

The Hallmark assessments carried out in 2013 were very complimentary about the overall state of the 1928 building both external and internal. In August 2015, during a major shutdown, the ceiling of the main hall was rebuilt to current insulation standards. Water ingress to the main hall was observed for a few weeks in January 2016 and conclusions drawn that accumulation of condensation in the roof void was too great for clearance by the current ventilation arrangements during the mid-winter period. Over summer/autumn 2016 several steps have been taken to much reduce this build-up of condensation in the roof void. Inspection hatches are allowing us to monitor any trapped condensation over the winter.

Building External

The building is generally in a good state. There are a number of places where brickwork mortar is missing and this should be attended to (notably around the exterior of the utility room and around the tops of windows). Wasps were accessing the building via gaps under the eaves where the single unisex toilet is located. The infestation was quickly resolved by a professional contractor – but demonstrates the value of attending to any mortar gaps.

The roof appears to be sound. Periods of very heavy rain have not indicated any water ingress. Windows and doors appear to be sound although the blocked off external door into the kitchen store area is now looking tired with the outer ply flaking. Consideration should be given to a more permanent solid filling of this previous doorway (maybe bricked-up?)

The gutters were enlarged and grill-covered recently but these still need inspection and clearing where needed. Grass was observed growing around the main porch. The full gutter run should be addressed after the leaf fall of this autumn. Attention is also needed to the leaf build-up under the ramps that now access the fire escape doorways.

An accident occurred with a car pushing and dislodging one of the timber columns. On inspection the other timber column had a rotten base. Two new and higher brick bases have been built for these timber columns (sound timber). All is now very satisfactory.

Grounds

The carpark resurfacing has been a great success. The drainage implementation around the back wall of the building has been well tested by the heavy downpours of the last year. No water ingress to the boiler room basement has been observed. Leaf clearance in the drainage channels has been routinely carried out and no problems identified. The ground beyond the carpark in the SouthEasterly corner appears to be very adequately soaking up any rain run-off.

The two drives are continuing to craze but are likely to last a few more years before they need resurfacing along with the forecourt.

The container roof has been inspected and is adequately sound. There is no indication of leakage. Awaits inspection by Ian – to verify the above statement!

The back fence was erected a few years ago and now has a fair amount of ivy coming through between the timbers. This needs discussion with our neighbours and remedial action taken before the ivy starts to damage the fence. The Monica garden continues to be well tended and offers interest and colour through much of the year. The side fence and other side hedge as well as the front hedge are both in an acceptable state.

All signage is acceptable although some signs are showing their age.

The new external noticeboard along with its much improved access – has been well received by users although it does suffer slightly from condensation – misting over during early morning. We do need to guard against a build-up of (non-refuse) items awaiting disposal. At the time of inspection the old noticeboard was still in the Monica garden.

Building Internal

Virtually the whole building now has roof/ceiling insulation meeting current Building Regulations. The only exceptions are above the stage and inaccessible areas such as the low tight voids above the main lobby and utility room.

Carpeting in the meeting room and bar area and lobbies is overdue for thorough cleaning. This should be addressed during the next available period (Xmas 2016?) Upton Drama Society have promised to clear their docking and stage areas of unused historic wiring. The badminton lines were re-painted and the floor resealed but this was not to our satisfaction and a credit note has been granted. In August 2017 the floor is to be thoroughly sanded down to the wood and the line painting and sealing applied. Careful monitoring of this sanding must ensure that any wood sanding is minimal to safeguard the board tongue/grooves.

A new electrical supply to the kitchen was installed in April 2006 and required re-testing and certification after 10 years. Initially this was declared as not meeting regulations but further inspection and considerations have now stated it as safe (3/11/16). An air extraction system (initially rejected with the new kitchen in 2006) has now been installed in the kitchen. Its effectiveness at adequately removing kitchen moist air before it enters the roof void will not be fully tested until the worst of any winter weather.

Hygienic cleanliness is being maintained at a very acceptable standard in the kitchen/bar area although the initial new brightness of the stainless steel lives on only in photo records. Sinks are stained with tea drainage but all is still hygienically acceptable. The kitchen is now 10 years old and showing signs that some attention is needed. The steel door beneath the dishwasher has been repaired but a steel door in the bar area needs attention. Two of the mixer taps leak when the swivel spout is moved. Their 'hot'/'cold' indication is no longer visible. We have a £200 quote to install replacements of both units but no decision yet made. The kitchen vinyl flooring is still in an acceptable state. The kitchen was fully repainted following the main hall ceiling work in summer 2015.

The various improvements to the Disabled Toilet are performing correctly and we believe the facility meets the spirit of DDA legislation. The toilet block is now looking dated but is fit for purpose. There are no imminent plans for refurbishment. On purely cosmetic grounds considerations have been given to re-surfacing the furniture store doors. Functionally they are sound and practical. Some of our doors – new over recent years – are now starting to look 'tired'.

Further reference points

1. The last professional 'Building Condition Report' was carried out by Architects/Surveyors Tweed Nuttall Warburton of Chester in July 2004. We have not yet identified the need for another full survey. Various aspects of the building have been looked at by specific experts since that report. None of these have raised issues that are still unattended to. At some point a thorough inspection under the timber floor should be undertaken but we are confident that the ventilation is reasonable – as can be witnessed under the stage.
2. The drains were last surveyed (videoed) ten years ago. Despite increasing the run-off into the drains due to the carpark resurfacing – the drains appear to be coping adequately.
3. A roof defect inspection was carried out by surveyors Cassidy & Ashton of Chester – into the possible causes of our water ingress. Report A2991 dated July 2016. This did not quantify the improvement potential of its listed points but it did justify taking the remedial steps that have now been taken.