Chair’s report June 2019 - May 2020

It was very encouraging that this year started on a superb note. Our new monthly community cinema club, film@BAHC, (started in May 2019 during the Baldock festival, with the assistance of a local community cinema coordinator, Simon), is becoming more and more popular, with regular audiences and good attendance.

In September we hosted the return of Balstock and this was once again a very well organised and enjoyable event and one that is very profitable for us and provides much needed help with our winter utility bills.

Our gallery is also extremely popular and has established itself with our local community artists. During September we were also registered as a venue as part of the Herts Open Studios, showcasing 3 different artist and receiving a good many visitors to view their work. The gallery is proving a popular attraction in the town and compliments the museum for our visitors.

Our monthly ‘history in the afternoon’ event has also grown into a very popular event with the local community, with regular audiences and is very well attended every month.

Our autumn events were well received and we had a busy Christmas fair, teaming up with The Baldock Forum, Baldock Community Centre and St. Mary’s Church to provide a venue for craft stalls to support the festivities and music in the town center.

Moving into 2020 our forward events program had never been so full and diverse, including a fantastic movie line-up of popular ‘blockbuster’ films. In February we again supported the fireside festival, which was very popular. Our own in-house drama group were looking at presenting a pantomime towards the end of the year and we had many children’s events lined up including a Disney princess story and ‘sing a long’, with our own Laura Valentine, as well as a Harry Potter themed magical event.

We held a volunteer day in January to grow our pool of volunteers for various events and we were very pleased by the number of people ready to volunteer, some of whom already volunteered in the museum, but were happy to take on the gallery duties, too.

Before our volunteer event we held a strategy meeting and have started to look at grants for audio visual equipment as well as how best to utilise the extended museum space and look at restructuring the museum with, hopefully, inclusion of the old fire station entrance as our main entrance into the building. It was also agreed that we should purchase a bar fridge and dishwasher to complete the Gallery kitchen area and these were duly purchased.

2020 was shaping up to be a very busy and exciting year.

Then the Coronavirus pandemic and the outbreak of Covid 19 struck. None of our planed events could go ahead, with even the Baldock Festival being cancelled. We closed our doors after our last children’s event, being the ever popular Kev’s Comic Masterclass and went into lock down with the rest of the country.

We have been lucky in that we received a government grant via NHDC to help cover lost revenue and we are currently looking to get some maintenance and decorative work completed while we are closed.

We still hope that 2020 can pull something out of the bag in the next financial year, however, we do suspect that it may take a while for audiences to be confident regarding attendance of events and what restrictions will be lifted enabling groups of people interacting.

So we end our 2019/20 year on a very quiet note, maintaining a quarterly Webex or phone meeting and keeping in touch by email and telephone. Essential maintenance, security and fire checks are being carried out regularly by committee members, but no social or group events have been held since March 2020.

One of our original members, Bob Eversden, decided that he would stand down as a Director/Trustee. Bob also chaired our building maintenance committee and completed many small maintenance tasks himself, organised work and supervision of work together with maintaining the heating for the forward program of events on a weekly basis. Therefore Bob’s contribution is going to be sorely missed. We wish him the very best and would like to take this opportunity of thanking him for his support over the years.

We now await government advice on when we can reopen as a community focused establishment.

We thank everyone for their support during this testing time.

Alison Gentle

Chair, Baldock Town Hall Group Limited, as Baldock Arts & Heritage Centre