

GAUMONT TO CLOSE

The 2000 seat Gaumont Cinema, Chester's biggest, is to close on December 9th, and work will start almost immediately afterwards on converting the building into a bowling alley and licensed club. It is expected that the conversion will be completed within four months and the premises reopened by next Easter.

It is the fourth Chester cinema to close in the last six years. Like the Music Hall (now being converted into a store) and the Majestic (now a ballroom) the Gaumont is owned by the Rank Organisation.

Chester will be left with only three cinemas, the Odeon (also a Rank theatre), the ABC, and the Classic. The success of the bowling alley experiment at a former cinema at Cheetham, Manchester, has made Rank Organisation officials optimistic about the Chester venture which will be run on similar lines.

Conversion of the building will cost about £100,000, and the premises will be stripped of furnishings in readiness for the extensive alterations.

Spectators will be admitted free, but the main business will be the bowling alley. Besides a licensed club, a buffet bar will be provided.

Although the cinema closes on December 9th 1961, the Gaumont restaurant is remaining open until after Christmas. The last film to be shown will be "The Marriage-Go-Round".

Opened in March 1931 by the then Mayor of Chester, Mr John Morris, the premises were known as the Gaumont Palace, a luxury cinema. The first film was the comedy "On Approval" starring Tom Walls and Yvonne Arnaud.

As many of the staff as possible will be retained by the Rank Organisation, but the closure will be a wrench for Mr. Walter Vickers, who has worked at the cinema since it opened. The cashier, Miss. M. Baskerville, and the head usherette, Miss. E. Edge, have been on the staff only a few months less.

The present manager is Mr. A. E. Hopwood, who recently succeeded Mr. R. Jones. Mr. K. Edmondson manager of the Odeon was manager of the Gaumont until last year.