

## Interview Transcript: Chris Kingdon



My name's Christopher Hugh Kingdon - Hugh after my grandfather Hugh Sewell Kingdon who once was instrumental in building the Streatham Hill Theatre right behind me.

I've come here today with my family to see the theatre that I've heard so much about throughout my life and today's my first visit to Stratham to see the theatre which I always wanted to see.

My grandfather Hugh was quite the adventurer. He first lived in Madagascar with his father who was there as a Baptist minister. They later moved to Canada and then he joined the Canadian cavalry for the Boer war - he was only 17 but he pretended to be 18 - and being a veteran of the Boer war, he was allowed to buy land cheaply in South Africa which he did and then he sold it as orange groves to English immigrants and made a lot of money.

So, by the time he fell in love with Mary Law the violinist, he had a bit of cash and they moved to England and I think that's when he started thinking about building the theatre and he was starting to buy property here in Streatham and forming the limited companies that would allow him to create the Streatham Hill Theatre and the Locarno and the movie theatre as well.

So, my father was only five years old when my grandfather died from a [WW2] bomb - he had stayed here in Streatham to work and he sent the family to the south coast where my grandmother's mother lived. So, we don't have so much direct stories from him but I've heard a few.

So, for example there's very little known about his military record. There's really only one thing and that was he was jailed for two weeks for having fallen asleep when he was supposed to guard the horses!

What else do we know about him. Well, there's another rumour that he had travelled around with a movie of a boxing match and that he was selling tickets to this boxing match so maybe that was one of the things that made him think of having the cinema here in Streatham and of course having made money off of the orange groves on profitable property business in South Africa it probably made sense to do property business here.

A couple of years ago I saw on Facebook that there was a new group that was taking action to turn the Streatham Hill Theatre back into a theatre again and of course I immediately joined the group and I've been following the group ever since and I'm really impressed by all the work the group is doing and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that they will succeed and I'm trying to help in any way that I can myself of course too.