

WARMINSTER PRESERVATION TRUST Ltd

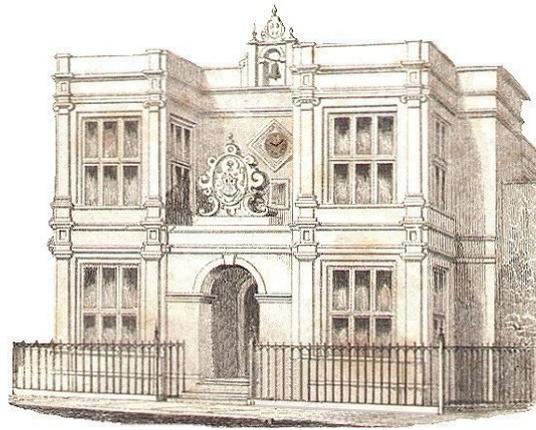
Incorporated in 1987
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Patron
DR ANDREW MURRISON MP

The Old Town Hall Grade 2 Listed Building at Risk

Registered Charity No 29772

This iconic and landmark building dating back to 1832, commissioned by the 2nd Marquess of Bath is one of the earliest buildings of the famous Victorian architect, Edward Blore, the designer of Buckingham Palace. Among other features, it contains a Town Clock, the Thynne Coat of Arms, a magnificent cantilevered staircase, a Minstrels' Gallery and seven prison cells in the basement.



It was gifted to Warminster by Thomas Henry Marquess of Bath in 1903, with the explicit intention that it remained in trust for the use of the people of the town in perpetuity. For decades it was the centre of the Town's social and governmental life, serving as a Magistrates' Court, having been acquired by the then District Council in 1974 and then sadly sold off in 1979. It has had an unhappy history in more recent times, having passed through the hands of several owners, being empty for a few years, and then auctioned by the Receiver on 27th July 2011.

The Warminster Preservation Trust, formed in 1987, has a good record in restoring historic buildings in the town and, although failing in its bid to buy at auction in 2011, is now cooperating with its current owner, in an attempt to restore the building, step by step, in order to bring it back into use.

Phase One

A local builder and his family have now come forward. Securing a lease from the owner and recognising the potential of the building, they have invested their money in the enterprise. A wine bar called **The Boston Shaker** has now opened in the basement area. This venture has proved its worth and has led to further initiatives.



Phase Two

With the Wine Bar now open for business, the work of redecorating and making ready the ground floor started in February 2014. Permission for retail use having been confirmed in December 2013.

All the rooms on the Ground Floor have now been cleared of rubbish, the electrics overhauled and checked, and the heating fully restored, all to a high standard. The two front rooms are now operational, but a new tenant is now being sought for the area formerly occupied by the Magistrates' Court.

(views of various rooms below)



Plans are being made to put railings around the top of the old disused toilet block at the back of the building to provide a patio area.

The area over the main entrance (the Portico) has now been fully repaired thanks to a grant from the WPT, with new joists and decking in place. (Cost £4k including VAT).

Phase Three

Major external works are required to the First Floor. Listed Building consent may be needed to replace the sash windows by Restoration Glass (Mike Turner Construction) Estimated cost £9,600 plus VAT. The original clock mechanism has to be re-connected to the dial. The main roof needs to be made completely water-tight. Works include the repair of the guttering and internal downpipe, stripping off the old roofing felt and replacing with a breathable covering, stripping off the old render and replacing. Also where necessary renewing the slates and lead facing. The estimated cost including scaffolding £24k inc VAT.



(Rear windows await renovation)

Phase Four

Remove the two external downpipes and replace. The front of the building was poorly cleaned in 2012 and will have to be properly treated this time. The stonework also has to be treated properly and this is likely to be the most expensive item. An estimate needs to be sought from a qualified stonemason. The other three walls of the building are in reasonable condition although some pointing and cleaning is necessary.



WPT has obtained several estimates in the past for pigeon-proofing. Concerted action by the local councils and all concerned must now be taken to deal with this problem for good.

Overview

Why should the people of Warminster be concerned with the survival of the Old Town Hall? A briefing note prepared by a local and highly respected archaeologist is attached. With the growing interest in historic buildings, this paper puts everything into perspective. As he emphasizes, this building is an asset, not a liability and it has to be secured for the benefit of all those who come after us.