**Year 1 / 2 Visit to the Paragon Theatre**

Learning about the history of Childers’ buildings in class, the Year 1 / 2’s took the opportunity to visit the Paragon Theatre, a special icon of Childers with a long history behind it.

Waiting at the door to meet us was the new owner, Merissa Craft (nee Riccardi), who in fact, attended St Joseph’s school during her primary years. Due to have her first baby very soon, she was only too happy to show us around.

The spacious foyer and ticket box is still as it was many years ago. Even the old phone was there, the only communication to the projector room.

First we visited the bottom floor which was once filled with rows of canvas seats for watching movies. Merissa explained how there used to be a second floor but it was later removed.

The students learned the theatre was built in 1909 by Mr Gee. He then sold it to Mr & Mrs Mammino who later sold it to their daughter, Mrs Riccardi, who happens to be Merissa’s grandmother. The Paragon has been kept in the family for many years.
This is the original curtain. Behind it is the movie screen. The screen can be slid backwards which opens up a stage. Plays, orchestras and musicians used to use it when movies weren’t playing.

All the canvas chairs are currently stacked behind the screen. Because they are so heavy and old, Merissa doesn’t think she will use them again.

Merissa led us upstairs to the elite seating area which overlooks the entire room below with a great view of the screen.
These seats were more comfortable but were more expensive. Guests had a special service and could order drinks and food delivered from a room with its own private set of stairs.

The square holes are where the film is projected through.

While waiting turns to go into the projector room, others checked out the street from the window. All the windows are frosted over to stop any light coming in.
Merissa and bub-to-be.

There were lots to see in the projector room, including two huge projectors. As one movie came on two reels, two projectors were needed so one half of the movie could play and then continue on the second projector without stopping the movie.

There were even empty reels left behind.

Glass slides were used for the advertisements before the movie.

This one is advertising Dunlop boots, which are still around today.
This is the projector that showed the slides. You can see where they slid in.

And here is the turntable they played music on during the advertisements.

There were even some old bottles... 

... and broken film left behind.

The students also spotted the phone which was linked to the one in the ticket box.

After the tour, the students asked many questions, including – what and when was the last movie played in the theatre.

The last movie played was in 1998 and the movie was Titanic.

Year 1 / 2 had a wonderful time looking through the Paragon and thanked Merissa for her time and information.

Hopefully she will be playing movies again in the old theatre soon.