very far before I heard a rifle being cocked nearby by an English soldier behind bushes. My heart stopped beating. In those fearful days it was ‘shoot first, ask questions later.’ Then another command: ‘Hold your fire! Raise your arms! Advance to be recognized!’ A sergeant approached cautiously and asked me a question. I could breathe again. It would appear that they had moved another regular army unit in to guard the area. They did not know that a group of friendly aliens were billeted not far away.”



Harry Rossney – photos courtesy of Helen Fry.

When increasing numbers of Jewish ‘enemy aliens’ were released from internment camps on the Isle of Man and across Britain in 1940 - men who already spoke English as they had arrived as refugees in Britain from 1933 onwards, when Hitler came to power - and the Government



wished to double the intake of aliens into the Pioneer Corps, it was moved again to a larger base in Ilfracombe.

Helen Fry also writes of Maurice's appointment to the post of Devon Information Officer, liaising with the Devon County Defence Committee and Regional Intelligence in Bristol, and as a civil defence warden. In the B/200 archives there is various correspondence including a slightly surreal, 'Dad's Army-esque' letter of 20 May, 1941 marked 'SECRET' relating to these responsibilities:

'Dear Sir,

Several astonishing examples have occurred recently in which enemy airmen from crashed aircraft have actually had difficulty in giving themselves up ... another German airman who landed in a pond in the New Forest, managed to reach the road and tried several times to stop motor cars. He finally succeeded in stopping a large ambulance by standing in the middle of the road and shouting "Soldat Germain". The driver of the ambulance flashed his torch and after a quick look, let in his clutch and made off.

There is yet another case of a German airman who attempted to surrender to a soldier in uniform in the Egham By-pass. The soldier is said to have told the airman that he could not be bothered with him as he was waiting for his girl. The airman then wandered round the by-pass until he eventually met a Home Guard patrol.'

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CONFIDENTIAL.

MP/DEV. 1/8.

8908 August, 1949.

Mrs. W. Dermott Hunt,
Intelligence Officer,
Ministry of Information,
15, Belgrave Road,
R R I S T O D, S.

Dear Mrs. Hunt,

It has been reported to me from a most trustworthy source that a shop-keeper in Okobangton knew of the Dieppe Raid several days before it took place and actually knew that the objective was Dieppe. He is understood to have said that this information was freely given to him by soldiers in his shop.

The name and address of the man concerned is: Mr. Bassett, News Agent & Hairdresser, Fore Street, Okobangton, and I certainly feel that this is worth following up.

The integrity of my informant is beyond reproach and I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Bassett made this statement.

Yours sincerely,

County Information Officer.



Letter of 29 August, 1942 from Maurice to Mrs. Dermott Hunt, Ministry of Information, Bristol, about a security leak by an Okehampton shopkeeper about the Dieppe Raid.

Maurice, in his capacity as secretary of the Devon Ministry of Information Committee, organized an Emergency Cooking demonstration at Instow, reported in the *North Devon Journal* on 4 June 1942, attended by Northam and Bideford Girl Guides. He invited the English/American novelist Miss Susan Ertz to speak on Anglo-American relationships at the Rifle Club Canteen.

Helen Fry concludes: "Maurice led a full and active life as a member of many societies and masonic lodges". These included Chairman of the South-West Cinematographic Exhibitors Association and Chairman of Barnstaple Rotary Club – in 1952 organising emergency relief for victims of the Lynmouth flood disaster.

The family background of Maurice Myer Greenside Prince, 14 October 1899 - 26 February 1991

Maurice settled in North Devon in the 1930s, having travelled around Britain in the cinema business as a young man.

Maurice's maternal Jewish family emigrated from central-Eastern Europe and Russia. They had lived for 3 generations in Aldershot, the garrison town in Hampshire. His great grandfather Moses Phillips was a pawnbroker and his grandfather Francis Phillips a pawnbroker and watchmaker. They were founding members of the Aldershot Jewish community in the 1860s. Jewish services were held at Moses' premises at 14, High Street, and a permanent synagogue was established in 1901 at 1, Barrack Road.

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Headstones of Maurice's mother Phoebe Prince and great-grandparents Moses and Martha Phillips (born in 1819 in Poland) in the Jewish cemetery at Aldershot.

<https://www.theus.org.uk/category/find-grave>

His parents were Phoebe Phillips (1862 – 1951) and Nathaniel Greenside Prince (1870 – 30 Sept 1964), who married in Aldershot in 1898.

Maurice's aunt Dora (nee Phillips) Meyer (1882 - 14 March 1979), his cinema company co-director, was Phoebe's younger sister, aged 19 when the family were recorded together in Aldershot in the 1901 Census, and Maurice was 1. Their parents, Francis and Amelia Phillips, were born in Russia. Thanks go to volunteer Laurence Hillel for finding these documents on Ancestry.com.

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CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 214
(To be filled up by the Enumerator and returned.)

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every person	INFIRMITY							
			Wife	Single	Married	Widow	Personal Occupation	Industry or Service with which worker is connected	Wholly Employed, or Working as an Apprentice	Working as an Apprentice										
F. A. Meyer	Head	38	married																	
Phoebe Meyer	Wife	29	married																	
Maurice Prince	son	11	single																	
Emily Fuller	servant	34	single																	
Agnes Emma Tucker	servant	31	single																	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

Total	0	9	5
Males	2	3	5
Females	2	3	5

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Apartment, or Servants' Quarters) and the Number of Persons who are usually employed in the Dwelling, including baby, sheet, bathhouse, and washhouse, office, shop.

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *F. A. Meyer*
 Postal Address: *71 Chatterworth Rd, Barnstaple, Devon, N.W.*

Maurice's younger sister was Amelia Joan Prince, 1906-1984, who was born in Farnham and died in Farnham. Her First World War ration book (for lard!) dated 1919 and that of her mother Phoebe are amongst Maurice's papers.

Maurice lived with his parents and sister in West Hampstead at 83, Priory Road, London NW6, as recorded in the 1911 and 1931 census. Amelia married Frank Saul Krusin (1905 – 1986) who grew up on the same street in Hampstead. On the 1925 electoral register, at 83 Priory Road, NW, Maurice was living with his parents, and the Krusins lived at no. 93.

In the 1939 census, Maurice the Managing Director of Cinema Companies is staying at the Imperial Hotel in Barnstaple with mother Phoebe and sister Amelia Krusin who does 'unpaid domestic work' (!) The tea party and gift of chrysanthemums organized by the cinema staff for Mrs Phoebe Prince's 80th birthday party is reported in the *North Devon Journal* on 5 November 1942. Phoebe passed away in Barnstaple aged 88 in 1951.

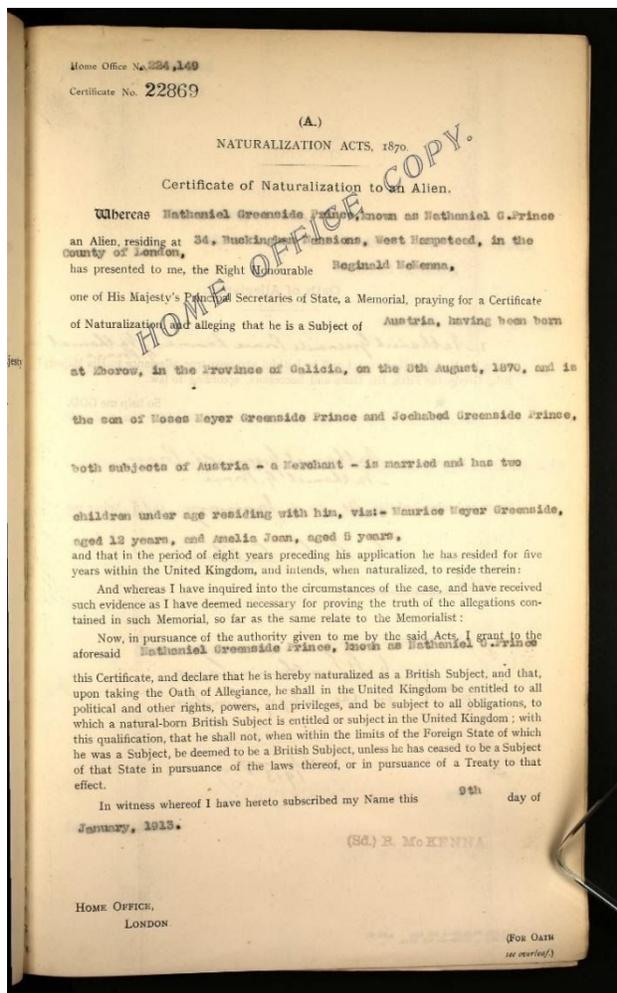
Maurice remained unmarried. He lived at the Grade II Listed Strand House, Ashford, near Barnstaple, a beautiful spot overlooking the Taw Estuary across to Fremington. Another 'Strand' – the word originating from the Old English/Germanic name for the edge of a river, border or beach - in this context of the Rivers Taw and Torridge.



Turning to Maurice's father, Nathaniel Greenside Prince was a merchant, financial agent and commercial traveler. He was born in Zborow, on 8 August 1870, in the vanished Province of Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now in western Ukraine). Since Ukrainian independence was declared in 1918, the region has been invaded and ruled successively by Poland, the USSR and, during the Second World War, Germany, due to its location on the troubled fault line between eastern and western Europe. Armed conflict on the eastern border with Russia has continued since Ukraine's 2014 Revolution.

Nathaniel was the son of Moses Meyer Greenside Prince and Jochabed Greenside Prince. Greenside may be an anglicized form of a Jewish surname such as 'Grunseit', and Prince originally 'Prinz'. A certificate on Ancestry.com shows that he was naturalised 9 Jan 1913, when Maurice was 12. In his 40s, we find him on passenger lists travelling between Plymouth, Liverpool and New York more than once in 1916. Nathaniel, like thousands of other impoverished Eastern Europeans from the 1880s onwards, emigrated in search of a better life rather than suffer poverty and pogroms (persecution and mass killings of Jewish communities in the region). Little did he know that he was also saving his future family from the genocide of the Jewish population at the hands of the Nazis 40 years later.

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So both Maurice's first generation immigrant father, Nathaniel, and his uncle F A Meyer, aunt Dora's husband, had emigrated to England from Austria and Germany respectively sometime around the turn of the 20th century.

'After serfdom was abolished in 1848, the peasantry owned only tiny subsistence holdings. Until 1900, up to 40 percent of the arable land remained in the hands of the large landowners. The gentry claimed ownership of pastures and forests and the peasants no longer had the right of use, which they had previously according to the traditional 'servitudes', but now had to pay for their use. The Polish nobility strongly opposed any improvement of the peasants' condition and the equitable distribution of land. As their population rapidly increased, the peasants were forced to subdivide their small holdings even further and to earn money by working on estates. This led to a series of agrarian strikes (see Peasant strikes in Galicia and Bukovyna), the largest of which occurred in July–August 1902 with the participation of some 200,000 peasants. To alleviate the condition of the peasantry, the Populist intelligentsia strove to develop a strong

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co-operative movement, credit unions, and insurance companies. But for many impoverished peasants, even these efforts were insufficient. Beginning in the 1880s, a mass emigration began, mainly to the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina; by 1914, some 380,000 Ukrainians had left Galicia.'

<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CG%5CA%5CGalicia.htm>

Zborow, Nathaniel's birthplace, is mentioned on the website of the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem:

'Zborow, Tarnopol district was part of eastern Poland before World War II and is today in Ukraine. The town was occupied by the Germans on 4 July 1941.

As in the other territories conquered by the Nazis from the Soviet Union in the Second World War, the murder of the Zborow Jews began immediately. One thousand Jewish men were executed by shooting shortly after the occupation. Through the winter of 1941/42 the remaining Jews of Zborow suffered from disease and hunger, and in summer 1942, a year after the occupation, the killings resumed and 1,300 Jews were deported to Belzec and killed. The Jews of the towns and villages from the area were brought to Zborow and the ghetto was fenced off. On 9 April 1943, 2,300 Jews were rounded up, forced to dig their own graves and executed. Three months later, in June 1943, was the end of the Zborow community. All those remaining in the ghetto and in labor camps in the area were killed.'



First grade students at the Jewish Tarbut School, Zborow, 1939

<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/zborow-historical-background.html>



When I first discovered Maurice Prince in Helen Fry's book, I didn't know that his father was born in Galicia. I visited Ukraine myself in 2017, staying in the city of Lviv, following in the footsteps of the interconnected individuals (of Maurice's generation) who are the main characters in Philippe Sands' 2016 book East West Street. It was only when I was assisting Philippe with the manuscript that I learnt that almost his entire Jewish family on his mother's side, who lived in small Galician towns up until the Second World War, had been murdered in the holocaust. East West Street tells the story of his grandfather Leon Buchholz, who escaped to Vienna and then Paris; his one year-old mother's rescue by an heroic missionary called Elsie Tilney from the Surrey Chapel in Norwich; and the Jewish international lawyers Hersch Lauterpacht and Rafael Lemkin who both studied at Lviv University and served in the Allied prosecutions at the Nuremberg Trials. They invented the legal terms 'crimes against humanity' and 'genocide' respectively. Philippe has formed friendships with the sons of two of the senior Nazis, also lawyers, who instigated the extermination of the Galician Jewish population: Governor General of Poland Hans Frank, executed in 1946, and Governor of Krakow and later Galicia Otto von Wächter, who escaped into the Austrian Alps in 1945 and found sanctuary with the help of a Vatican Bishop until his mysterious death in Rome in 1949. The complex full story has recently been published in The Ratline (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020).

I shall also be sharing an oral history interview with Nataliya Vanstone, from the town of Boryslav, Lviv District, near the Polish border, who has lived in Bideford for over a decade and now lectures on health studies at Petroc in Barnstaple. Nataliya and I met as parents of young children at the Sure Start Children's Centre in Bideford.

I have not yet found any surviving members of Maurice's family who could tell me more about his life, so I will close with the tribute on his headstone to 'One of nature's gentlemen'. The Hebrew script at the top reads: 'Here buried', and below 'May his soul be bundled in the bundle of life'. Although 30 years have elapsed since he was laid to rest, perhaps someone may read this and wish to get in touch with me if they have any family connections with Maurice or can share memories of his friends and business associates.

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Maurice Prince's headstone at Hoop Lane Cemetery, West London Synagogue, Golders Green