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Celebration Event Marks Milestone For Iconic Cathedral Quarter Building

A horse-drawn coach arriving at the Old Bell Hotel in Sadler Gate will mark the start of a day of celebrations on Saturday July 4 for the completion of the £1.2 million restoration programme at the iconic building in Derby's Cathedral Quarter.

VIP guests will arrive in the authentic coach at 12 noon – reflecting the historic past of the building which was Derby's premier coaching in throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

A day of free entertainment at the Old Bell Hotel will then include the Rolls-Royce Brass Band, a town crier performing the traditional ale tasting ceremony, jousting jesters and live musical entertainment.

The opening of the street-front bar at the Old Bell Hotel is the final part of the two and a half year programme to restore the ground floor of the building.

The new bar, which will specialise in real and craft ales, joins the other parts of the building that are already open to the public - the ballroom, Tudor Bar and former stables which have been opened as Restaurant Zest.

Owner Paul Hurst explained that the celebration day marked a milestone in the history of the Old Bell Hotel.

“The Old Bell is one of the last surviving coaching inns from the 17th century and we have managed to retain and restore many of its original features.

“This has been a complete labour of love which has brought the dignity back to the Old Bell.

“We are extremely grateful for the support of our neighbouring businesses, the Cathedral Quarter Business Improvement District and the regeneration and conservation teams at Derby City Council who have all helped to make this happen.

“In its heyday the Old Bell Hotel was at the heart of the local community – staging court hearings and even as the place where everybody came to pick up their post which arrived on the stage coach.

“My aim has always been to make this a building that could be enjoyed by everyone and the celebration day will be a real family occasion.

“The building has been a pub and nightclub for the past 40 years but we now have customers of all ages from families in the restaurant to tea dances in the ballroom.

“We have also only used local tradespeople to do the restoration programme – putting more than £800,000 back into the local economy.

“There has already been a great deal of interest in the building from visitors to the Cathedral Quarter and I am confident that this will really help to draw even more people into the city from throughout the UK and abroad.”

The Tudor Bar opened in July 2013 having been closed since the Seventies. It was previously a venue frequented particularly by the judges and lawyers attending the nearby courts.

The magnificent ballroom opened in October 2014 and has already hosted a number of events including the Derby Folk Festival, private parties and weddings.

The former stable blocks were originally a tea room and is now the new home of Restaurant Zest which moved from George Street.

The new bar is the final piece in the restoration jigsaw - serving real ales, craft and world beers.

Mr Hurst stated that he would be taking some time off before considering the future of the remaining three floors in the Old Bell Hotel.

“We originally planned to open a boutique hotel which is still on the cards but we need to think about the future of the upper floors – taking into consideration the interest from people into its fascinating and sometimes gory past which makes it Derby’s most haunted building.

“None of us like to be the last people in the building at night as there are all sorts of ghostly goings-on!

“The bar manager saw something disappearing through the fire place just the other night and workmen have reported footsteps and noises when they have been the only ones there.

“We are therefore considering whether to convert the upper floors into holiday lets which I am sure will draw ghost hunters from far and wide.”

The opening was welcomed by Martin Langsdale, chair of the Cathedral Quarter Board, which drives forward activities under the area’s Business Improvement District (BID) status.

He said: “The Old Bell Hotel is a jewel in the Cathedral Quarter and particularly Sadler Gate which has come back to the fore as one of the most iconic and popular streets in Derby city centre.

“The BID has been fully behind Paul’s plans for the building and we are delighted that his vision and hard work has come to fruition.

“The opening of the ground floor of the Old Bell further strengthens the Cathedral Quarter’s aim to be a destination that is unique, diverse and inspiring and will continue to put this area firmly on the map for local people and visitors alike.”

For information about all that the Cathedral Quarter has to offer, visit www.derbycathedralquarter.co.uk; follow on Twitter @DerbyCQ and like the Facebook page CathedralQuarterDerby

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