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Specialists in Traditional Lime, Heritage and Fibrous Plasterwork

PROJECT: RE-MAKING BEAMISH

FOREWORD



“Over the last four decades I have had the pleasure to lead a team of dedicated and talented craftsmen, working alongside them on the restoration of some of the most magnificent, historic buildings throughout the country.”

It is with immense pride that I introduce this book, a tribute to a remarkable journey – Re-Making Beamish.

From its inception, this project was more than a construction or restoration effort; it was a commitment to preserving history while crafting a future that honours craftsmanship, innovation and community.

What truly set Re-Making Beamish apart was the incredible team behind it. Every individual brought not only their skill and dedication, but also a sense of purpose that carried the project through its most complex and demanding phases. Their tireless work and shared belief in the mission created an atmosphere of collaboration that I believe is rare and deeply special. The finished project is a testament to the power of collaboration and the impact of shared purpose.

The recognition of our efforts in receiving the Fibrous and GRG Award at the FIS Contractors Awards 2025 was both humbling and affirming. It was a moment that belonged to every team member who contributed their time, talent, and passion to this project.

The judges said: “The historic Ryhope cinema was meticulously dismantled and moved to the Beamish Museum – despite the original plastering having been thrown away. Ornate’s final touches were superb and perfectly capture the 1950s”.

This book captures the essence of what we achieved together. It is a celebration of the challenges we overcame, the detail and craftsmanship that defined our work, and the legacy we leave behind at Beamish.

My appreciation as always goes to my colleague Jim Dodd for his dedication and thoroughness.

Ronnie Clifford
Managing Director

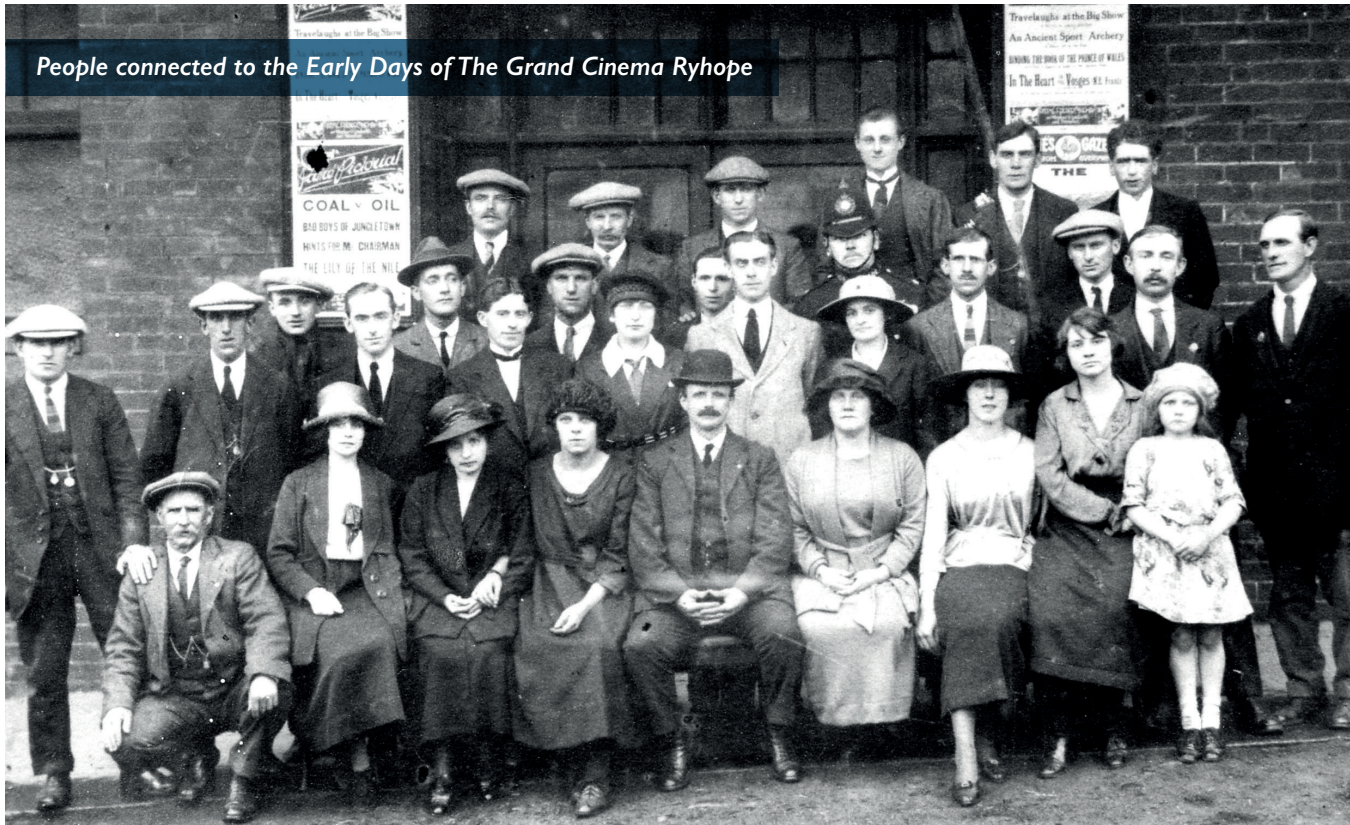
Front cover image provided by and property of Space Architecture



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THE HISTORY OF RYHOPE'S GRAND (ELECTRIC) CINEMA



People connected to the Early Days of The Grand Cinema Ryhope



Ryhope Grand Pre WWI



Ryhope Grand circa 1950s

The original Grand Cinema was built in 1912 for Mr G F Chaytor in the village of Ryhope, Sunderland on the North East coast. It featured a curved balcony with ornate moulds of fruit, flowers, swags, ribbons and medallions. A striking feature in the main auditorium were the two stained glass windows, lit from behind, that featured Galleons on the high seas.

The building survived two world wars, the General Strike, the closure of many cinemas in the 1950s and television before closing its doors as a cinema in the late 1960s.

Like many former cinemas it was re-opened as a Bingo Hall before being sold to a local businessman who used the auditorium floor space to store cars.

The business closed in 2015 and the Cinema was donated to Beamish Museum.

THE VISION OF RE-MAKING BEAMISH



“ The Re-making Beamish project was awarded £11.8m by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and will tell the story of a period still in living memory. ”

Re-making Beamish is the biggest development in Beamish's history so far. The project brought a new era to the museum in the form of a 1950s town and farm.

Funding for the project came from the Heritage Lottery Fund and allowed a once-in-a-generation opportunity to involve people who experienced life during the 1950s by telling the story of a time period in living memory.

The team at Re-making Beamish began collecting objects, stories and memories from across the region. The buildings in the scheme are a mix of relocated buildings and replicas of pre-existing buildings. The Grand Cinema at Beamish being based on the Grand Electric Cinema building from Ryhope, as it was in the 1950s.

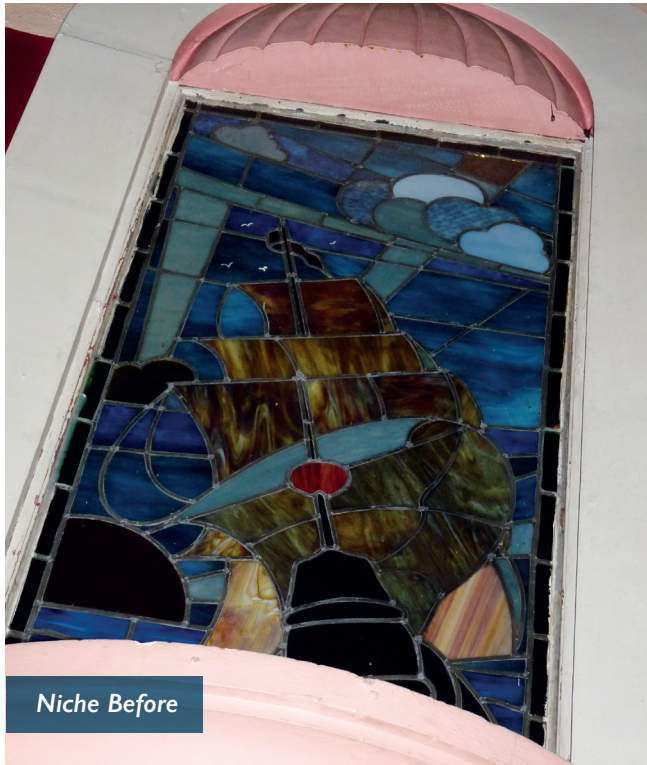
CONDITION SURVEY

The project team at Remaking Beamish hoped to conserve portions of the original mouldings in the Cinema. Their research brought them to Ornate Interiors.

In 2017 to 2018 there was a very tight time frame to clear and exit the building before deconstruction. A site visit was undertaken to evaluate the scale of the job and provide a Condition Survey giving options for the feasibility of retaining the existing plaster mouldings and reinstall them into the relocated cinema at Beamish Museum.

Investigations showed that the in-situ plasterwork would disintegrate upon removal and attempting to take a cast would be rendered useless.





Niche Before



Balcony Swags before



Clay model for architects approval

REPLICATION OF MOULDINGS

The Cinema rebuild was then put on hold in 2020 due to Covid 19.

In March 2021 Ornate Interiors was asked to tender for the manufacture and installation of the mouldings to match to the existing. The cinema had now been demolished and all the original plasterwork had gone.

In May 2023 Brims Construction was selected as Main Contractor and appointed Ornate Interiors with the task to replicate the original mouldings.

The architects on the project, Space Architecture, had undertaken a digital survey of the old cinema building prior to demolition. From this survey drawings were produced with basic dimensions added for the size of the mouldings.

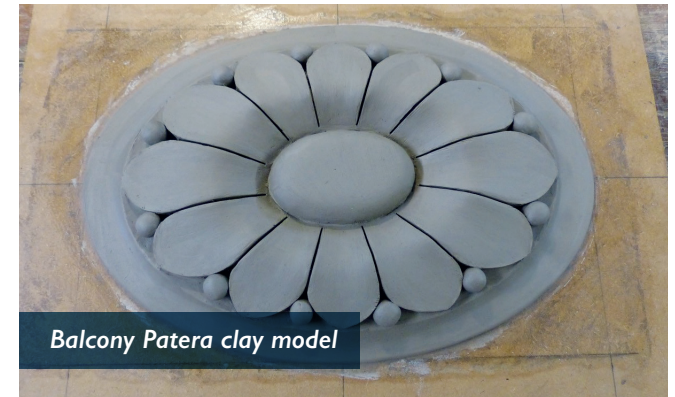
Next steps were to produce sketch profiles of the lost mouldings and send these to the architect for approval.



Frieze Swag & Drop clay model



Lost balcony mouldings before



Balcony Patera clay model

ORNATE MOULDINGS

The high-level frieze detail and the balcony fronts had very enriched details embellished with fruits. These would be modelled in clay on to plaster backgrounds.

High resolution images of the clay masters were sent to Space Architects for comment and approval.

Once approved the clays were then poured in silicone rubber to create moulds from which plaster casts can be manufactured.

The process then requires these casts to be bedded into plaster models of the moulding and cased then re-poured in silicone rubber to form a master mould.

Casts can then be produced from this mould in sufficient quantities to install on the project.



Clay model, balcony front



Balcony front before

BALCONY FRONTS

The balcony fronts presented further issues as the original fronts were formed in lath and plaster with the enrichments then bedded on.

The solution was to produce new ones in GRG (Glass Reinforced Gypsum) panels. These panels would be supported on a specially designed, curved galvanised metal framework.

The framework was installed on site at an earlier stage of the programme to the panels



Replicated mouldings painted in 1950s colours



Re-furbished balcony

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FURTHER CLAY MODELS

Other features that required the production of clay models were the cap detail to the pilasters and the cherub plaque below the frieze.



Old existing Ionic pilaster cap



New Ionic pilaster cap



Cherub, clay model preparation



New mouldings being installed

PROSCENIUM ARCH



The Proscenium arch is a faithful replication of, what was, the original Ryhope arch.

The Arch is constructed with three different elements, the first being the main curved section, manufactured with a purpose-made recess to accept the Zig Zag moulding.

The Zig Zag moulding was manufactured as a separate element and planted into the purpose-made recess on site.

The final element was the beaded moulding detail to the inner part of the arch, also manufactured separately and planted in on site, again to a purpose-made recess in the main arch cast.



Proscenium arch before



Auditorium

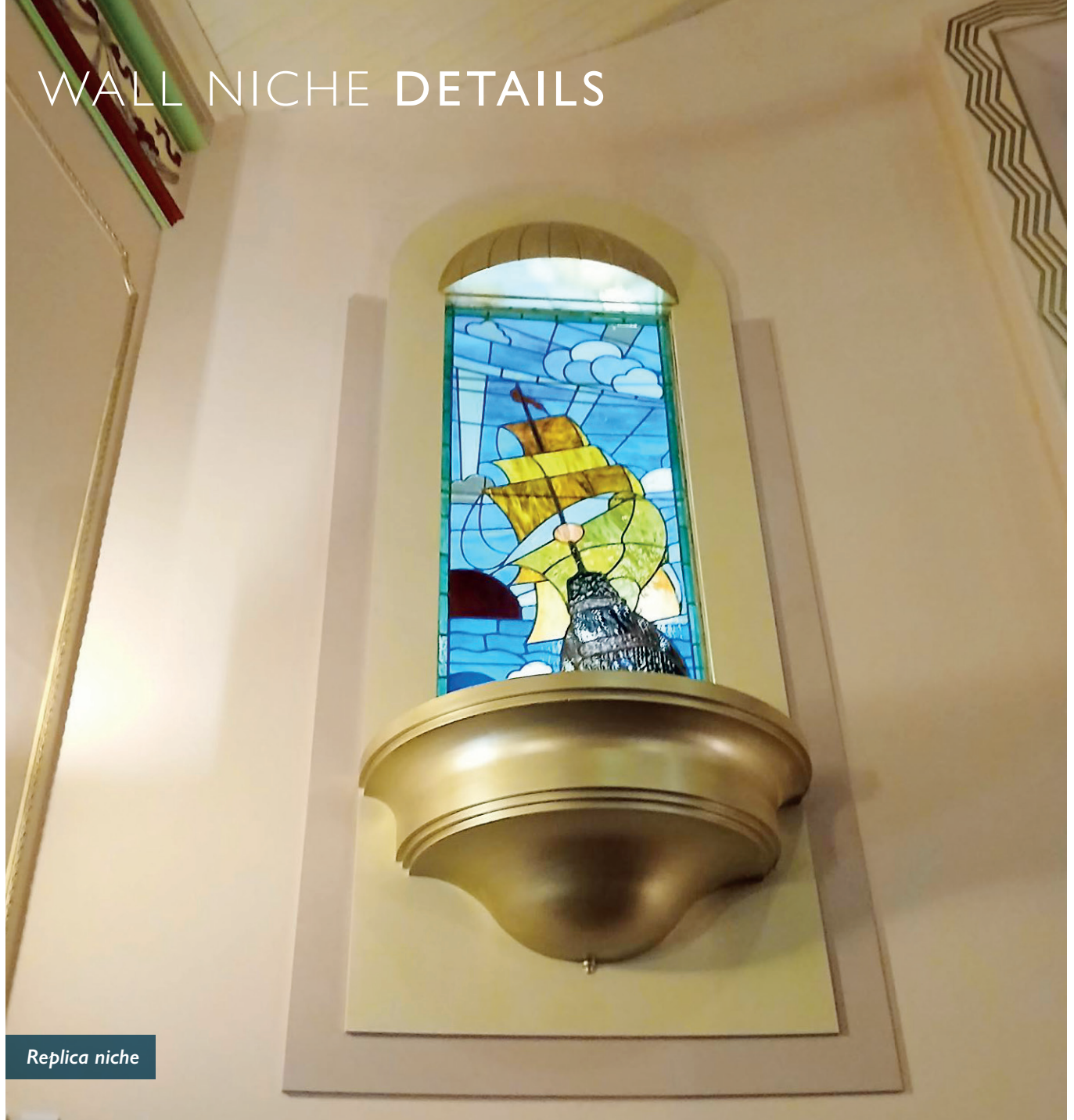
“ **New fibrous plaster hood and base detail fixed to a timber background to replicate the original detail. The stained glass is the original glass salvaged from the original Ryhope Cinema building.**

The semi-circular base detail is also a lighting detail to up-light the feature. ”

WALL NICHE DETAILS



Original niche



Replica niche



Replication of original Edwardian mouldings

“Fibrous plasterwork became popular in the 19th Century, particularly in Victorian and Edwardian architecture. It was widely used in theatres, public buildings and grand residences due to its ability to replicate classical ornamentation quickly and cost effectively.”

PROJECT INSTALLATION

The client selected a number of mouldings from the Ornate Interiors' standard product range to complement the reproduced mouldings.

Ornate Interiors commenced on site in March 2024 and completed the installation at the end of April 2024.

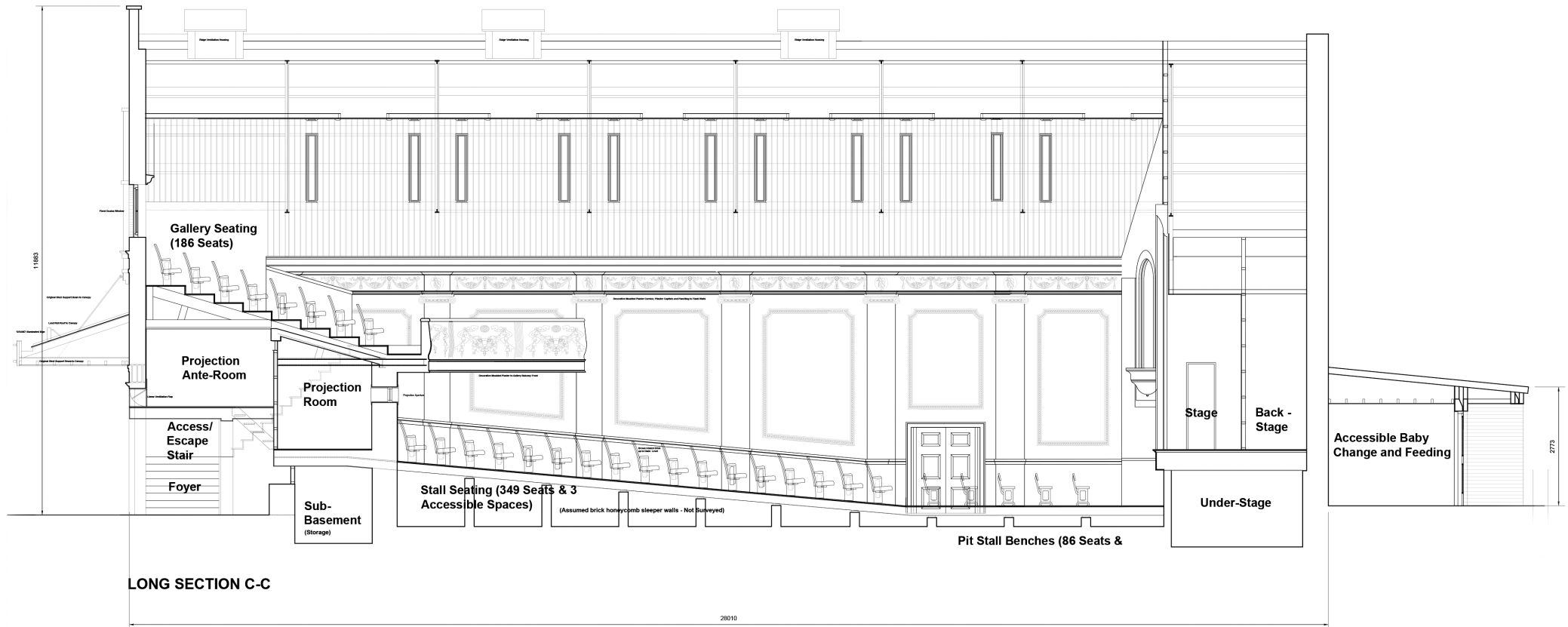
Works were duly signed off snag free by Brims Construction

The cost of the project was £139,000



New mouldings to match originals

ARCHITECTS DRAWING



TESTIMONIALS

“ This scheme was without a doubt a once in a lifetime opportunity. To create all new fibrous plasterwork into a newly built representation of the Edwardian Cinema from the Sunderland village of Ryhope, which was demolished in 2015 and build a ‘new’ Edwardian Cinema in the state it existed in the 1950s. This was done using personal accounts, laser scans and photographic archives that generated layers of historical value to enable us to replicate the building as it was in that period, which was no small task. We worked closely with the museum’s historical collections and research teams, and community member accounts from people who worked and visited the cinema during that period to piece together a realistic picture of the building during that time.

Due to the condition of the plasterwork within the original cinema building at the time of demolition it was not possible to take ‘squeezes’ or mouldings from the plasterwork. As such this detail would have been lost without careful photographic and laser point cloud survey data being carried out by the client. Using this information we were able to provide scale drawings, photographs and point cloud/photogrammetric data which Ornate Interiors were able to use. However, this was not sufficient to generate the new detailed and extensive plasterwork packages required but Ornate were able to create a series of replica clay moulds, using expert artists and sculptors, based on these scale drawings. This enabled the client to approve the final designs and installations.

We have worked with a number of fibrous plasterwork contractors on other historic schemes including theatres, in the past, but no-where else have we had a need for the whole-scale recreation of every single element of the fibrous plasterwork detailing. The setting out of all these elements and coordinated detailed design in what is essentially an entirely new space, working around modern steelwork and structural requirements added additional complexity. It has been a truly unique experience and we are extremely grateful to Ornate for the care and craftsmanship they have taken to work with us and the wider team to deliver this wonderful asset for the museum to be enjoyed by visitors for years to come. ”

Carinna Gebhard Associate Architect SPACE

TESTIMONIALS

“ In our trade, as fibrous plasterers, the opportunity to undertake a project such as this is rare and is very reliant on the vision and determination of others. Many in our industry may reach the end of their career without having been fortunate enough to have demonstrated their craft on such a rewarding venture.

It was my personal pleasure to play my part in delivering the team at Re-making Beamish the vision that they had worked tirelessly to achieve. ”

Jim Dodd Contract Manager Ornate Interiors

“ Due to the good relationship built up pre-Covid with Jim and the team from Ornate, we were able to re-evaluate what moulding styles were essential to recreate the original look and what could be tweaked e.g. only 1 cherub style used. From then on it was a fast process and the overall finished products are fantastic. Our cinema opened in 2024 and all who visit love it especially the Ryhope Community that can see the love, skill and dedication that has gone into replicating their building and that is due to the outstanding work produced by Ornate Interiors. ”

Cassandra Robson Re-making Beamish Design Team Officer



Balcony front

TESTIMONIALS

“ I had the pleasure of working with the team at Ornate interiors on the Re-making Beamish project, managed by Brims Construction as the main contractor, on behalf of the client Beamish Museum. The scheme involved the reconstruction of a 1950's Cinema, toy shop, electrical shop, record store and milk bar, all of which are a replication of existing and historic buildings from around the North East of England, namely the Grand Cinema based in Ryhope, before its careful demolition and relocation to the museum. We worked with Ornate Interiors on the design and installation of bespoke cornicing, balcony frontages and general high end moulded plaster work.

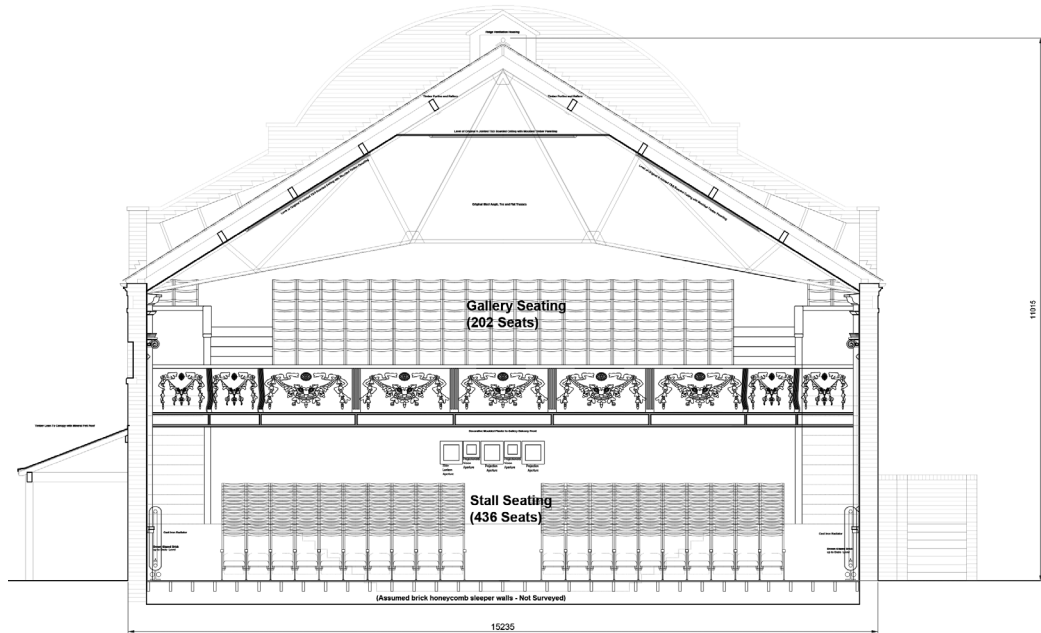
Ornate Interiors involvement on the scheme started prior to our own involvement as principal contractor; visiting the original cinema with the design team and client to review the existing plasterwork. Unfortunately, the plasterwork was in a state of disrepair and could not be saved, however record photographs and a Point Cloud survey captured distinct elements of items that remained, allowing new works to be made in its likeness. When Brims Construction commenced work on the project, we appointed Ornate Interiors to undertake the decorative plaster works; namely due to their prior involvement and good reputation. Jim from Ornate was excellent at keeping a good flow of communication, he attended site regularly.

Ornate Interiors employed a draughtsman to produce accurate drawings, which were approved and progressed to clay modelling to create casts of the bespoke plasterwork, at every stage Ornate provided excellent quality assurance and photographic records. Once produced Ornate started on site, with the installation and had several weeks working on site, at every turn the team were helpful and pleasant to deal with, they made every effort to work with our team in a collaborative way. They maintained an excellent level of H&S while on site, with a comprehensive set of Risk & Method statements and kept a safe productive methodology.

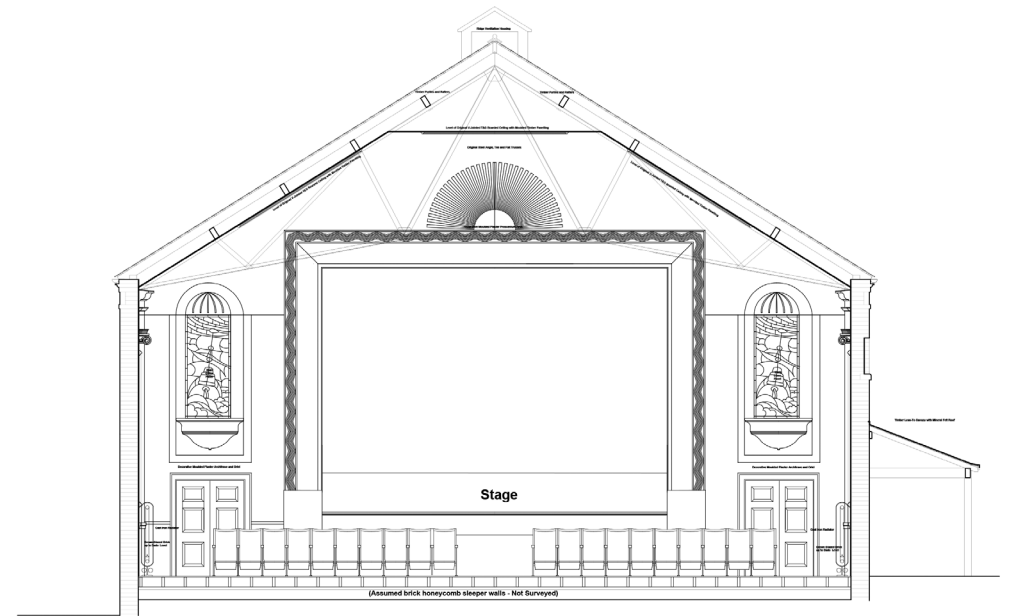
The quality of work that was achieved by the Ornate team was second to none, every visitor to site commented on the quality and magnitude of the decorative plaster works, it really helped the building's period features the design team and client were aiming to achieve. I would not hesitate to employ Ornate Interiors on further projects and look forward to working with them again in the future. ”

Conal Wade Site Manager Brims Construction Limited

ARCHITECTS DRAWING



CROSS SECTION A-A



CROSS SECTION B-B

ORNATE INTERIORS PROJECT TEAM

Our thanks go to our highly skilled team who worked very hard on delivering a very high standard on this project.

Managing Director

Ronnie Clifford

Contract Manager

Jim Dodd

Fibrous Plasterers (workshop and site)

Ameha Shewaye

Jake Clifford

Jason Rider

Neil Williams

Shaun Chamberlain

Tyler Stafford



PLASTER WORK CONDITION SURVEYS



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Damaged plaster mouldings



De-bonded lath and plaster ceiling

PLASTERWORK CONDITION SURVEY – WHO NEEDS ONE?

Anyone with responsibility for the maintenance of historic properties be this listed property owners, local authorities, theatre owners and historic building managers. Good management and vigilance coupled with regular inspections of historic plasterwork will create an awareness of preventative measures.

Some visible signs a survey should be undertaken would include missing plasterwork, deterioration of hessian/plaster wads, bowed ceilings, water ingress, cracking and damp. Each of these individually will affect the stability and security of the plasterwork.

The survey will be undertaken by a historic plaster specialist, accredited by The Finishes and Interiors Sector (thefis.org), working in association with a structural engineer and a timber treatment specialist.

A survey will involve a visit to site to inspect all aspects of plasterwork, including below and above the ceilings, if accessible, and with the aid of rope access if necessary. Photographic evidence will be taken. The subsequent report will include a brief history of the property and its structure, a room-by-room survey detailing each repair and marked up sketches and/or drawings.

Analysis of existing materials may also be undertaken to determine the correct composition of replacement materials.

The report will conclude with the most appropriate method of repair, materials and will include budget costs and time-scales.

The benefit to the client being that they can budget for this work if it is part of a much larger project as well as having a detailed specification prepared for the bill of quantities.



Ceiling wads securing back of theatre dome



Damaged caused by water ingress and damp

CEILING INSPECTIONS

Following the ceiling collapse at The Appollo Theatre in 2013 owners and managers of historic buildings have the responsibility to comply with The Association of British Theatre Technicians Guidance Note 20 (ABTT Note 20) to ensure all suspended fibrous plaster ceilings are inspected and certified.

Our surveys and reports are driven by public safety.

Once the ceiling is deemed safe, we will issue a certificate and continue to inspect ceilings as detailed within the initial Baseline Survey to ensure compliance with the ABTT Guidance.

Our surveys have been carried out at:

The Hammersmith Appollo (1932)

Huddersfield Town Hall (1878)

Leeds Grand Theatre (1878)

Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield (1899)

Art Picture House, Bury (1920s)

Ryhope Grand Cinema (1912)

York Theatre Royal (1744)

A Baseline Survey is “A thorough one-off survey of existing conditions that should have been, or should be, carried out by a competent structural engineer and by a competent plaster inspector”.

(ABTT Guidance Note 20)

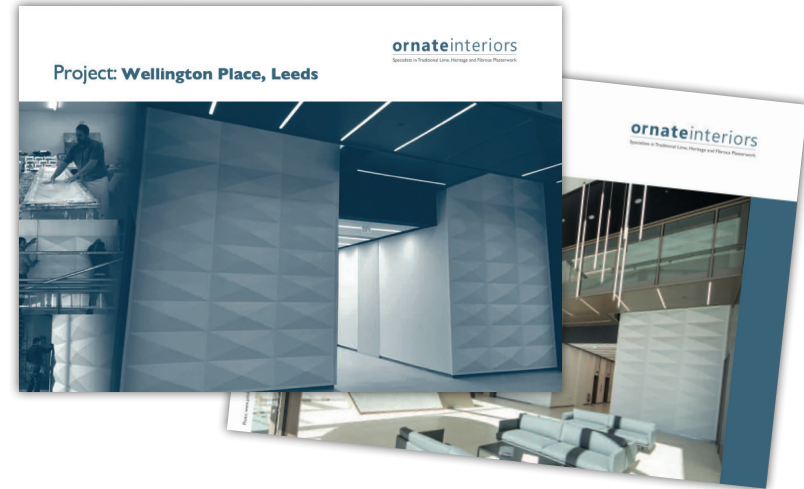
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Grand Theatre, Leeds



Wellington Place, Leeds



County Hall, Northallerton

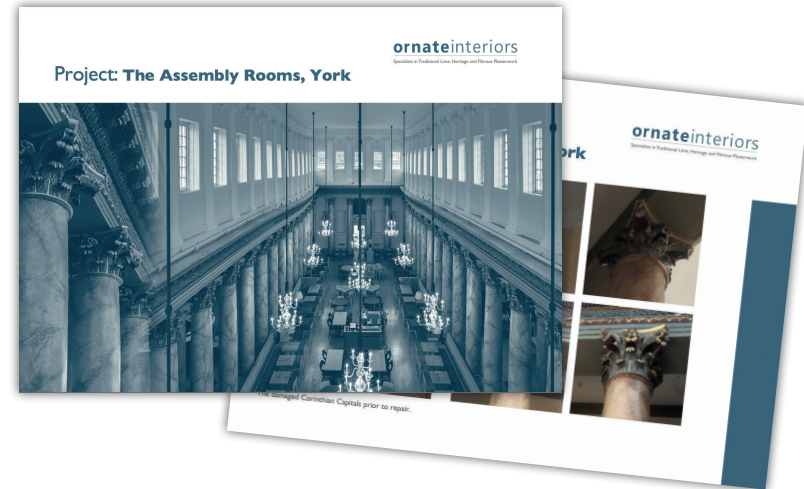


Oldham Town Hall

PREVIOUS PROJECTS available to view online at ornateinteriors.co.uk



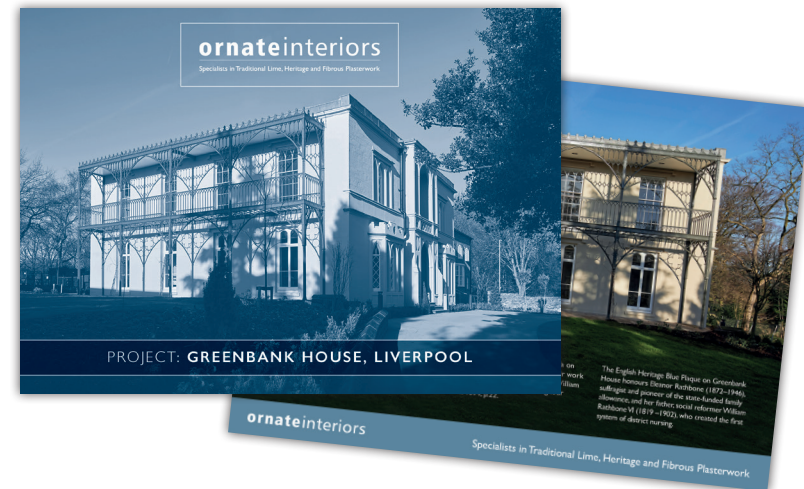
Bath House & Chapel in Private Estate



The Assembly Rooms



Georgian Residence



Greenbank House

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