

CORN EXCHANGE THEATRE

Stamford Corn Exchange has a history stretching back to the 1800s

[Apparently it has a very shady past – you will have to call in to find out]

Now home to the Stamford Corn Exchange Theatre Company, it was originally built in 1859 on the old Black Swan Inn site and soon became a popular venue for celebrations and dinners.

By 1900 the hall was used for the first time as a cinema, and then hosted amateur stage productions and by 1913 was called the ‘New Palace of Varieties’

Only Corn business was carried out during the war years 1914 – 1918

Locally known as The Electric Cinema in 1920, costing 5d, 9d, 1/3 and 1/10 for admission and renamed The Picture House in 1923. By 1924, new stage and projection equipment fitted. Within the next couple of years, a new roof was constructed, new balcony erected. By 1926 Lord Burghley, the Marquis of Exeter, opened the building as The New Theatre.

By 1927 The hall was yet again renamed as the Picture Drome and continued showing silent films. 1930 saw the first films with sound

Each Friday Corn sales were still being held at this time

1939-45 - The Hall was closed at the beginning of the war, but after a few days it was realised that theatre and film was a great boost for public morale.

The Picture drome was eventually closed in 1956 as new regulations concerning the management of cinemas came into force. Seats and screens had to be permanent fixtures. This did not allow the local theatrical groups or merchants to use the building, and the new home-based entertainment ‘Television’ was starting to take over people’s homes.

1957 -Local auctioneers took up the lease of the Corn Exchange. And by the late 1950’s the last of the Corn Markets were held.

1988 - The hall was closed as an auction room, then in 1990 – Building was leased to an antique dealer and was known primarily as the Antiques Centre. Two Local Amateur theatrical societies continued to use the venue for their annual productions.

But in 2000, the Antique Centre closed, and the lease was taken up by the ‘Corn Exchange Theatre Company’ (CETC), a newly formed charitable company, with a view to redeveloping the uses of the building and encouraging and supporting the arts in Stamford.

Following extensive renovations by a team of volunteers a new Theatre was created with 399 seat capacity.

In 2016 the ground floor hall was revamped into a retail space, with room for many independent businesses to thrive. Then in February 2018 Corn Exchange Café & Shops was born.