

Property news

Turning a dream into a reality



THE Viking Gallery is a new arts space in Cliftonville set in a beautiful art deco building in Viking House, Cliftonville Avenue. Owner Pamela Price writes about how the project came about and transforming the Turkish baths into a gallery...

VIKING Gallery was the dream of my friend Karen Whitaker.

She started building in 2004 with a view to make a gallery, six flats, a private club and library in the basement, designed to hold my late husband, editorial director at Secker and Warburg, John Blackwell's enormous collection of books.

Margate appealed to Karen as a place to recover from her illness.

It was full of friendly people, light and fresh air and she could afford both to buy property there and pay a skilled local workforce to transform some neglected buildings into smart well-designed and well-built apartments.

She saw great potential in the town for making a new, healthy and successful business life for herself.

By September 2009 the gallery was open, the flats were occupied. Two months later in December 2009 she died and the dream died with her. The project languished in sympathy and the gallery became empty and sad.

The freehold came my way in autumn 2012 and having seen the huge progress made within the Old Town and the new and exciting businesses, shops and living space that had replaced a lot of tired buildings we decided to revive Karen's dream. Using the same local Margate builders, tradesmen and craftsmen that Karen had used, we cut out a new two-floor gallery surrounding the original rust red furnace from then Turkish

hamaam and an adjoining three bedroom apartment.

We propose initially to have a series of exhibitions, the first, South London Artists Go To The Seaside, will open on Saturday May 24 and the second, a selection of works from the people of Kent, and particularly Thanet, will follow it.

There will be a variety of workshops run by visiting experts and we propose having a small gallery gift shop and perhaps a tiny tearoom and we hope to be able to offer a selection of interesting local and artisan products and gifts.

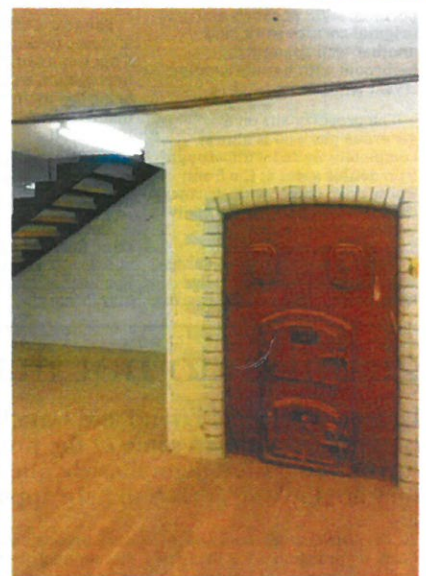
In this way we hope there will be something to attract and interest everyone who comes to see us.

Ideally we would eventually like the gallery to be rented, managed, curated and loved by a competent professional artist and people-loving person/tenant with experience in running art and community projects.

We are also looking for volunteers to help with setting up and managing the exhibitions, handing out flyers and giving a hand with getting ready to open and the day to day running of the project. We hope some of this will be able to turn into gainful employment eventually.

Now that the space is ready to show the world we hope the world and particularly the world of Margate will come to see what we have achieved so far.

With local help and participation we hope the space



will be used for exhibitions, we hope that this will grow into a successful and international project but we shall also promote the space for work shops, photo shoots and poetry readings, meetings, seminars and

receptions as well as markets, filming, yoga rehearsal space and dance classes whatever is needed by the people of the area.

It is a space we want to share, it is for people to use and enjoy, a place where they can offer their

works and perhaps improve their skills and knowledge and to bring not only art and culture but bustle excitement and, above all, fun to Cliftonville.

■ For more information visit vikinghousegallery.co.uk