



The Main Feature

Season 44 – Issue 9 – Screening 23 January 2025

One Life

UK, 2023, 110 mins, Cert 12

Director	James Hawes
Writer	Lucinda Coxon and Nick Drake, based on the book by Barbara Winton
Cinematography	Zac Nicholson
Editing	Lucia Zucchetti
Music	Volker Bertelmann

Cast

Anthony Hopkins	Nicholas Winton, aged 79
Johnny Flynn	Nicholas Winton, aged 29
Helena Bonham Carter	Babi Winton, Nicholas' mother
Lena Olin	Grete Winton
Romola Garai	Doreen Warriner
Alex Sharp	Trevor Chadwick
Jonathan Price	Martin Blake
Samantha Spiro	Esther Rantzen



Nicholas Winton was born in West Hampstead in 1909. His parents were German-Jewish immigrants who changed the family name and integrated into English life. As a young man, Winton had contact with family in Europe and followed international news. He knew that the German occupation of the Sudetenland was a threat to the Czech Jewish community and on a trip to Prague – changed at short notice from a skiing holiday at the request of a friend – saw how imminent it was. With the help of his mother and a small group of equally committed friends, he decided to act.

The rescue mission faced bureaucracy on both sides, expenses for travel and fees, and the need to find foster homes for the children. The nearest equivalent in recent years is the 'Homes for Ukraine' project in 2022, which relied on the generosity of people opening their homes to strangers fleeing war.



The first train carrying child refugees to London and the uncertainty of a new life in a strange place left Prague on 14 March, 1939, although that was not organised by Winton. One day later, all Czechoslovakia was under German occupation and those who had gone to Prague for safety were again in danger. Once the 8th train left on 2 August, Winton and his team had brought 669 children out to safety. As the Talmud

says, "whoever saves one life saves the world entire".

For a consumer affairs programme which brought us wonky vegetables, questionable poetry and an array of dodgy businesses, introducing Nicholas Winton to the British public was something of a departure for *That's Life!* As with so many stories that come to public attention, the story came to light by accident. Winton had kept a scrapbook which contained the names and photos of the children he had helped to leave Prague and his wife found it in an old suitcase in the attic. Before then, she had no idea of his role in what has come to be called the 'Czech Kindertransport'.

Nicholas Winton's first appearance on *That's Life!* was in February 1988, when four of the children who had left Czechoslovakia thanks to him were in the audience, traced by the programme's production team. The purpose of Winton's appearance was to offer any of the former refugees the chance to find out their stories and ask if he could help them find out what had happened to the families they had left behind.



Five months later, Winton was back in the *That's Life!* studio surrounded by other survivors who had contacted the BBC after the February programme. After a summary of the story so far, Esther Rantzen asked "Does anyone here tonight owe their life to Nicholas Winton?". Viewers were as moved as Winton himself as dozens stood up and applauded him.

Nicholas Winton was knighted in 2002 and, among other Czech honours, a statue was erected outside the main railway station in Prague (2009). The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel declared him to be Righteous Among the Nations. Despite the hundreds of lives saved, Winton himself regretted to the end that he had not been able to rescue more children; the outbreak of the war on 1 September 1939 stopped a planned evacuation train due to leave on 2 September. Sir Nicholas Winton died on 1 July 2015, aged 106.

When it came to making a film about 'Britain's Schindler', casting Sir Anthony Hopkins as Winton was a master stroke: one national treasure playing another. Co-star Helena Bonham-Carter had a special interest in the story, as her maternal grandfather helped Jewish children flee Franco's Spain.

Gill McGlashan

Further reading:

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20240328-in-history-nicholas-winton-rescues-children-during-holocaust-ww2>

<https://www.radiotimes.com/tv/entertainment/esther-rantzen-radio-times-magazine/>

<https://www.holocaust.org.uk/nicholas-winton>

Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by Wednesday 29 January 2025
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian's film critic, noted that Curzon Cinemas has been sold for a 'bargain' £3.9m and asked 'is this good news for UK filmgoers?'

Who wants to buy an arthouse cinema chain? That question may seem unexpected now that being depressed about post-pandemic filmgoing appears to be the industry's default position. But the sale of the Curzon cinema group to New York investment company Fortress – part of a foreclosure auction of assets belonging to current American owner Cohen Realty Enterprises – has been met with a lack of surprise, still less alarm, in the industry and within the Curzon group itself, who reportedly regard the new owner as more likely to invest and to nurture long-term growth than the current proprietor. Fortress bid \$5m [£3.9m] for Curzon, and insiders are calling it a “bargain”.

Its films skew toward a prosperous consumer group who will turn out for arthouse films in well-appointed venues

This is one of the UK's prestige cinema companies with a history going back to 1934, now with 350 employees, 16 venues and 58 screens. It consolidated its position in the arthouse marketplace with its acquisition of Artificial Eye in 2006 and the launching of a streaming service in 2010 and this integration was boldly masterminded by its outgoing CEO Philip Knatchbull, the dapper, urbane leader with a movie-aristocrat and actual-aristocrat background – he is the son of producer John Brabourne and grandson of Lord Mountbatten – who left last year.

The truth is that distributing world cinema hits and European festival favourites to discerning filmgoers in UK city locations is not a loss-leading enterprise or charity case. Niche it may be, compared with Hollywood;

but it is profitable, or can be. Curzon had a big success with Alice Rohrwacher's *La Chimera* starring Josh O'Connor, which ran for an extraordinary 18 weeks at London's Curzon Bloomsbury cinema, a great run in a film marketplace where films can be brutally yanked after less than a week. It had a hit too with *Kneecap*, the Northern Irish hip-hop comedy in which Curzon had also invested at development stage. And its success also with the heartwarming Iranian drama *My Favourite Cake* shows that non-superhero films can and do make money. These are films which skew toward the boomer demographic, a more prosperous (possibly smugly so) consumer group who will turn out for arthouse films in agreeable, well-appointed venues where ticket prices are in fact still less than those for live theatre and Premier League football.

There is a lingering issue, though. The flagship Curzon Mayfair cinema in London, a Grade II listed building, is wanted by its landlord, the Jersey-based company 38 Curzon Lease, to be redeveloped as a cinema-slash-dining venue which would not be operated by Curzon. Curzon has lodged objections to Westminster City Council on the grounds of its historic and cultural importance as an officially designated “asset of community value”.

The new proprietor may be in favour of keeping the Curzon Mayfair, but of course they are the lessee, not the owner, so this is far from cut and dried. I myself have happy memories of taking to the stage at this historic cinema, with Kylie Minogue and director Leos Carax for a somewhat surreal question-and-answer event after his film *Holy Motors*. We can never be sure of these things, but the Curzon sale may be good news.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/nov/12/curzon-cinemas-uk-sold>



We thank Red Eye for subsidising the cost of printing these notes. Red Eye Print, Unit 2D, Lansbury Estate, 102 Lower Guildford Road, Knaphill, GU21 2EP Tel: 01483 772111

Comments and reactions to: **Wicked Little Letters**

No of reaction slips received = 35

Average score = 7.66

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	~	3	4	9	9	6	4

Brilliant story, writing and acting

Very enjoyable plus a true story

Loved it!!

Very well acted. Enjoyed the film

Excellent film

Massive overreach by the DEI police was a major distraction and rendered this film less true than you might have thought. Vacillated between comedy and social commentary – couldn't make up its mind!

Thoroughly enjoyed it. A bit different!

Excellent film, good acting and very entertaining. To think this is a true story

Enjoyable and very good performances as one would expect

Colman and Buckley convey well two complex characters despite some suspect period background

Enjoyable but not deep. Colman and Buckley both excellent

Second viewing for me. Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley make the film. Great contributions from Alisha Weir

Too many modern touches compromised period setting

An enjoyable film of an interesting, largely unknown until now, court case

Position	Film	Average score
1	The Great Escaper	8.00
2	The Holdovers	7.80
3	Wicked Little Letters	7.66
4	The Taste of Things	7.04
5	The Color Purple	6.77
6	Past Lives	6.33
7	Winners	6.00
8	Barbie	5.59

Forthcoming attraction: 13 February 2025 – **Maudie**



The true-life origins are underplayed, which allows the emotions to speak for themselves and it's hard to fault either of the leads, though it's fair to say we're always aware how hard they're working to realise these unusual, ultimately worthwhile roles. Radio Times

Aisling Walsh knows how to balance the comedy and the pathos as she takes us through her subject's life and chronicles her unlikely emergence as an artist. Independent

What shines through is the beauty of Guy Godfree's cinematography - the light has a lovely, soft stillness to it, like a painting - and a remarkable performance by Hawkins, whose impossibly wide smile seems to bring the sun. Seattle Times