

Chair's report June 2020 - May 2021

This has been an unprecedented year for everyone and our charity's aims have been severely affected by closure and uncertainty.

In such uncertainty, rather than channeling our efforts into hosting events, that our audiences may not have felt comfortable in attending, we carried on with decorative and maintenance works started last year, but this time on the upper floors. The Theatre was repainted, giving everything a fresh and bright appearance.

Maintenance works included replacement of external Fire doors and repairing windows. Consequently we had scaffolding up for a few weeks. One window was beyond repair and this was replaced.

The decorating extended to the stage, fire escape stairwell, green rooms and the museum stairs, as well as our new office and the small museum space on the ground floor.

Finally in the latter end of this financial year we have transformed the theatre further, adding new stage curtains, matching blinds on the high level windows and lovely new, hard-wearing flooring. We have transformed the theatre, making it modern, vibrant and just waiting for performances. More importantly the old badminton markings that have been on the floor for over 40 years are now no more, which is something to celebrate.

We have also started preliminary works on making good the old fire station arches to provide a new accessible entrance into the building via the Museum / Heritage space and creating more light into the building. It is hoped to be refurbished as our next project.

We have had the assistance of a local Architect, Neil Gaskall, who has kindly assisted with the design on the new opening and foyer area. We are hoping to apply for a lottery grant once preliminary works are complete. The scope on what can be displayed in the Museum and who can attend will benefit more of the local community and transform this space, making it a lovely place to visit.

All of the above could not have been completed without the help and support of Ted, Liz and Brendan. So a big thank you to them for their time and support.

Thankfully the Gallery was able to open and host local artists from the summer but we closed our doors in December 2020 and in the main didn't open again until June 2021.

Not being able to support some of our groups with rehearsal or training space, we have lost a couple of our regular bookings, although we are looking forward to welcoming our long standing Art Group back in June 2021. Part of next year's drive will be on hiring the space and recruiting more volunteers.

During the year our booking secretary, Di, stepped down from the role as she has moved out of the area, so we have been able to welcome Ishbel as our new bookings secretary. Our thanks go to Di for all of the work she completed during her time in the role.

My thanks go to the committee members and volunteers who have bided their time, learnt how to use Zoom and kept in touch during these months of closure.

We are now looking forward to a new start, in our newly refurbished theatre and although the start might be slow to begin with, we hope to be able to build our audiences back to pre-covid levels by the end of the year.

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