



JUNE UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

TECHNOLOGY? SOMETIMES, IT'S A THING OF THE PAST!!

This may seem a rather odd headline for this month's Hall update – not least because almost every day we learn about new ways technology can, and in all probability will, transform our lives. So, far from being a thing of the past, the digital age looks set increasingly to dominate all our futures –and in that context ***we're now asking for your advice.***

Technology, it seems – just like *milk; chocolate cigarettes; house paint; sunscreen; Tupperware parties* and even, (probably sooner than we think), *cash* – can have a *shelf-life* (or a *use-by* date) too. What may once have been *cutting-edge* can soon become old-fashioned and out of date – replaced by new technologies that are either smaller, smarter, faster, lighter, cheaper, more fashionable, ecologically sound, and user-friendly – and sometimes all of the above.

I well remember some years ago a couple of friends who were visiting, phoned to say they were going to be late. Nothing unusual about – until I tell you that this was 1989 and they were phoning us en-route from their car. Impressive. On arrival they brought in with them a fiercely expensive, state-of-the-art 'portable' phone – in case it got stolen from their parked car. It was like an ordinary house phone of the day, but with a lengthy, bendy aerial and a heavy, cumbersome acid-battery attached by a curly cable.

All of which brings me round neatly to our Hall's current website. It 'went live' 8 years ago in April 2016, and represented a huge step forward for us. For the first time anyone could find lots of information about the Hall and even book a hire in an instant, simply by visiting the website. Up to that point, potential hirers had to fill in a booking request form or phone our booking secretary; payment was by cheque, which then had to be banked and the door key had to be collected in person and then returned and hire end. The old paper-based system was time-consuming and inefficient, keys could often go missing and there was always the potential, inadvertently, to make double bookings.

Almost overnight our new website made the whole process much speedier and, after people got used to it, much more convenient, relatively straightforward to use and generally much more efficient. But technology, as they say, moves on. Lots of features people expect to find on websites today are missing from ours – but due in part to the way it was originally 'built', those new features can neither easily nor economically be incorporated into what is, as far as our website is concerned, old technology – a thing of the past. Or, to put it another way, just like the cumbersome 'portable' phones of the late 1980s, it is reaching the end of its useful

shelf life. In short, the advice we had from James, who maintains our current website and expertly coordinates all our online bookings, it is "*quicker, easier, and cheaper, to build a completely new site than to try and untangle the existing one*".

And so, towards the end of last year the trustees commissioned James to design and build a brand-new website. A site, that in James' professional jargon, will have an "*improved user interface*" giving a "*superior user-experience;*" be of "*responsive design*" and "*increased flexibility*"; and as far as possible is "*future proofed*".

To you and me, that means a website that looks attractive and up to date; is set out clearly – making it 'friendlier' (or more intuitive) to use, needing fewer 'clicks' to find the information you need quickly; making communication with us through the site uncomplicated and eliminating the potential for confusion.

The new website must also look and work in the same way whether you use a desktop or laptop computer, a tablet, or your mobile phone. That certainly isn't the case with our current website – those of you who use a mobile phone to visit the site will know only too well, that on the home page the opening 'Welcome' message goes from top to bottom, one letter at a time, in a huge, long line. Obviously, it should scale and be easy to read in one chunk without having to scroll down endlessly!

Finally, it needs to be 'Future-Proof' with as long a 'shelf-life' as possible – so it can be updated quickly as and when the specific technologies we rely on to add functionality to the site changes – like pop-up messaging, uploading photographs and videos or simply revising the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and online booking calendars.

However, what we may consider to be a great improvement, to others could still seem rather 'clunky' – in that, in their opinion, it doesn't work as smoothly, intuitively, or as efficiently as it could. So, it's a good idea to invite a few people to 'road test' our new website before it goes live.

If you would like to register your interest with me as a potential volunteer tester, please get in touch. After all, as a resident of this community it's not only *your* Hall but also *your* new website. ***Please text me on 07776 225408 in the first instance. Whether you use websites frequently or just occasionally, we'd value your opinion!***

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees