

# Rescuing and restoring the past



*“Conservation of a 200 year old theatre”*

*“The equipment we need is always in stock”*

Geoff Finch is site manager for Haymills Contractors in Suffolk, England. The 300 employees company recently undertook an important task in the conservation and refurbishment of the Theatre Royal in Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. During 72 weeks they took on the reconstruction of this oldest playhouse still in use. It dates from Georgian times and has had no structured repairs since it was built nearly 200 years ago. The project's aim is to re-create the Theatre's original features as well as to install modern, state-of-the art facilities including a new bar and restaurant area, lifts, an exhibition space, specifically designed seating, improved wheelchair access and a new heating and ventilation system. The project takes 18 months with the Theatre re-opening in early summer 2007. The Theatre Royal is a 356 seat venue and nearly 80,000 people pass through the doors every year.

Haymills is the responsible contractor and uses Topcon equipment for this challenging undertaking. “The biggest challenge was to put modern equipment into a Georgian listed theatre”, Geoff Finch states. Topcon takes care of all of Haymills' equipment and has it ready to take out when any of their workers needs it. This way they know the used Topcon equipment has been well taken care of. Geoff Finch: “For this contract we specifically used a RLVH-3C Rotating Laser and an ATG4N automatic level.”

Topcon equipment surely helped to meet the challenges of this large project. Geoff Finch: “In the early stages of the job we used an Interior Laser, an RLVH-3D as one of the difficulties was transferring level between the various floors, so we used a visible beam and two detectors. Levelling has been quite complex at times between differing floors and area's that were altered. But the Topcon laser has been very helpful when levelling concrete and for setting up constant levels. It is important for us to have reliable and up to date equipment and Topcon helps in this respect. What I liked most about the Topcon products though, is that the instruments are easy to use.”

The design for the restored auditorium includes a mechanised stage. The stage will be brought up and forward for Georgian productions to bring the actors closer to the audience. Geoff Finch closes with a statement on Topcon's service. “Topcon always kept us informed when the equipment needed recalibrating, they have a very good delivery service and they are reliable; the equipment we need, is nearly always in stock.”



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