

Royal High old boy volunteers at Hidden Door Festival

A Royal High School former pupil is one of the volunteers who has helped clean up and steward the Hidden Door Festival taking place on the site.

The multi-arts festival has taken over the empty building on Regent Road for a ten-day celebration of new and emerging artists performing music, dance, theatre, spoken word and visual art.

The building has been empty and unused since it closed as a school in the 1960s and needed sprucing up before it could host the festival.

One of the volunteers who signed up to help get it ready was Derek Grainge, who attended the Royal High School at the Calton Hill site until it closed in 1968, finishing his sixth year at the new building in Barnton.

This month was the first time Derek had been back in more than 50 years.

He said: "It's fantastic, even in this small way, to be able to come back and do something useful. Even doing something as lowly as scraping grass off of pavements is good because it gets the place back into something like decent condition."

Much of the building is the same as when he was last inside, and Derek can remember particular classrooms he was taught in. But he is thrilled the school is being used for something

different.

He added: "I don't see it in terms of 'it's art in an old classroom', it's just lots of different little places where you can go and see a certain artist strutting their stuff.

"When I come and go to any of the events here, I see it as being musicians and artists, not people who've intruded into my old classroom.

"It's what the school deserves. You can't turn it back into what it was in the 60s. You've got to find some sort of new purpose for it, and this summer, if Hidden Door's events come in, and various festival events thereby follow, then that's good. It's all just active use. More power to everybody's elbow!"

Hidden Door Festival continues at the Old Royal High School until Saturday 18 June.

More information and tickets can be found on the website hiddendoorats.org



Derek Grainge PHOTO Chris Scott