



Historic England

# The Guildhall, High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight: Historic Building Investigation

Johanna Roethe and Susie Barson

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



Research Report Series 44-2022

**THE GUILDHALL,  
HIGH STREET,  
NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT**

**HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION**

Johanna Roethe and Susie Barson

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Cover image: The Guildhall, High Street, Newport. [DP301377]



## **SUMMARY**

The Guildhall in Newport was built in 1814-16 to a design by the architect John Nash. It originally housed the borough's civic and judicial functions and a market. There have been several phases of alterations and extensions, notably in 1887-8 when a clock tower was added and in 1967-8 when the building was extended and its interior adapted for use as court rooms. Since 1996 it has been in use as the Museum of Island History, offices and storage for the museum and archive. This report aims to inform the building's refurbishment and options for its future use, as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) partnership between Historic England, the Isle of Wight Council and Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

The report was written by Johanna Roethe, apart from the sections on the original development of the building and on John Nash which were written by Susie Barson. The report was edited by Joanna Smith. Photography is by Chris Redgrave and Johanna Roethe and the phasing plans were prepared by Sharon Soutar. Unless otherwise indicated, the copyright of the illustrations belongs to Historic England.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

Historic England Archive, Engine House, Firefly Avenue, Swindon, SN2 2EH

## **DATE OF RESEARCH**

Research took place in May and June 2021 and the building was visited on 20 May 2021. The report was desktop published in April 2022.

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Figure 1: The Guildhall (highlighted in purple) in relation to the town's historic market places. [Base map © Crown Copyright and database right 2022. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900]

## INTRODUCTION

The Guildhall is a Grade II\*-listed building, which was originally constructed as a town hall and market building.<sup>1</sup> It has undergone a number of changes, including a major phase of extension and alterations, and a considerable amount of functional change. This research report was commissioned by Robert Lloyd-Sweet, a Historic Places Adviser for Historic England, and the steering group for the Newport High Street Heritage Action Zones, in order to inform proposals to refurbish the building and to bring it back into full use.

In 2019, an area of central Newport was selected as one of 68 Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zones across the country. One of the priorities of the Newport scheme is the refurbishment of the Guildhall. The building is located at the south-east corner of Quay Street and the High Street (Figure 1), within the Newport Conservation Area. It is owned by the Isle of Wight Council who aims to bring the upper floors back into use, conserving original and significant fabric, and make the building more accessible.



It would appear that there has been no systematic, in-depth study of the Guildhall's history and architecture. The building is noted only in passing in most of the major studies of John Nash's life and work.<sup>2</sup> And although it has been the subject of grey literature reports, including a paint analysis report of 1996, it lacks an overall synthesis. Furthermore, almost all of the building's internal spaces have changed use over time but there has been no attempt to give any account of their original functions, design and later alterations. This report aims to fill this gap.

After a brief description of the building the report sets out the historical background to its development, followed by an account of the subsequent phases of work. It then describes the survival of its historic fabric and makes recommendations for further research. An appendix provides the text of the original specification of 1813.

### **Naming convention**

During its history, the Guildhall has occasionally been known as the Town Hall. For the sake of clarity, and to avoid confusion with a large function room on the first floor that was also referred to as the 'Town Hall', the report uses the name 'Guildhall' throughout. As a consequence of the amount of adaption that the building has undergone the names of some rooms have altered over time. For ease of reading, the nomenclature of the first-floor rooms used in the report is given in the building plan (Figure 6) on page 6.

### **Research limitations**

Due to time constraints the research for this report has focused on the major alterations to the building and a comprehensive chronology of the minor alterations has not been attempted. The research was undertaken at a time of government restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some sources could not be consulted. During the site visit it was not possible to obtain full access the building. The roof spaces of the Guildhall could not be inspected, the half-columns on the ground floor could not be closely examined, and one second-floor room was not accessible.



Figure 2: The Guildhall from the south-west. [DP301382]

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Guildhall is a three-storey building on a wedge-shaped plan between the High Street to the south and Quay Street to the north-west. The main materials are stuccoed brick and Bath stone, which was used for the columns, dressings and the clock tower. The main pitched roof is covered with asbestos-cement tiles, a smaller hipped roof in slate and flat roofs in lead and roofing felt.



Figure 3: The south elevation from the south-east. [DP301379]

The west elevation has three open arches with keystones on the ground floor and behind the arcade an entrance door with an arched fanlight, flanked by two arched sash windows (Figure 2). The upper floor has a tetrastyle portico with unfluted Ionic columns supporting a triangular pediment. Between the columns are three cast-iron panels forming a balustrade and behind them are three six-over-six sash windows. The dentilled cornice of the pediment continues on the south and north-west elevations.

At the south-west corner, and set back from the portico, is the stone-clad clock tower. It has four main stages: a rusticated base with open arches on three sides, a central stage with rusticated corners which extends up to the level of the building's cornice, and above that a short, rusticated stage with the inscription 'Victoria'. Above this are the four clock faces, which are framed by pedimented aedicules on fluted Ionic pilasters, below each of which is the inscription 'MDCCCLXXXVII' (1887). The ovoid cupola with a ball finial is supported on scrolled brackets and an open colonnade of Ionic pilasters.

The south elevation to the High Street has a six-bay Ionic colonnade over an open ground-floor arcade (Figure 3). Behind the arcade are arched sash windows and



Figure 4: The Quay Street elevation, looking south-west. [DP301380]

on the first floor are sash windows similar to those in the west elevation. There is a circular window at first-floor level in the east elevation of the clock tower. The colonnade is bookended at the west by the clock tower and to the east by a plain masonry corner. Both of these have ground-floor arches which are slightly lower and narrower than those of the main arcade. Two bays at the east end of the elevation are recessed and have sash windows on three levels, of which the ground-floor ones are arched.

The eleven-bay north-west elevation in Quay Street is the plainest elevation (Figure 4). The westernmost bay is the return elevation of the portico and has an open arch on the ground floor, a circular window with radiating glazing bars on the first, and a three-over-six sash window to the top floor. The next five bays to the east have shallow, recessed arches with keystones on the ground floor which are filled with arched sash windows, except for the central door with a fanlight and a circular window in the west bay. The sash windows on the floor above have six-over-six panes and those on the second floor three-over-six panes. The eastern five bays have similar fenestration, except that the window bays are more tightly spaced and there are no recessed arches on the ground floor. An arched opening in the central bay leads to a recessed entrance door.

The main entrance to the museum on the ground floor is through the west door, leading into an entrance hall with a small toilet space (Figure 5). To the east of this is the main exhibition room, and beyond that a smaller exhibition room. To the north are a number of ancillary spaces, including three staircases. Two of the stairs are original and their form and size differentiate their status: the smaller, secondary stair

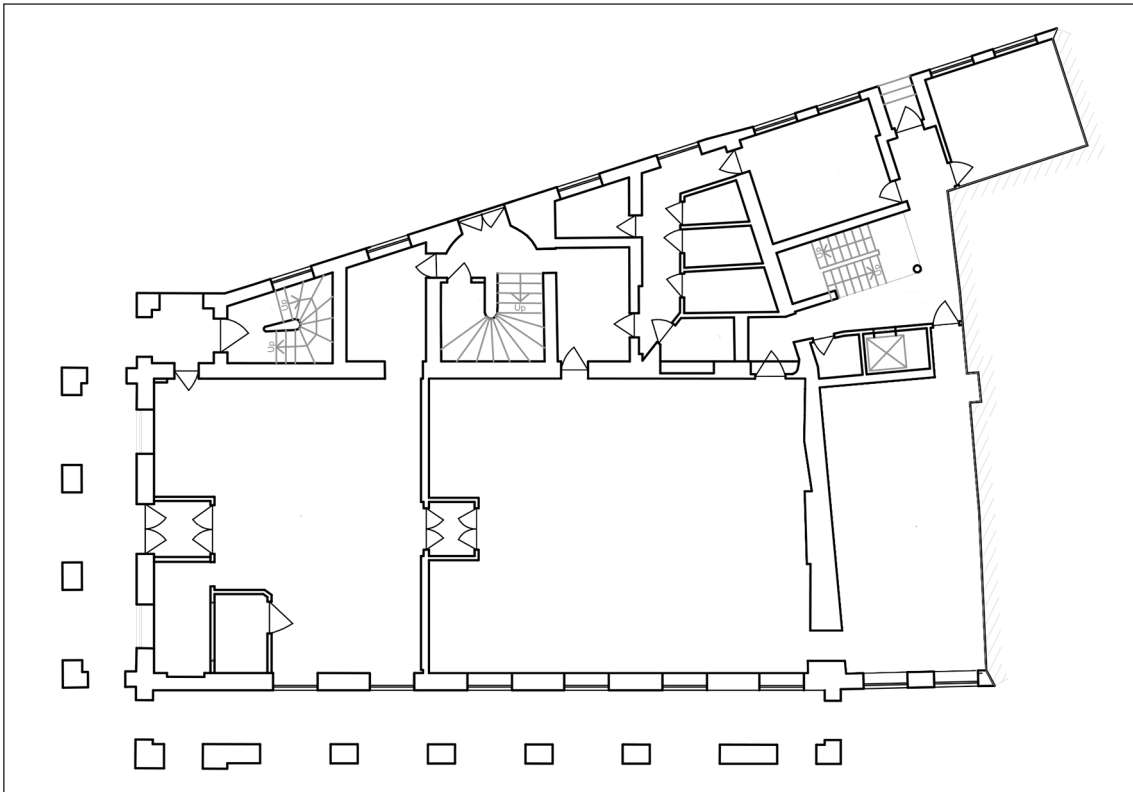


Figure 5: The ground-floor plan. [Plan based on the asset management floor plan of the Isle of Wight Council's Corporate and Facilities Management team]

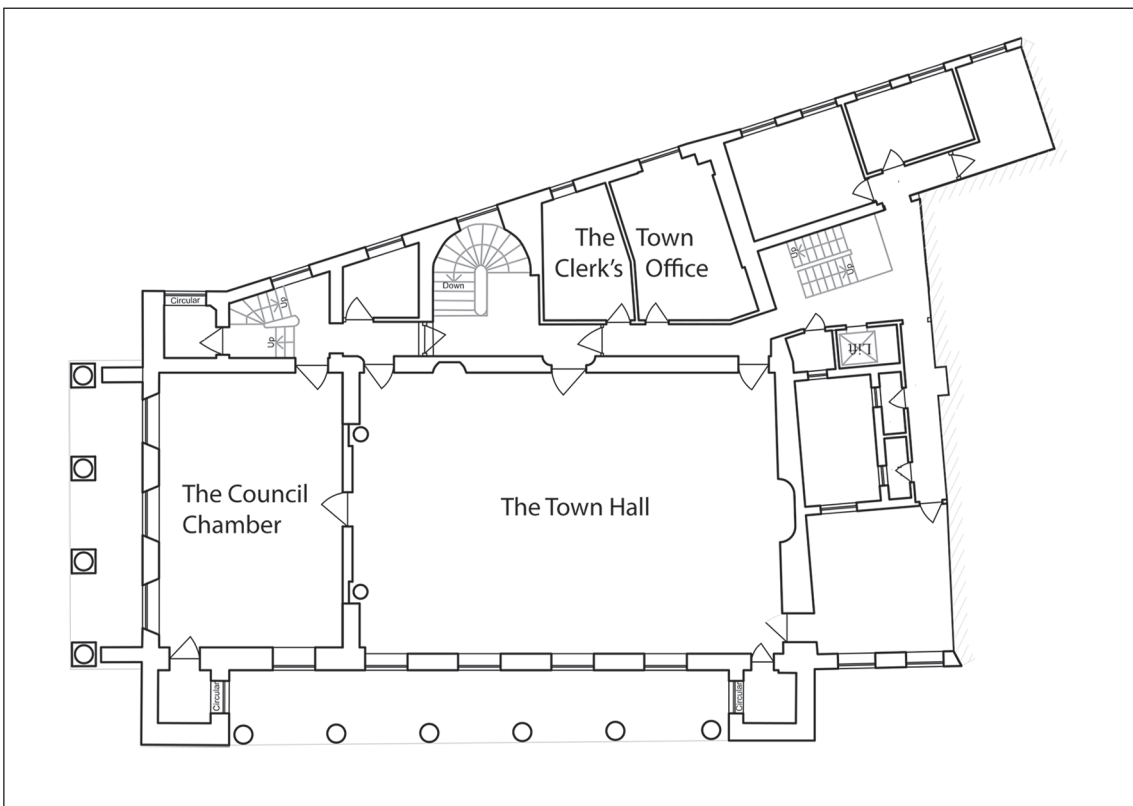


Figure 6: The first-floor plan, annotated with the original room names and uses. [Plan based on the asset management floor plan of the Isle of Wight Council's Corporate and Facilities Management team]

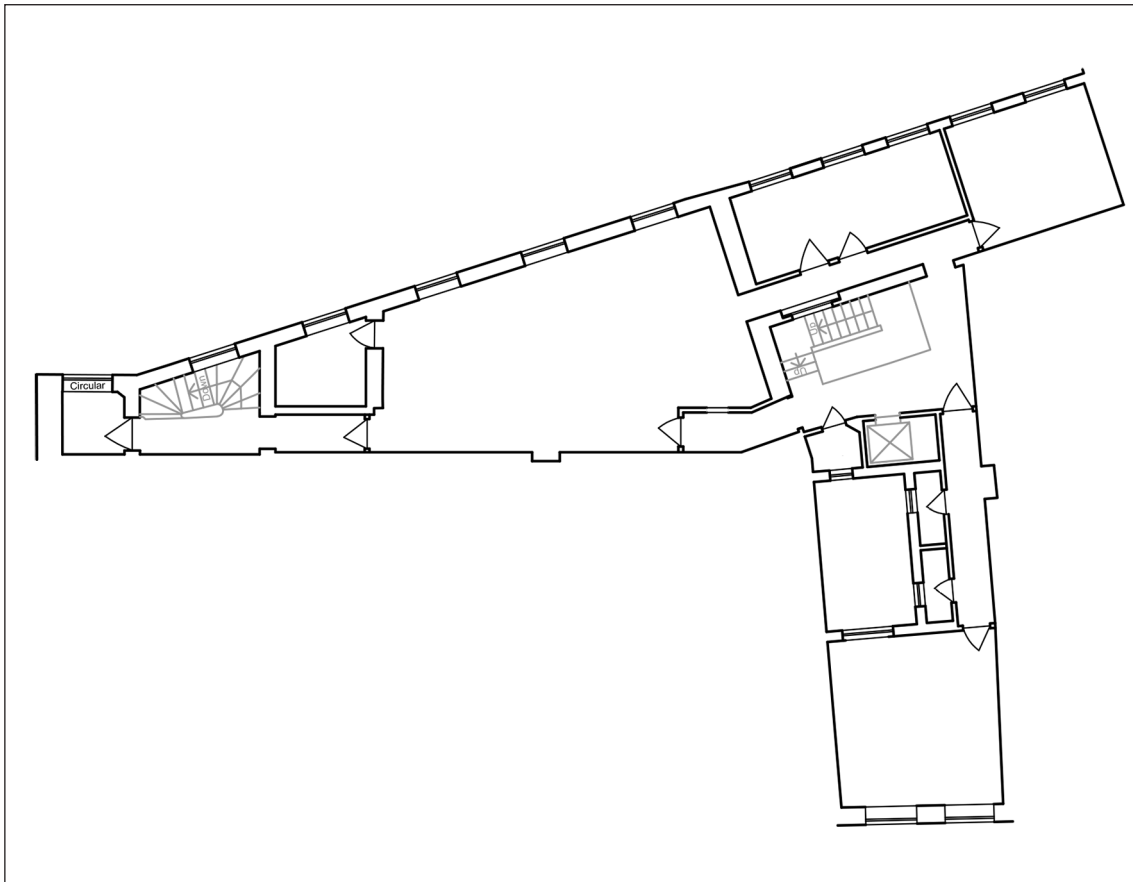


Figure 7: The second-floor plan. [Plan based on the asset management floor plan of the Isle of Wight Council's Corporate and Facilities Management team]

to the west is on an irregular oblong plan, which is wider at the east; the larger stair to the east was the 'principal stair' and has an oval plan.

On the first floor are two double-height spaces, the former Council Chamber to the west and the former Town Hall to the east (Figure 6). A stair in the south-west corner off the Council Chamber leads to the clock chamber. There is a corresponding space off the Town Hall, which is now a store. To the east of the Town Hall is a nearly square room facing the High Street and to the north of that an oblong light well around which the elevator, lavatories and smaller rooms are grouped. A corridor to the north of the Council Chamber and Town Hall connects a sequence of small rooms and the three stairs.

The partial second floor has rooms along the Quay Street frontage to the north and along the east end of the building (Figure 7). The layout largely mirrors that of the spaces on the floor below, except that only two staircases reach this floor, the secondary stair and modern stair.

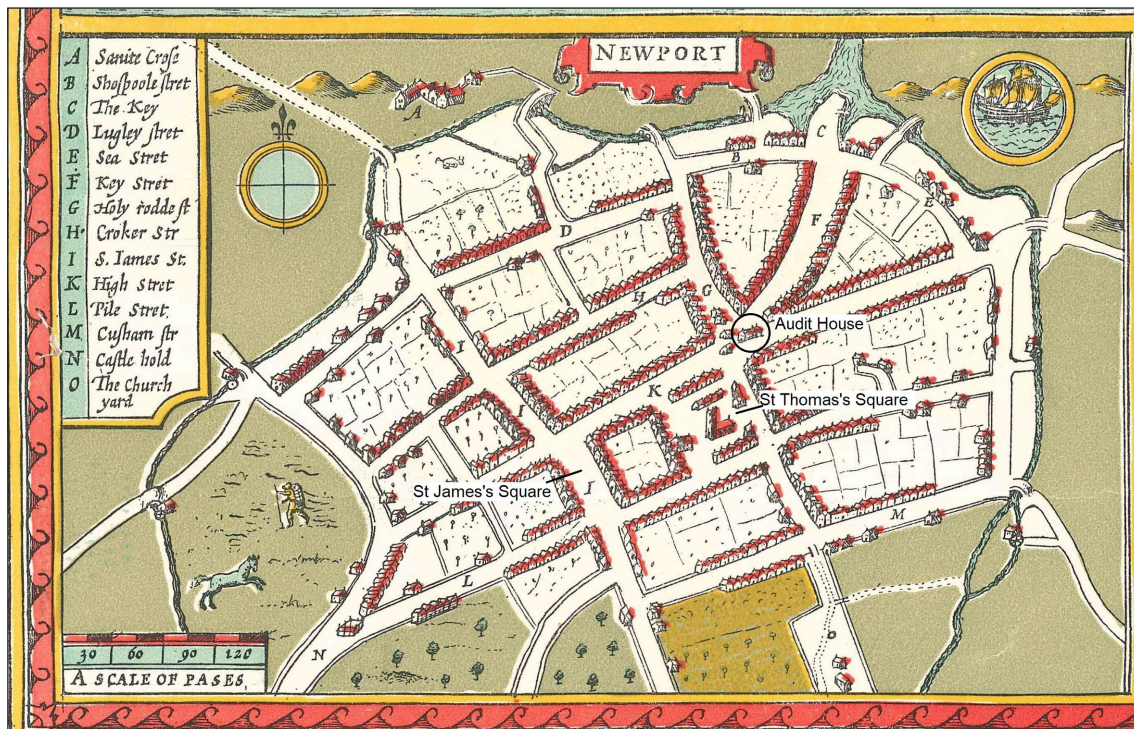


Figure 8: Town plan of Newport from John Speed's map of the Isle of Wight, annotated to show the two main squares and the audit house. [Isle of Wight Record Office, County Maps/Speed]

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### The old audit house and the markets

The Guildhall occupies a site that has been associated with the administration of Newport since at least the early 15th century. The town was founded in about 1180, when Richard De Redvers, the lord of Carisbrook Castle, instigated the planning of a new town on a grid plan at the head of the river Medina.<sup>3</sup> A market at Newport was first recorded in 1280, when it was held by Isabella de Fortibus, lord of the Isle of Wight.<sup>4</sup> The town was largely destroyed in a French raid in 1377 and recovered its prosperity only slowly. After its establishment, the town was governed by two bailiffs elected by burgesses. In 1584, the number of bailiffs for Newport was reduced to one and in 1608 the town was incorporated as a borough, with a mayor, eleven aldermen and twelve chief burgesses.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest arrangements for local government are unknown but in 1405-6, the two bailiffs let a piece of ground at the junction of Holyrood Street, High Street and Watchbell Lane for the construction of two shops with a court room above for the use of the bailiffs and commonalty.<sup>6</sup> This building became known as the 'audit house' and, according to a salvage inventory from the time of its demolition, it was built of Flemish brick with a roof of 'slatts', i.e. slates, and a wood-panelled interior.<sup>7</sup>

John Speed's map of 1611 shows the audit house as a free-standing building at a prominent junction in the town centre (Figure 8). This later became the site of the Guildhall. The audit house stood slightly to north-east of one of Newport's main



Figure 9: Drawing of the audit house of c. 1637-39 in an undated watercolour of the 1790s by Thomas Rowlandson. [Reproduced by the kind permission of the Isle of Wight Council Heritage Service, IWCMS:2002.138]

squares, known until 1861 as the Cornmarket and thereafter as St Thomas's Square.<sup>8</sup> Set around Saints Thomas Church, which was dedicated to both St Thomas the Apostle and St Thomas Becket, this formed the main marketplace. On the north side of the square was the fish and flesh (meat) shambles and on the south was a row of standings or shops. The corn market was also held here and the name of the Wheatsheaf Hotel on the corner with Pyle Street is a reminder of that use. The market house was on the west side of the square, depicted in Speed's plan as projecting out beyond the main building line. At the north-east corner stood the Cheese Cross, which related to the butter and cheese market which took place in the area around the audit house.<sup>9</sup>

The other main square, St James's, hosted the 'beast' or cattle market, which was held from the 1530s and continued into the 20th century; it may have had a ring for bull-baiting.<sup>10</sup> The name of the former Lamb Tavern at the corner with the High Street probably relates to the cattle market use of the area.

The medieval audit house was repaired in 1618.<sup>11</sup> By 1637 or 1638, it was in poor condition and no longer fit for the newly incorporated borough of Newport.<sup>12</sup> It was decided to demolish and rebuild it, funded by a special rate. The new building



of Portland stone was completed in 1639 and it combined both civic and market functions.<sup>13</sup> This survived until 1814 and is depicted in several 18th-century drawings (Figure 9).<sup>14</sup> The ground floor had an open colonnade, where the butter and cheese market took place, having moved there from the nearby Cheese Cross.<sup>15</sup> This had a water supply assured by several wells, which were rediscovered in the 1960s during works to the ground floor of the Guildhall.<sup>16</sup> By the late 18th century, the building also had a watchbell to alert residents in case of a French invasion that is probably commemorated in the name of nearby 'Watchbell Lane'.<sup>17</sup>

## The construction of the Guildhall, 1814-16

In 1813, the borough decided to replace the mid-17th-century audit house with a new mixed-use building for the market, the town hall and the courts. The reasons for the rebuilding are not entirely clear but probably include the desire to have a civic building which adequately reflected Newport's status as the island's social and commercial centre. It was also part of a general trend in the late Georgian period to replace older civic buildings with more modern structures in reorganised town centres. Hundreds of medieval and early modern town halls were replaced between 1750 and 1850 with new buildings for civic and market functions, designed in a refined urban guise.<sup>18</sup> The Guildhall at Newport is a typical example of this updated building type.

As a larger site was required, the Corporation acquired several adjoining plots in 1813, including a site in the High Street belonging to the Crown and Sceptre pub.<sup>19</sup> The leading architect John Nash, who had close connections with the Isle of Wight (see the section on Nash), was commissioned to produce a design that same year. This was duly accepted by the Corporation with a vote of thanks to Nash 'for the very elegant and masterly plans for the construction of the new Town Hall and Market Place, which, in the most liberal and flattering manner he presented to the Corporation'.<sup>20</sup> The latter comment alluded to the fact that he had waived his fees and Nash was elected a free burgess in recognition of his efforts.<sup>21</sup>

In January 1814, the *Hampshire Telegraph* advertised an invitation to tender for the construction of 'a new Town-hall, Council Room and Market Place', with a closing date of February 1814.<sup>22</sup> The option to quote for the whole contract or the contracts for the six individual 'branches of workmanship' was offered and tenders had to provide 'security', i.e. a deposit or insurance. Plans and the specification (see Appendix) could be 'seen ... at the Town Clerk's Office, until the 25th day of January ... and after that time ... at the Office of John Nash, Esq, Dover Street, London.' The work was to be completed 'on or before the first day of September next'. The list of tenderers and their quotations for the work survive in the Isle of Wight Record Office.<sup>23</sup>

Having reviewed the tenders, Nash stated in a letter dated 10 February 1814 that he favoured the submission from Tayler and Moorey, 'an advantageous contract'.<sup>24</sup> Following his recommendation the Corporation swiftly drew up an agreement with Richard Read Tayler and Richard Hall Moorey 'to erect and build according to the plans drawn thereof by John Nash esquire and of the size and specifications

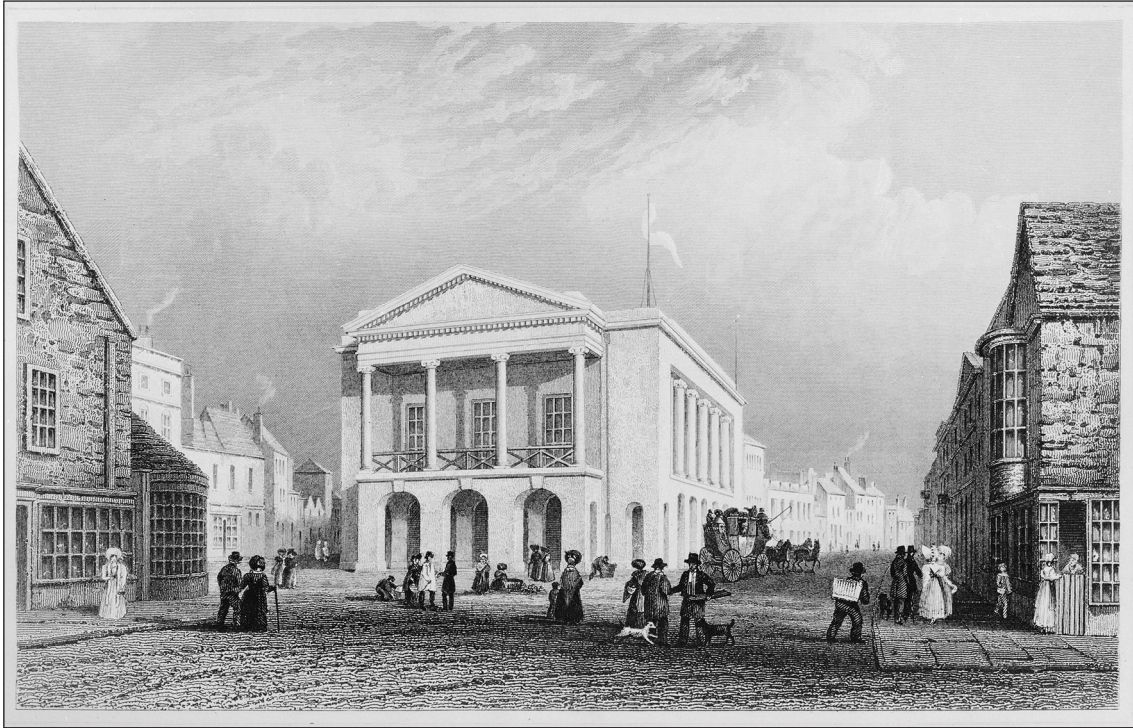


Figure 10: Early 19th-century print showing the Guildhall, drawn and engraved by Thomas Barber, published in Barber 1834, opposite p. 44. [BB65/02594]

mentioned in the printed particulars annexed a new Guildhall, Council Room, Market House & other rooms over the same ... and to use in such buildings the materials mentioned in the specification annexed'.<sup>25</sup> They also suggested to re-use some of the old materials; no doubt to save time and money. The agreement was signed on 24 February 1814 and the Corporation of Newport agreed to pay Messrs Tayler and Moorey £4,760, for the work.<sup>26</sup> A local architect and builder, William Mortimer, who had submitted an unsuccessful tender, was retained to supervise the works.

The corner stone was laid on 20 March 1814.<sup>27</sup> A year later, tenders were submitted for erecting butchers' stalls in the new market.<sup>28</sup> The 1814 specification stated that the work was to be completed 'on or before the first day of September next' but the building was finally completed in March 1816 (Figure 10).<sup>29</sup> The total cost was over £10,000, an enormous sum for a relatively poor borough.<sup>30</sup> To meet the expense, the borough had to sell off nearly all of its landed property, including unenclosed lands at Hunnyhill in 1812 and in 1813 the reversion in fee of land in the town centre, including in High Street, Pyle Street, South Street, St James Street and Crocker Street.<sup>31</sup> Later in the 19th century, the borough frequently used the building as a security for mortgages, for example in 1833, 1835, 1861 and 1890.<sup>32</sup>

To commemorate its completion, a public subscription was started in 1814 to commission a painting of Sir Leonard Worsley Holmes, MP for Newport (1812-25) and the Recorder of the Borough of Newport (1816-25). The portrait by William Owen RA (1769-1825) was presented to the Corporation on 30 August 1816, followed by an 'elegant *dejeune*' at the new Guildhall.<sup>33</sup> A rather grander celebration

then took place on 11 September 1816, a dinner for 130 guests including many dignitaries such as the governor of the island, the magistrates, the members of parliament and the mayor of Yarmouth.<sup>34</sup> The painting has continued to hang in the building ever since.<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary accounts of the building were generally favourable. In 1816, the *Hampshire Telegraph* described the newly-opened building as ‘an edifice exhibiting the chastest specimen of architecture, a Court possessing convenience and dignity for the administration of justice, scarcely surpassed by any borough in the kingdom, and a Market adapted in every respect for the comfort and accommodation of the town’.<sup>36</sup> In his *Companion* of 1818 John Albin commented on the ‘beauty and chastness [sic] of design, in taste, proportion, and that happy union of utility and ornament, which forms the perfection of public buildings, it deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it’.<sup>37</sup> Bullar’s guide of 1818 also gave a favourable review of the new building: ‘An excellent Guildhall has lately been erected by the Corporation, after a design by Mr Nash, with every appropriate convenience as a court of justice’.<sup>38</sup> But there were a few dissenting voices. For example, in a letter of 1831 Fanny Oglander wrote to her brother in India: ‘The whole building is very large, ridiculously so and it is really hard I think on many of the inhabitants who are obliged to pay high rates for it’.<sup>39</sup>

## The design, materials and fittings of the Guildhall

Because of the survival of a set of thirteen drawings and a specification for the building it is possible to describe much of the building’s original form and appearance.<sup>40</sup> The drawings include three elevations, three floor plans, one section, two plans to show the timber construction of first floor and roof, and four drawings showing architectural details. And the specification set out the building materials and internal finishes and decoration of the rooms. These all seem to have been followed quite closely in the construction of the building.

But, despite the overall cost of £10,000, there was not a lot of architectural flourish: even a low relief proposed for the tympanum did not make it to execution. The specification shows that the materials used were substantial enough: Bath stone was specified for the plinth of the arcades, the columns, frieze, cornice and window surrounds; Portland stone for the floor of the colonnade. For the main structure ‘hard and sound’ bricks were to be used ‘bound by stone lime mortar grouted every fourth course’ with ‘unflushed joints to be filled with Parker cement’.<sup>41</sup> Nash frequently used this material in his buildings, as a cement and, in a more liquid form, as stucco.<sup>42</sup>

The specification states that hardwood timber in the building, such as the lintels, was to be English oak, with softer Memel fir from the Baltic for the battens and deal for the architraves and, as far as is known, this seems to have been followed. Oak was specified for the sash window frames and ‘the best Newcastle Crown Glass’.

Nash’s design for the roof used both timber and cast-iron trusses. According to the original drawings, the main pitched roof was to be a variation of a king-post roof, with two subsidiary posts and struts (Figure 11). ‘Duchess’-size Welsh slates,

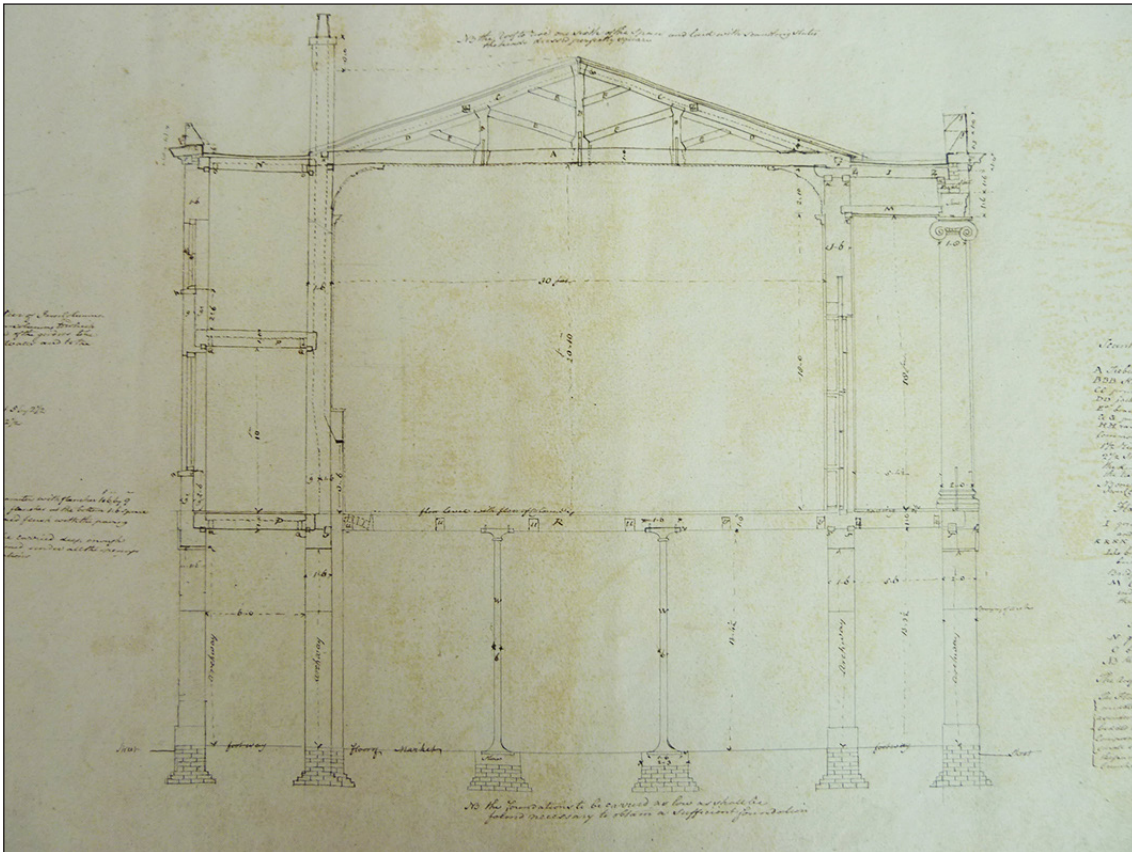


Figure 11: The original section showing the roof structure and the cast-iron columns of the market hall. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash]

the third largest size, were attached with ‘best copper nails’.<sup>43</sup> The lead flats over the north-western corner were to be provided with flashings sealed with ‘Lord Stanhope’s Composition’, a tar-based cement which the architect used in other buildings including Buckingham Palace and several houses in Regent Street.<sup>44</sup>

The ground floor consisted of a market hall with an open, double arcade to the west and south. Inside, the ceiling was supported by twelve hollow cast-iron columns, 18 inches in diameter (Figures 11, 12). According to the specification, the columns were intended ‘to support the girders over the market, which form the floor of the town-hall and council-room’. The floor was paved in Purbeck stone, cut with channels to ‘convey water to the kennels [i.e. the surface drains in the street]’. Otherwise relatively little is known about the original appearance of the market hall (see below). The remainder of the ground floor was largely open, apart from the two enclosed stairs leading to the upper floors. The larger of the stairs was to the east and formed the principal staircase of the building. The smaller stair to the west was reserved for the use of magistrates. Both stairs featured oak handrails, Portland stone steps and landings, and wrought-iron balusters.

The first floor had two main spaces: a smaller Council Chamber and Grand Jury Room to the west, and a larger Town Hall and Court Room (Figure 13). These rooms could be thrown into one by opening a folding partition which ran between

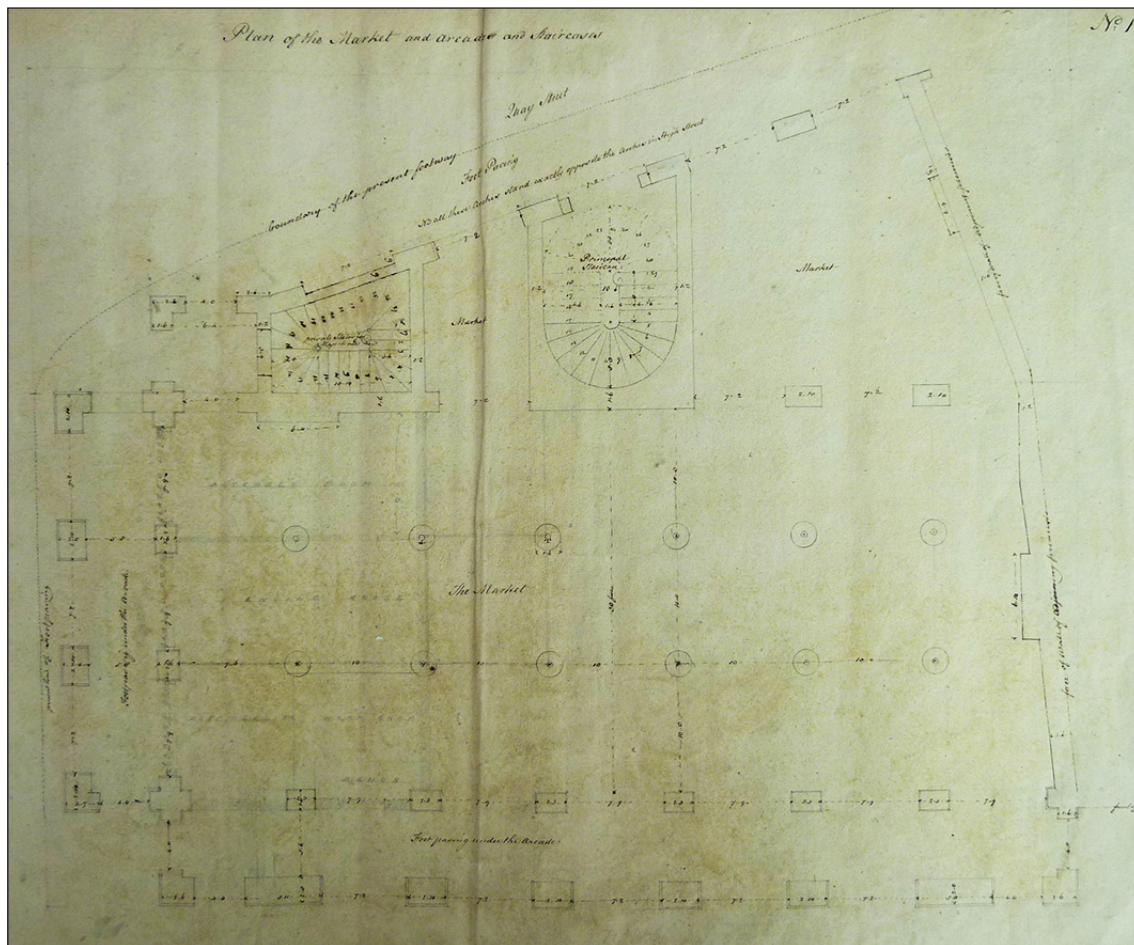


Figure 12: The ground-floor plan by John Nash, 1813. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash]

two imitation-stone columns, of scagliola intended to look like porphyry, with stone bases painted to imitate bronze and Corinthian plaster capitals. According to the specification, the partition was apparently lined with canvas and painted to imitate the other walls stuccoed internal walls. When in use as a court, the room was set out with removable fittings (see below). According to the plans these were placed at the west end on the room, beside the partition. These furnishings and a raised platform and bench could all be removed (see discussion of the court furnishings below). Access from the secondary stair to the Council Chamber was via a curved lobby that led to a doorway at the west end of the Town Hall. On the south side of the building two small square service rooms were provided at either end of the colonnade; that to the east contained a closet for the Town Hall while the room to the west provided a strong room for the Council Chamber. The other first-floor rooms on the north side of the building provided ‘useful apartments’ and other facilities such as a small WC off the magistrates’ stair, a closet for the jury and the town clerk’s office to the east of the principal staircase. Unsurprisingly, the two principal rooms were given the most expensive chimneypieces: each had a ‘Black Derbyshire marble chimneypiece and slab with fine stone carvings ... at a cost of £45’.<sup>45</sup> Folding shutters flanked the double-hung sash windows in both rooms. The specification mentions that the town clerk’s office and the closet for the jury were to have chimneypieces of Portland stone.

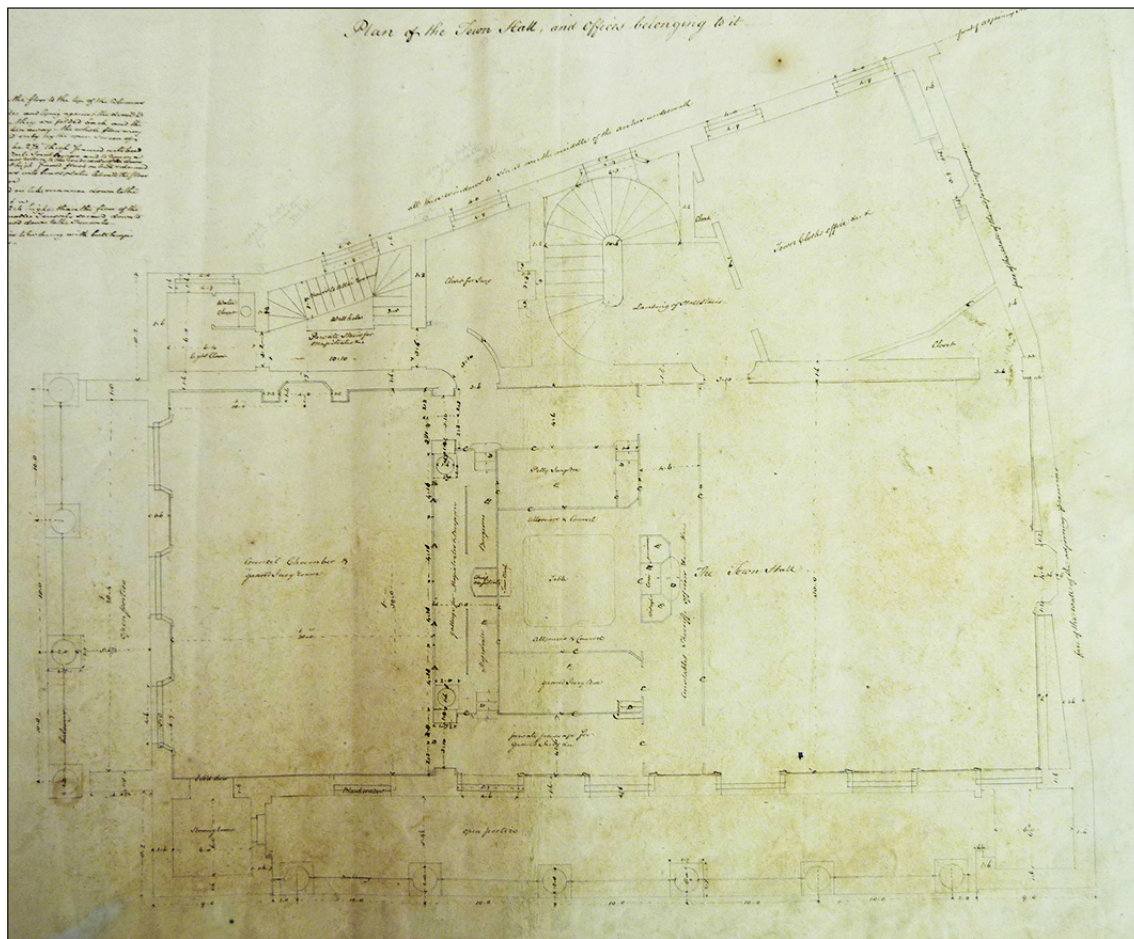


Figure 13: The first-floor plan by John Nash, 1813. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash]

In 1818 John Albin gave a description of the main first-floor rooms as follows: ‘Over the market place is a magnificent town hall; the partitions, forming the apartments for the juries, solicitors, witness etc are screwed to the floor, to afford when required a facility of removal. The hall communicates at the upper end with the council chamber, where the grand jury meet, being a room of the same width and elevation, and about 30 feet by 20, separated from the hall by a moveable partition, which being taken away the council chamber is thrown into the hall, which then forms a magnificent room, of 48 feet by 30, and 22 feet high.’<sup>46</sup> This larger space was used ‘upon most occasions of general assembly upon public business or festivity’.<sup>47</sup> ‘At the lower end of the hall,’ Albin continued, ‘hangs a very spirited full length portrait of Sir Leonard Holmes, in his recorder’s robe, by Owen’.<sup>48</sup>

In 1996 a paint analysis was undertaken by experts from the Victoria and Albert Museum that provides evidence for the original colour scheme in the principal rooms.<sup>49</sup> They found oak graining on the softwood doors, with an oil varnish; Nash had specified oak doors, so clearly corners had been cut here. Oak graining was also found on the skirting and dado rails. The walls and dado were painted a ‘warm stone colour’, typical of the Regency period, and the ceiling cove was painted in a green oil paint on a distemper ground. With reference to the egg-and-dart decoration on the cornice, the report notes that this was picked out in contrasting colours as Nash

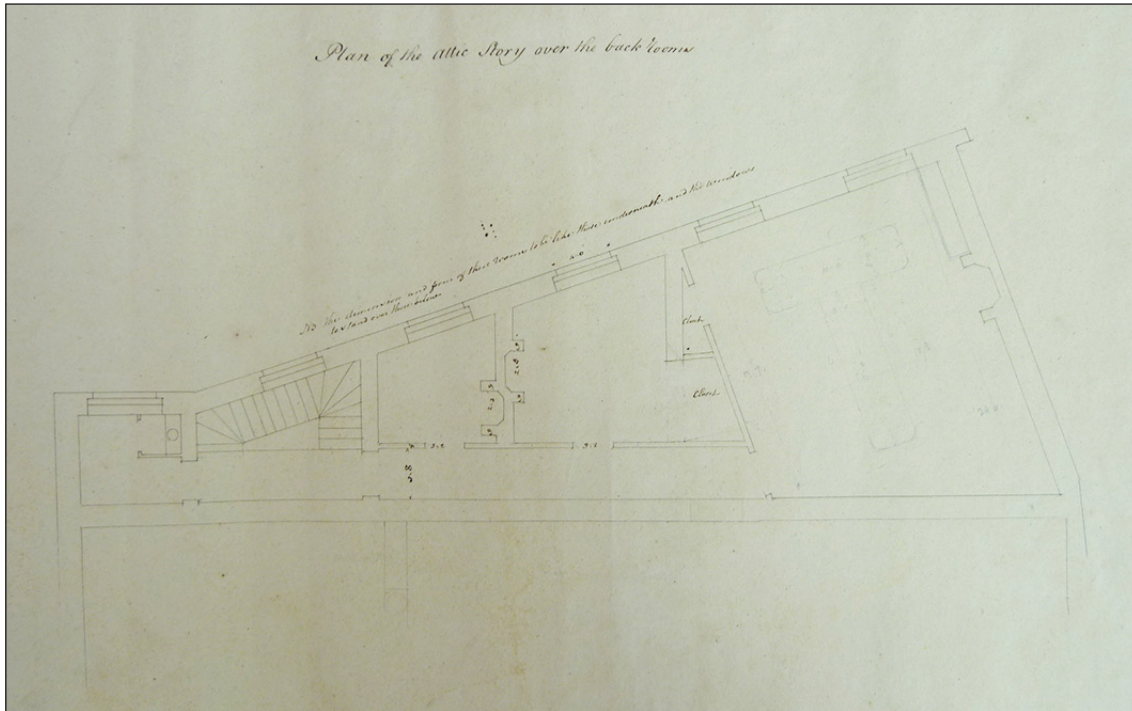


Figure 14: The second-floor plan by John Nash, 1813. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash]

specified. These were a cream oil paint, and one with a green pigment, chromium oxide, described in the report as ‘sage green and buttery cream’. The ceiling was probably white, with the same cream and green combination on the ceiling rose. The capitals of the scagliola columns were originally a cream or stone colour. Elsewhere on the woodwork examples of mahogany wood graining, both varnished and unvarnished, were found.

The partial second floor on the north side of the building was served by the secondary stair (Figure 14). This contained two small heated rooms, one with a closet, and one larger heated room with a closet; all were provided with Portland stone chimneypieces. A corridor or passage running west to east connected the rooms and a WC to the west of the stair. The original plans do not denote the room functions but a later hand added in pencil a T-plan table in the largest room.

## The market

In 1818, John Albin described it as ‘a spacious, commodious market-place, excellently arranged in compartments for butchers’ shambles, fish and vegetable stalls, and other requisite accommodations, with a large pump on one side’.<sup>50</sup> Bullar’s contemporary guide gave an insight into the nature and origins of the produce: ‘Two hundred wagons loaded with different grain, have frequently been brought here on a market day; their contents amounting to fourteen or fifteen hundred quarters: a great part of which is manufactured on the island, into flour and malt’.<sup>51</sup>

Thomas Brettell’s later *Topographical and Historical Guide* of 1840 provided additional information on its character: ‘The Newport market is the great resort

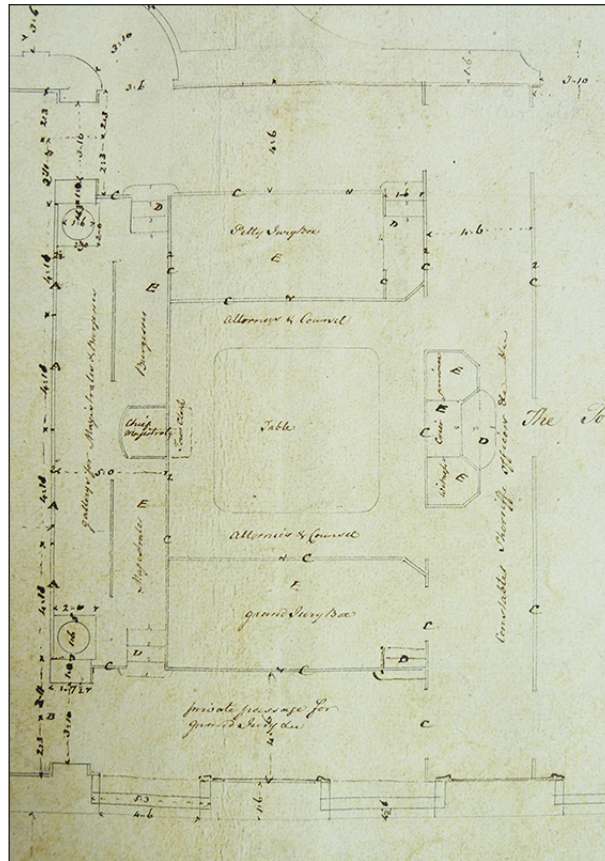


Figure 15: Detail of Nash's first-floor plan showing the layout of the moveable court furnishings. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash]

of the Island farmers, and much business is transacted here weekly, in corn and other agricultural produce; while the villages in the interior and back of the Island draw from it all their supplies.' On market days, the 'town is generally thronged by people from all parts of the Island. Provisions of every description are to be had in abundance, and the Market House possesses a pump of excellent water'.<sup>52</sup> By 1860, the market was held on Saturdays when the produce for sale included 'butter, eggs, poultry etc'.<sup>53</sup> The weekly market continued to be held in the Guildhall until at least 1888.<sup>54</sup>

## The courts

The main courts that used the building were the quarter sessions (held twice a year in 1818), the petty sessions (held weekly in 1818) and the borough court (held every three weeks in 1818).<sup>55</sup> But it was also used by other courts that met less frequently, including the court of record, the admiralty court and the court leets for Newport and Castlehold.<sup>56</sup> In addition, there were two ancient courts: the court of pie powder (also known as *pie poudre*), which ruled once a year on disputes at markets and fairs; and the *Curia Militum*, the 'knight's court' or 'knighten court', held by the island governor's deputy every three weeks. The latter's remit included any dispute under the value of 40 shillings on the whole island, except Newport. It was partly



superseded by the court of requests established in 1806 for the recovery of debts under £5, but both existed until 1847.<sup>57</sup>

These various courts all used the moveable court fittings (Figure 15). These included a raised platform containing the bench and a 'gallery' (probably a raised bench) behind it for the magistrates and burgesses, placed against the folding partition. At the centre of the bench was the seat of the chief magistrate, in front of whom sat the town clerk. To the left was the grand jury box, to the right was the petty jury box; both had seats for attorneys and counsels in front of them. The grand jury was formed of between twelve and twenty-three freeholders and heard the bills of indictment at the quarter sessions. The petty jury had the more familiar arrangement of twelve jurors. Between the two jury boxes stood a square table, a key part of court furnishings since the Middle Ages.<sup>58</sup> Behind the boxes for a witness, court crier and prisoner was seating for 'constables, sheriffs, officers etc' and then public seating. Such movable furnishings remained common in the early 19th century, particularly in multi-purpose buildings, although fixed court room furnishings were becoming more usual from the 18th century.<sup>59</sup>

## John Nash and the Isle of Wight

John Nash (1752-1835) had a long association with the Isle of Wight that predated his involvement with the Guildhall. In 1798, he bought a 30-acre estate in an elevated area on the east side of Cowes and towards the north side of the island facing the Solent.<sup>60</sup> There he built a house – or more precisely a marine villa – for himself, called East Cowes Castle. This building was added to in phases, in a variety of eclectic styles, the most characteristic part being the round tower added in the 1820s. The castellated tower resulted in its picturesque appearance that could be seen from afar, and most strikingly from the sea, as one approached the island from the mainland. This was to be Nash's country retreat for more than 35 years.

In 1802, Nash also bought the manor of Ningwood, on the north coast of the island about five miles west of Cowes, as well as a tiny hamlet called Hamstead, where he converted an old property into a shooting lodge, farmed some land, and built brick ovens and lime kilns there.<sup>61</sup> Neither the shooting lodge nor East Cowes Castle survives.

Nash was responsible for a number of other buildings on the island, including cottages and lodges on various estates around Cowes, a Gothic villa built in c. 1825 for Sir John Coxe Hippisley, and a villa at Bembridge called Hill Grove (or Hillgrove) for the Earl of Ducie.<sup>62</sup> He also designed several churches, including St James's Church at East Cowes and Bembridge Church (demolished), alterations to Whippingham Church and a new tower at St Mary's Church, West Cowes. Following a stroke in 1830 he retired to East Cowes Castle, where he died in 1835 and was buried in the churchyard of St James's Church.<sup>63</sup>

This association is perhaps what brought Nash to the attention of the Newport Corporation. After an eventful career, the architect had by 1813 established himself as one of the most successful architects of his time and had an official role with the

Crown Estate. When it came to designing the Newport Guildhall Nash was able to draw on his experience of similar building types. His previous work included an unexecuted county hall at Stafford of 1794 and market buildings at Abergavenny (1796, rebuilt 1826, demolished) and Chichester (1807, extant). He appears to have decided that a polite, decorous, Classical style would convey the correct message of democracy and sound civic administration and was thus best suited for an important public building in the island's major town. Otherwise, the compact, mixed-use building lacked much in the way of architectural pomp, ostentatious display and ornament. Perhaps for this reason John Summerson described it in his biography of Nash as 'a rather meagre building'.<sup>64</sup> But if Nash's brief was for simple elegance, dignity and practicality, then the building achieved its purpose. It also provided a useful model for the rather grander town hall and marketplace built in Ryde in 1829-31 to the designs of James Sanderson and, indeed, many examples of the building type that were erected across England throughout the 19th century.

## THE LATER HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

### Overview

Following the building's completion in 1816, there were a number of alterations and two extensions. In the early to mid-19th century mainly minor changes took place, including the installation of a bracket clock in 1843, the addition of a bell cupola in c. 1844, and the creation of two small rooms on the ground floor by 1862. In 1828, a balcony gallery in the Town Hall was proposed, although it is not clear if this was executed. It is possible that the town's fire station moved into part of the ground floor as early as the mid-19th century; it was certainly in the building by the end of the century. As part of this, the inner arcade was gradually infilled with windows and doors.

The first major addition was the clock tower at the south-west corner in 1887-8. Between the 1880s and the 1930s, further minor alterations were made. A new heating system was installed in c. 1888 and a ventilation system the following year. In 1909, part of the ground floor towards the High Street was converted to public lavatories, which were extended in 1929. In 1930, there were changes to the ground-floor spaces for an ambulance station and the fire station. Minor blast damage during the Second World War was repaired in the 1940s. In 1957-8, the public lavatories were removed and new windows and doors inserted in the inner arcade.

A major phase of extension and alterations took place in 1967-8, in conjunction with the building's conversion to law courts. It was extended to the east, there were changes to the roof and the interior was remodelled to accommodate three court rooms and detention cells. Most of the original cast-iron columns on the ground floor were removed and replaced by a new steel framework. A new corridor was created on the first floor and all chimneypieces and chimneystacks were removed. The external stonework was repaired and painted in the 1980s.

The courts moved out in 1994, prompting another phase of alterations to convert the building to the Museum of Island History and council offices, which was completed in 1996. All court fittings were removed and the ground-floor spaces reconfigured. Two door openings were created in the extension's party wall to provide access to the adjoining property which was temporarily in council use. Since 1996, there have been only minor changes.

The shifts in usage that the building has undergone since the 1950s have been shaped by local government reorganisation in the Isle of Wight and by functional redundancy. The court use of the Guildhall was expanding even before its conversion to law courts, possibly displacing some municipal functions, and by 1966 Newport Borough Council had at least one additional office at 39 Quay Street.<sup>65</sup> After the sale of the Guildhall, the council held their meetings in the council chamber of the nearby County Hall in the High Street, a building of 1938 which was extended in 1969.<sup>66</sup> By 1971, there were three municipal offices: the town clerk's department at 17 Quay Street, the borough engineer's department at Quay House, Newport Quay, and all other departments at 39 Quay Street.<sup>67</sup> In 1974 Newport was absorbed into

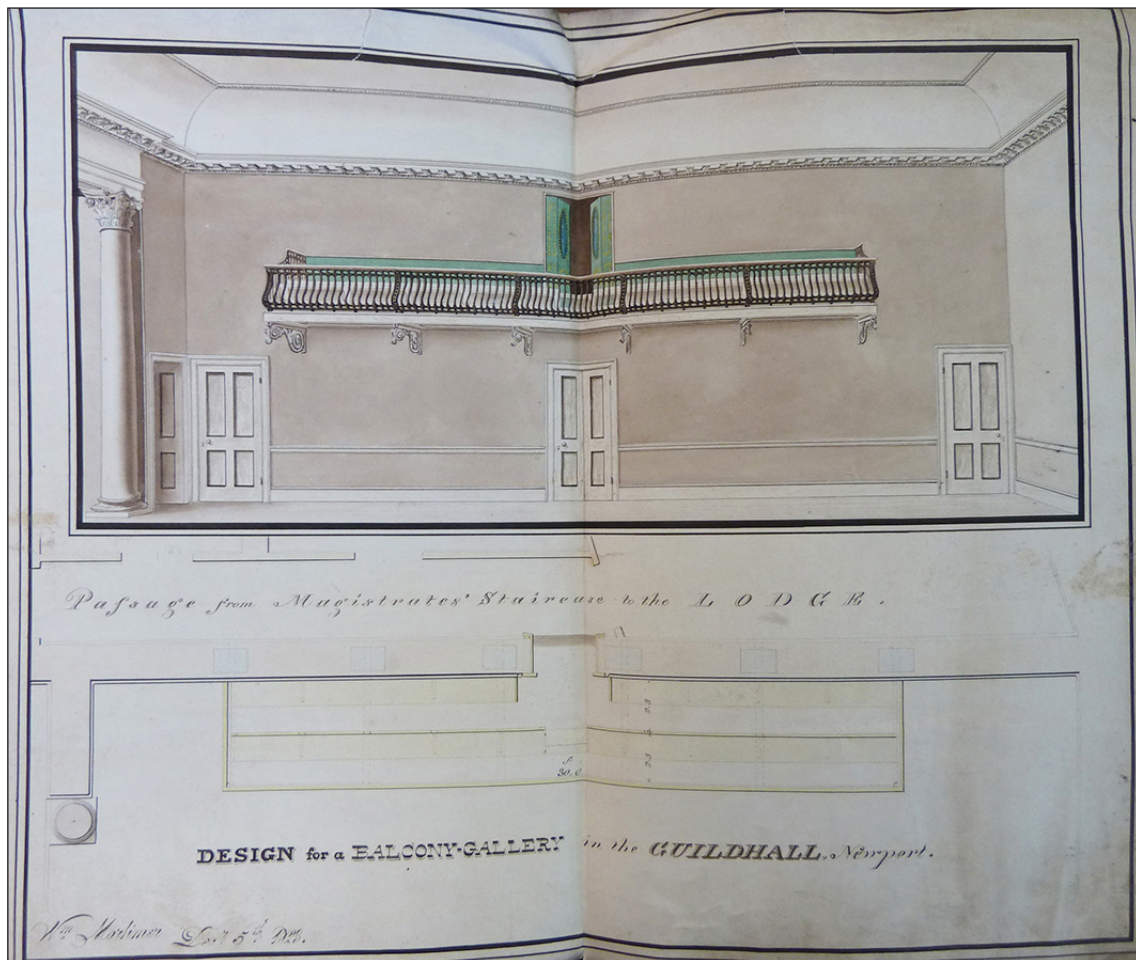


Figure 16: Plan and elevation of a proposed balcony-gallery, William Mortimer, 5 December 1823. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/1823]

a larger administrative unit, Medina Borough Council, which inherited other civic buildings, including Ryde Town Hall and Northwood House at Cowes, a former country house which had been gifted to Cowes Urban District Council in 1929. A further reorganisation took place in 1995 when the lower tier of local government was entirely replaced by the Isle of Wight Council, a unitary level authority and successor to the Isle of Wight County Council. This is still based at the County Hall in Newport.

### Minor alterations, 1820s-80s

In the decades following the completion of the building, only relatively minor changes were made, such as the introduction of gas lighting in 1821.<sup>68</sup> In 1823, William Mortimer prepared drawings for a balcony gallery in the Town Hall to be accessed from the second floor (Figure 16).<sup>69</sup> These contain a rare depiction of the folding partition in an open position and describe the east room on the second-floor as the 'Lodge', possibly due to its use as a meeting room by the town's Freemasons.

However, it is not clear if this gallery was ever constructed although there is evidence that such a feature may have existed. A watercolour of 1897 shows a gallery in the



Figure 17: The Town Hall room, with an arrow pointing out the horizontal feature which may relate to a former balcony or gallery in this room.

same position but supported on columns, rather than the cast-iron brackets shown in Mortimer's drawing (see Figure 21). And the location of Mortimer's proposed gallery does approximately correspond with a horizontal feature in the north wall of the room (Figure 17). There is also a recess in a second-floor office which could have allowed for a doorway, although this would not have been in the central position indicated in Mortimer's drawing.

In 1828, the building was repainted and underwent minor repairs, including to the cracked ceiling cove in the Council Chamber.<sup>70</sup> In the following decade, it was used for the annual Archers' Ball of the Carisbrooke Archery Society, held in August. They made cosmetic changes; for example, the bills for 1834 show that the Society paid compensation for using the building for the ball and the costs for alterations and cleaning of the Town Hall, including for 'mending walls' and 'painting chandeliers green.'<sup>71</sup>

More significantly, in 1843 a bracket clock was purchased from the clockmaker John Moore & Sons of Clerkenwell at a cost of £300.<sup>72</sup> This was installed at the south-west corner of the building, so it was visible from along the High Street (Figure 18). It is first shown in a dated print of 1844 engraved by P. Brannon and published by G. Brannon.<sup>73</sup>



Figure 18: A photograph dating from before 1887, showing the Guildhall with the bracket clock and the bell cupola. [Isle of Wight Record Office, NPT004]

A cupola for a small bell was erected on the same corner as the clock (*see* Figure 18). This was in situ by the time of the visit of the famous Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi to the island in April 1864.<sup>74</sup> But it may have been added at the same time as the clock as it seems likely that the two functioned in conjunction with one another. By the 1880s, two bells sounded the full and quarter hours and this may have been the original arrangement. But the bells may also have served other purposes at various times, such as a watch bell or fire bell. For example, a newspaper article of 1887 referred to the ‘fire bell’ and it is possible that a bell also served that purpose.<sup>75</sup>

The necessity for a fire bell might have been related to the relocation of the town’s fire station to the Guildhall. This had taken place by the late 19th century although it may have happened as early as the 1840s.<sup>76</sup> The fire engine was moved from Saints Thomas’s Church, where it had been kept at the west end of the north aisle, into the ground-floor market space. The necessary adaptations – primarily partitions for an assembly room, an engine room, space for the hose reel and a workshop with a bench – were added in pencil at some date to Nash’s original drawings. Although this new function encroached on the market space, the weekly market continued to be held in the building into the 1880s.<sup>77</sup>

In 1857, the corporation accepted Mr T.W. Fleming’s gift of a plaster statue of Sir Thomas Fleming (c. 1544-1613), who had been born in Newport and was one of the judges who tried Guy Fawkes and later became Lord Chief Justice.<sup>78</sup> This was

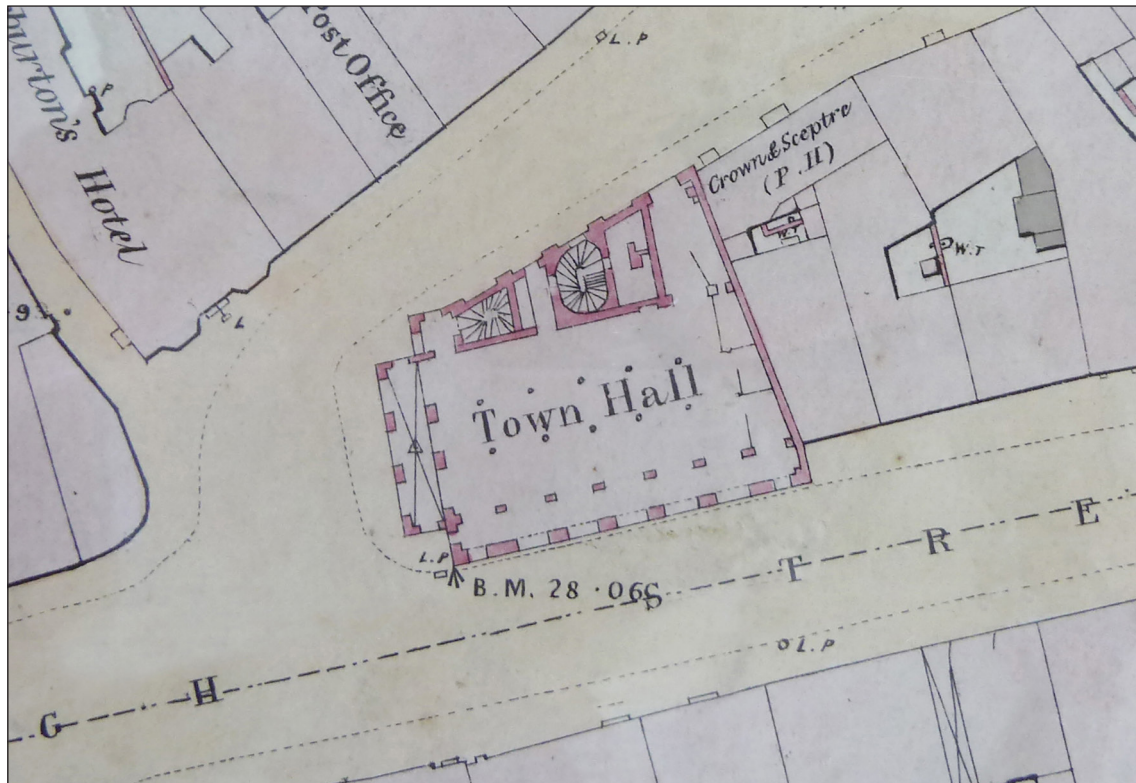


Figure 19: The ground-floor plan of the Guildhall on the 1862 OS town plan. [Reproduced from the 1862 Ordnance Survey town plan held by the Isle of Wight Record Office]

installed in the Town Hall where it remained until 1949.<sup>79</sup> The statue's current location is unknown.<sup>80</sup>

By 1862, the date of the Ordnance Survey town plan, two small rooms had been created to the east of the main staircase (Figure 19). The flimsier partitions shown along the east wall of the market hall were probably related to the market stalls.

In October 1888, the Council requested estimates for installing a hot water heating system in the Guildhall. Two heating engineers, F.V.B. Waterworth of Ventnor and G.N. Haden & Sons of Trowbridge, quoted for the work, which included the installation of ornamental gratings.<sup>81</sup> (It is not known which firm was ultimately responsible.)

### The Jubilee clock tower, 1887-88

The first major addition to the building was the Jubilee clock tower. This commemorated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, which was marked by various state festivities between 20 and 22 June 1887. In January that year, a public meeting was held at the Guildhall to consider how the event was to be celebrated and commemorated in Newport.<sup>82</sup> Councillor Salter proposed that a permanent memorial in form of a clock tower with four illuminated dials be added to the Guildhall and presented sketches by the local architect Robert Braxton Perres. Emphasising the eminent practicality of the addition, Salter observed that: 'Mr Perres [sic] had had possession of the plans of Mr Nash ... and he informed them that in the south-west



Figure 20: The south-west corner, showing the skin of Bath stone which was applied as part of the 1887-8 clock tower.

corner, as well as in the north-west corner, there was provision made, as he would suggest, for something of this kind, as the walls there were carried up 18 inches thick in solid masonry, so that there was no doubt as to the stability of the angle and its ability to bear the weight which this tower would impose upon it'.<sup>83</sup> It was estimated that the clock tower would cost about £350, to which the Corporation would contribute £100.

From the beginning, there was some criticism as the clock tower would upset the symmetry of the original building. In April 1887, the eminent architect Richard Phené Spiers FSA (1838-1916) wrote to the Permanent Jubilee Memorial Committee in support of Perres's design which he thought would be: 'a distinct advantage both in the general grouping of the building as seen from the High-street, and as regards its skyline'.<sup>84</sup> He advised against building two towers for symmetry, because the suggested position on the south-west corner needed some kind of emphasis and also because there were precedents in ancient Greek architecture for asymmetry. He recommended that the existing walls of the south-west corner be refaced to bring the entire tower into a visual unity (Figure 20).<sup>85</sup>

Further expert support came from Francis Newman, the architect and surveyor of Ryde, who confirmed that the building would be able to support the weight of the new clock tower.<sup>86</sup> To win over the final doubters, photographs of the Guildhall by a Mr Alderslade, which depicted a mock-up of the proposed tower, were exhibited in





Figure 21: Watercolour by W. D. Almond of 1897 showing the annual meeting of the county council in the large west room of the Guildhall. [Reproduced by the kind permission of the Isle of Wight Heritage Service, IWCMS:1995.638]

various shops in the town.<sup>87</sup> The foundation stone was laid on 28 June 1887, as the culmination of the jubilee events that had been held in Newport that day.<sup>88</sup> The clock tower was completed on 20 July 1888, when the top-stone was placed in position.<sup>89</sup> The builder was Thomas Jenkins.<sup>90</sup>

The clock mechanism was that of the 1843 clock, which was adapted by the original makers, Messrs Moore & Sons, who also supplied the new dials.<sup>91</sup> A description in the local newspaper published at the time of the foundation stone laying had suggested that the cupola would contain bells but in the event there was only room for one bell and the quarter strike of the clock was removed.<sup>92</sup>

The architect Robert Braxton Perres (1843-1915) received the commission through his friend, the mayor Sir Francis Pittis.<sup>93</sup> But it was not a lucrative one; as Pittis recounted at a dinner to mark the completion of the tower, he had told the architect 'that he would not get a penny for what he did, his only reward being in the fact, if his designs were accepted, that he would establish his name and have it handed down to posterity'.<sup>94</sup> Born at Newport, Perres had served his articles with James Woodman of Brighton and worked as assistant to Edward Augustus Gruning. He set up in private practice in 1875 and became an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1881 but his output does not appear to have been substantial and he may have been a 'gentleman architect' who did not need to work regularly.<sup>95</sup>

## Minor alterations, 1890s-1930s

In 1889, the Council's Finance Committee considered the need for the cleaning, painting and ventilating of the interior and for providing a fire-proof repository for the muniments.<sup>96</sup> This was probably because Nash's strong room now housed the clock-tower stair although this may have already become insufficient for the council's needs. The building's renovation was also prompted by administrative change. On 1 April 1890 a new county council came into being and met quarterly at the Guildhall until 1904.<sup>97</sup> A watercolour shows an early county council meeting in March 1897 in the first-floor Town Hall rather than the smaller Council Chamber (Figure 21). This image suggests that some of the original court seating may have been still in situ, including the tall canopy over the chief magistrate's seat, seemingly amplified by further benches in the eastern part of the room. The partition between the rooms, still described as moveable in 1879<sup>98</sup>, may have been replaced by a more permanent wall by the date of the painting as it now carried the Newport coat of arms under the entablature between the columns.

In 1895, some minor repairs were undertaken to the east end of the building and around the ground-floor arches and in June the Finance Committee debated the cost of two tenders for painting and cementing the exterior.<sup>99</sup> In 1907, John T. Locke undertook some painting and decorating in the Council Chamber.<sup>100</sup> Two years later, public conveniences were constructed on part of the ground floor.<sup>101</sup> These were located just behind the High Street frontage, with the men's lavatories to the west and the ladies' to the east and were accessed from the High Street via external doors set into the former inner arcade.<sup>102</sup>

In 1921, Locke once again undertook 'painting works at the Council Chamber and Committee Room'.<sup>103</sup> In late 1921 or early 1922, a small fire on the ground floor caused some damage. According to the repair specifications of 16 January 1922, the damage was mainly to the floor of the Council Chamber, the ceiling of the fire station and the ceiling of the gents' lavatory.<sup>104</sup>

Other small-scale repairs and alterations followed, and the interior was regularly repainted.<sup>105</sup> By 1927, a large flagstaff had been fixed to the pediment (Figure 22); these fixings have subsequently been replaced. In 1929, the ladies' lavatories were extended.<sup>106</sup> In 1930, the fire station, formerly at the west of the building, swapped spaces with an ambulance station, which by then occupied the north-east corner of the former market hall.<sup>107</sup> By that date most of the ground floor had been subdivided or repurposed, with public lavatories along the south wall, small stores along the east wall, and the fire and ambulance stations occupying the remainder of the space. In 1937, the first-floor town sergeant's room, which occupied the space between the two staircases on the first floor, was reduced in size, in order to create a lobby which connected the two landings.<sup>108</sup>



Figure 22: Detail from a photograph taken in September 1927. [WSA01/01/02179]

### War damage and post-war repairs

On 7 April 1943 Newport town centre was bombed but the Guildhall only suffered blast damage. The Council Minutes detailed the necessary ‘first aid repairs’, including repairs to the windows in the Council Chamber and two of the clock faces on the tower.<sup>109</sup> Some repairs were underway by the beginning of June and a month later the Town Hall was back in use.<sup>110</sup>

Photographs taken by the archaeologist O. G. S. Crawford for the National Buildings Record in the winter of 1943-4 show the building with a number of boarded-up sash windows and two partly bricked-up arches, possibly the result of the damage as well as wartime adaptations (Figures 23 and 24). They also show more serious bomb damage to the adjacent property.

In the autumn of 1943, a second phase of repairs commenced, including the plastering of the exterior and interior, and the coating of new woodwork with priming.<sup>111</sup> By February 1944, repairs to the balcony had commenced.<sup>112</sup> During these repairs the two scagliola columns in the Town Hall room were reportedly



Figure 23: The Guildhall and 136 High Street in a photograph taken by O. G. S. Crawford in the winter of 1943-4. [AA53/04334]

painted black<sup>113</sup> and an 'enrichment moulding' from the Town Hall was placed into storage.<sup>114</sup>

A specification for work in 1949 gives an indication of the war-time use of various rooms in the Guildhall.<sup>115</sup> On the second floor there was a Red Cross Room, the main store room and the small court room; on the first floor were the Court Room (i.e. the Town Hall), the Council Chamber, and the mayor's parlour (the original town clerk's office); and on the ground floor the 'Old Ambulance Station'. By this date, one entrance and stair were for use by the public, another for the justices.

The Guildhall underwent minor changes and refurbishment in 1949.<sup>116</sup> The works included the rendering of the exterior, repairs to the joinery (including the windows),



Figure 24: The Guildhall in a photograph taken by O. G. S. Crawford in the winter of 1943-4. [AA53/04353]

a new door to the Town Hall, replacing two lengths of missing mouldings in the Town Hall ceiling, and a general repainting of the interior. The windows in the two main first-floor rooms which had been glazed using sheet glass – presumably due to the war-time repairs – were reglazed with ‘¼” British Polished Plate of ‘Best’ quality’.<sup>117</sup> New, replacement windows were inserted in the inner ground-floor arcade and in two circular windows on the first floor: ‘The new windows on the ground floor are to be glazed with ‘Arctic’ glass, and the new circular windows on the first floor with 18oz sheet glass of ‘Seconds’ quality’.<sup>118</sup>

Also in 1949 the firm of the eminent architect Sir Albert Richardson and his son-in-law Eric Houfe was approached in connection with the design of curtain pelmets in the two main first-floor rooms.<sup>119</sup> They provided a design and in June 1950 Bentalls Ltd supplied and fitted curtains and pelmets.<sup>120</sup>

The watercolours give an indication of the rooms at this date although this may be their intended rather than actual appearance. They show the Council Chamber unfurnished with a large chimneypiece in the north wall and large double doors in place of the original partition to the adjacent room (Figure 25). In the Town Hall the



Figure 25: Watercolour by Richardson & Houfe, April 1949, showing the Council Chamber. [Reproduced by the kind permission of the Isle of Wight Heritage Service, IWCMS: 1995.311]

bench seating with a tall canopy is depicted as having been relocated to the east wall and would therefore have obscured the original chimneypiece (Figure 26).

### Alterations of the 1950s

The Guildhall was added to the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic significance in October 1953, at Grade II\*, an indication of how high the importance of the building was considered to be.

In November 1957, planning permission was granted for alterations to the ground floor, designed by the architect Marshall Sisson.<sup>121</sup> It seems likely that these were to satisfy ‘the growing needs of [the] Quarter Sessions’, as mentioned in a newspaper report of 1968.<sup>122</sup> The public toilets and various internal partitions were removed and the ground floor remodelled with a full-width entrance hall to the west, decorated with four hollow columns of fibrous plaster, set around four of the original cast-iron columns. The eastern half of the ground floor was partitioned to form smaller spaces, including an interviewing room, an office for the town sergeant and cloakrooms with lavatories. The two smaller rooms east of the main staircase apparently became a kitchen and as a room for ‘waiting & witnesses’.

Drawings of the upper floors in 1957 show the first floor to be essentially unaltered. The Town Hall was now referred to as the Guildhall and the former town clerk’s

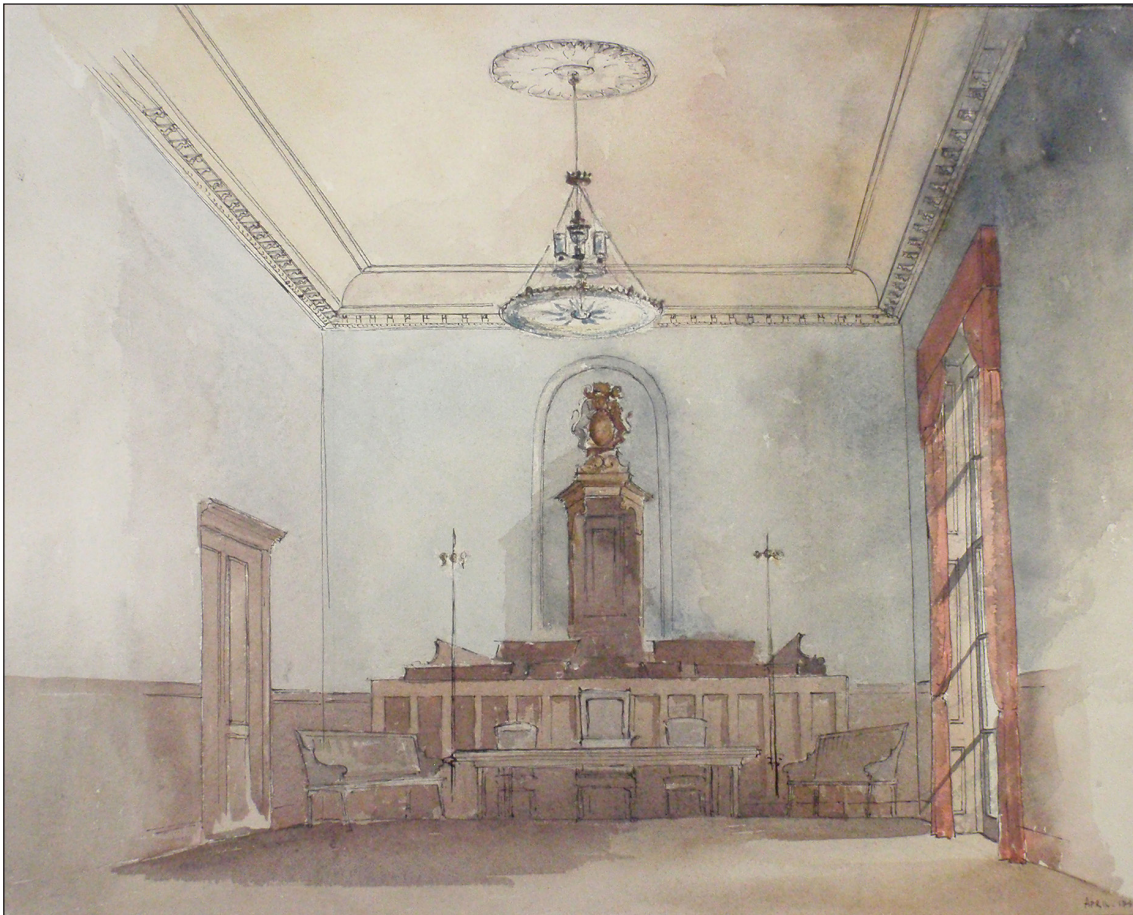


Figure 26: Watercolour by Richardson & Houfe, April 1949, showing the Town Hall. [Reproduced by the kind permission of the Isle of Wight Heritage Service, IWCMS 1995.310]

office remained the mayor's parlour. On the second floor, changes were proposed to the rooms. The large room to the east was subdivided to create a clerk's office and a jury room, and the small office to the west was identified as the location of a 'future passenger lift'. In the event, a lift was first installed in the 1960s and in a different location.

Externally, there were a number of small-scale changes to the north and south elevations at ground-floor level. Towards Quay Street, a new door was inserted in the first bay from the east, and new windows replaced former doors in the second and fourth bay from the east. Towards the High Street, four new windows were inserted in the inner arcade, one arch in the third bay from the west was completely blocked, and a new side entrance inserted in the second bay from the east, reusing an external door from elsewhere in the building. The drawings also show that there were several wrought-iron gates in the open arches, one of which is shown in a photograph of 1943-4 (see Figure 24).<sup>123</sup>

## Conversion to a court building: extension and alteration, 1967-8

By the 1960s, the island's crown, magistrates' and county courts were looking for larger premises. Newport Borough Council considered leasing or selling the Guildhall to the County Council, together with an adjacent site which could be used for an extension and the possibility of the sale of the building to the County Council was first publicly mentioned in September 1966.<sup>124</sup> There was some outrage in the local press at the prospect of the loss of the building as a public amenity with its 'old charters, maces, archives and pictures', its large rooms for public meetings and the balcony for public announcements.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, the Borough Council decided to sell the Guildhall and the adjacent site of 136 High Street and 26 Quay Street for £30,000 the following year.<sup>126</sup> The chief considerations in favour of the sale were the challenge of maintaining the building without the 'fees from justice' and the disproportionate cost of building new law courts.<sup>127</sup>

Planning permission for the extension to the listed building was quickly granted, in May 1967.<sup>128</sup> Thereafter, work proceeded quite quickly and the extended and modified building was handed over on 20 September 1968 almost, but not entirely, complete.<sup>129</sup> It was opened the following day by the Rt. Hon. The Lord Denning, P.C., Master of the Rolls.<sup>130</sup> The overall cost was reported to be £60,000, two thirds of which were paid by the Home Office.<sup>131</sup> The plans for the alterations and extension were developed by the County Architect, Frederick Harry Booth (1910-2002). The architect in charge of the works was N.W. Ward and the clerk of works K. Humber.<sup>132</sup> The main contractors were Messrs James Ball & Sons Ltd of Cowes.<sup>133</sup>

### Alterations to the Guildhall

These works of conversion and adaptation represented the most significant alterations to the interior since its construction and affected all the floors of the building. A bill of quantities of January 1967 described them in the following terms, starting with the ground floor: 'Demolitions of [eight] columns [on the ground floor], internal walls, partitions etc., and the erection of a new steel frame to support [the] first floor where [the] columns [are to be] removed. New internal partitions, doors and windows, spiral staircase from ground to first floor [for moving prisoners from the cells to the first-floor court rooms], internal and external decorations, and ancillary services'.<sup>134</sup> A new court room and detention cells were inserted on the ground floor. As part of the work all remaining chimneypieces were removed.<sup>135</sup> And a 'revolutionary new damp proofing system' was installed, using copper strips embedded in the walls to repel moisture.<sup>136</sup> Historically, the Guildhall had only had one royal coat of arms (shown in the 1897 watercolour, *see* Figure 21) so additional ones for the new court rooms were obtained from Ryde Town Hall and the Royal Brewery in Newport.<sup>137</sup>

On the ground floor, new partitions were inserted within the former entrance hall to create a barristers' robing room, a witnesses' waiting room, an interview room, and toilets (Figure 27). In this part of the building, four original cast-iron columns were left in situ. In the larger room occupying the eastern five window bays, the insertion of the steel frame allowed for the eight columns to be removed. The space



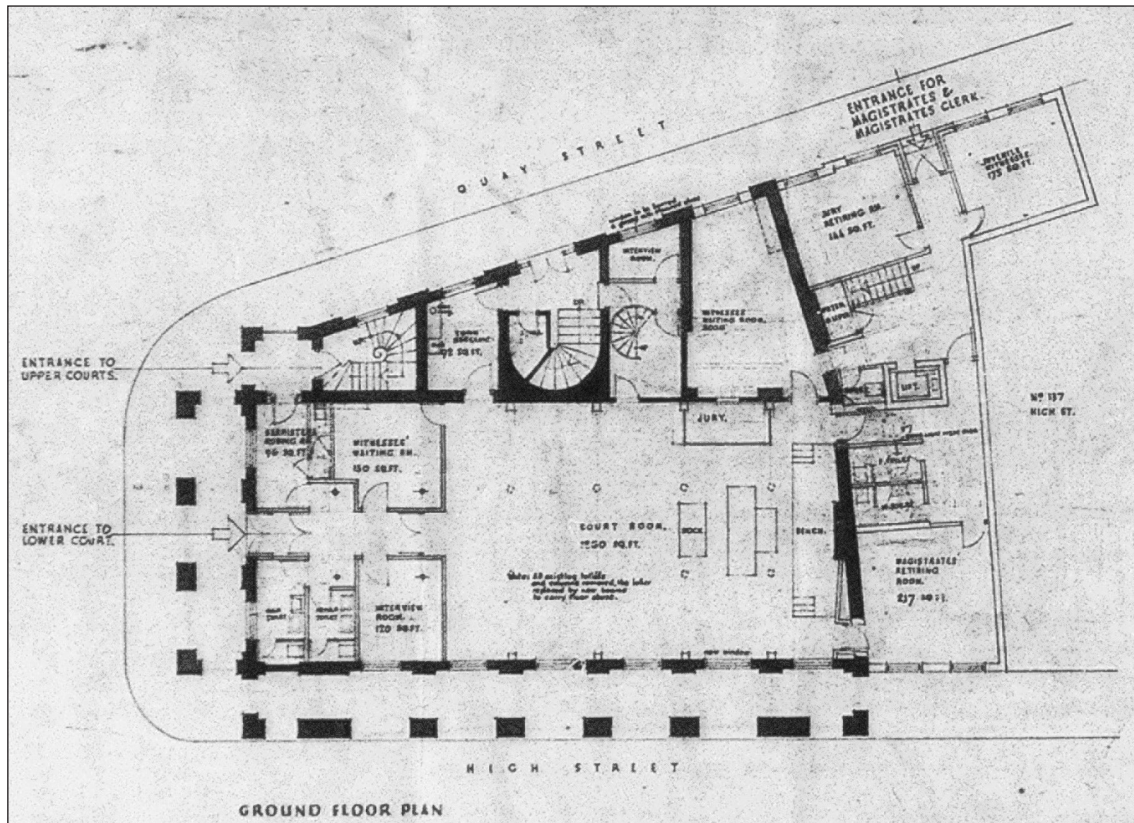


Figure 27: Ground floor plan of December 1966 by F. H. Booth, the county architect. [Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/A]

was remodelled as a court room, with the bench against the east wall and seating for the jury against the north wall. The walls were embellished with the four hollow fibrous plaster columns from the entrance hall which were ‘halved lengthwise and used as decorative supports’ (Figure 28).<sup>138</sup> The smaller rooms along the Quay Street frontage were used (from west to east) as the town sergeant’s office, an interview room, and a space with a spiral staircase to bring defendants to the upper court rooms. In plans produced in 1966, the room in the north-east corner had been designated as a waiting room for witnesses. However, as built this became the site of four detention cells, one of them with a WC. The entrance for the ground-floor court was in the west elevation, while the entrance to the courts on the upper floor was in the north-west corner leading to the smaller, west staircase.

On the first floor, the two main rooms were converted to court rooms and the partition between them replaced with a new, sound-proof partition (Figure 29). In the former Town Hall the 1949 watercolour by Richardson & Houfe suggests that the intention had been to move the court furnishings to the east wall, although they are not shown in this location in 1957 so the relocation may have taken place after this or in 1967-8. (The location of the bench corresponds with a change in flooring which is still visible in front of the east wall.) The two porphyry scagliola columns were dismantled, restored and refixed by Mr A. Philips of Messrs Bellman, Ivey, Carter & Co. of London, the great-great-grandson of the original craftsman who made the columns for Nash.<sup>139</sup> A new corridor to the north was carved out from the smaller



Figure 28: The fibrous plaster columns of 1957-8 in their positions of 1967-8. (The Newport coat of arms is part of the Museum collections and has no historic link to the Guildhall.)

rooms and the stair landing, and the reduced room between the staircases became a magistrates' retiring room. The 1966 plans show four detention cells in the room to the east of the main staircase but their location was moved to the ground floor at a later stage.

On the top floor, the space was reconfigured to create a small records office to the east of the smaller staircase, and one large office (Figure 30). Some work was carried out on the roof. The battens were replaced, the chimneystacks and existing ridge vents removed and all timbers in the roof space were sprayed with timber preservative.<sup>140</sup> A comparison of aerial photographs of 1962 and 1973 shows that two additional dormer vents were installed on the main pitched roof (Figure 31). And it seems likely that the slates of the main roof were replaced with the current asbestos-cement artificial tiles at the same time.

### The extension

The L-shaped eastern extension was built on the site of 136 High Street, which provided a 35-foot frontage, and 26 Quay Street, formerly the Crown & Sceptre pub, which had a 15-foot frontage. Following wartime bomb damage the site had been cleared before their acquisition by the Council in the early 1960s.<sup>141</sup>

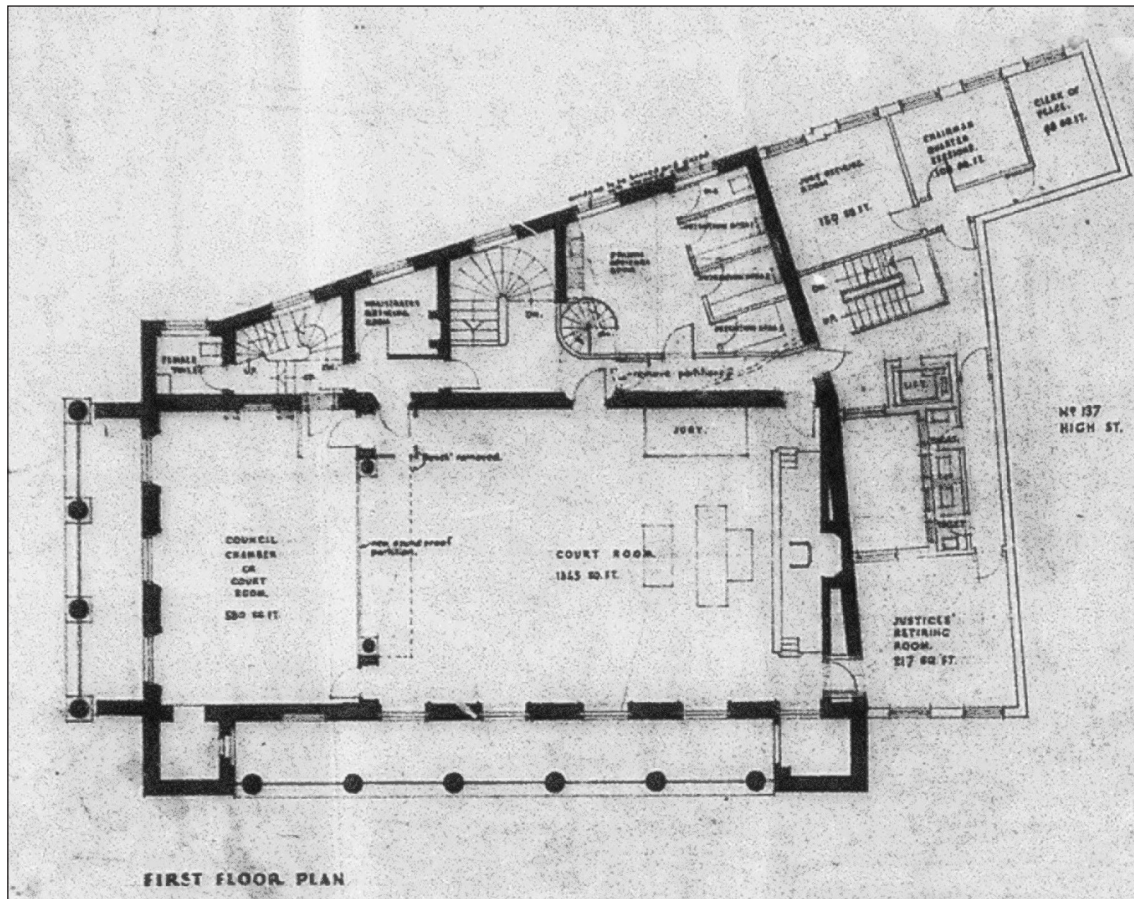


Figure 29: First-floor plan of December 1966 by F.H. Booth, the county architect. [Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/A]

The sympathetically styled extension was described in the bill of quantities as follows: 'A three storey building of strip and beam foundations, load bearing brick walls, concrete ground floor, reinforced concrete first and second floors, part reinforced concrete and part timber joist and Thermacoust flat roofs, plastered walls, plastered or suspended ceilings, asphalt roofing, PVC floor tiling, double hung sash windows, reinforced concrete staircase and a passenger lift serving three floors, and ancillary services'.<sup>142</sup> Because of the significance of the building Booth consulted the Royal Fine Art Commission on the design for the extension.<sup>143</sup> In 1968, the *Isle of Wight County Press* commended the careful design: 'Materials, window sizes and general design match the old Guildhall in detail and it is difficult to appreciate that the extension is not a part of the 150-year-old original'.<sup>144</sup>

The extension contained a jury retiring room, a room for juvenile witnesses, and the magistrates' retiring room on the ground floor. An entrance for the magistrates and the magistrates' clerk was provided in the north elevation on Quay Street. At first-floor level it housed the justices' retiring room in the southern half and to the north (from west to east) the jury retiring room, the office of the chairman of the Quarter Sessions, and the office of the clerk of the peace. The second floor contained an interview room and more offices.

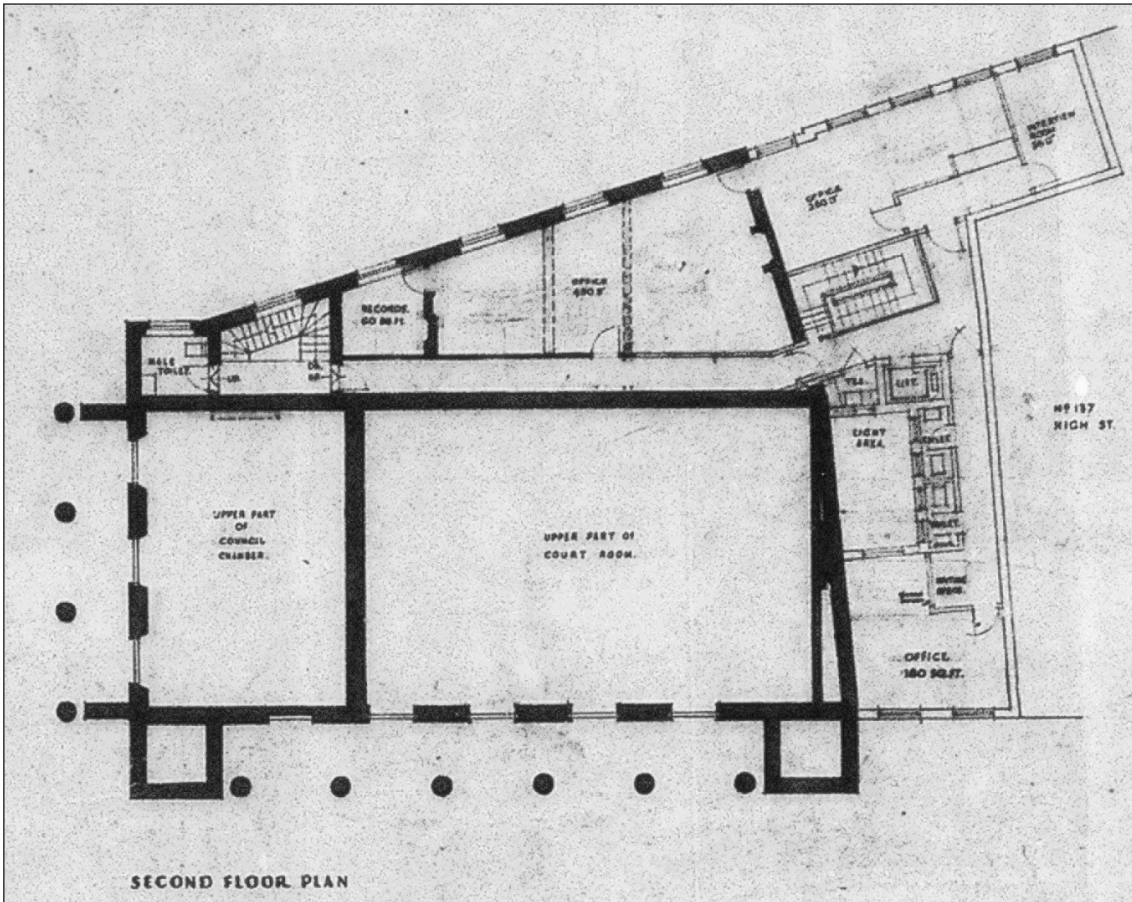


Figure 30: Second-floor plan of December 1966 by F.H. Booth, the county architect. [Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/A]



Figure 31: A comparison of aerial photographs taken in 1962 (left) and 1973 (right). [Historic England Archive (RAF photography), 1962-Jul-02 RAF/543/1803/f21/0051; Historic England Archive, 1973-April-25 MAL/73019/v/196]

## Minor alterations, 1970s-80s

In the early 1980s, the exterior of the Guildhall was restored in two phases: the repair of damaged stonework on the south and west sides of the building was completed in 1983 at a cost of £23,500. This was followed by the restoration of the north elevation towards Quay Street for £6,000.<sup>145</sup> This work included the painting of the stonework in light green.<sup>146</sup> In late 1983, the building was floodlit for the first time, with sponsorship from the Royal Institute of British Architects whose 150th anniversary took place that year.<sup>147</sup> In 1985, additional accommodation for administrative court staff was provided in the building, although further details are not known.<sup>148</sup>

## Conversion to a museum, 1995-6

The building's life as a courthouse was relatively short, lasting until 1994. In 1987, the first plans had been made for the construction of a new magistrates' court at the north end of Quay Street.<sup>149</sup> This was built in 1993-4 enabling the removal of the courts.<sup>150</sup> Two proposals for the reuse of the Guildhall were submitted in 1994 by Rainey Petrie Design of Newport. The first, in March of that year, was for the change of use of the first floor to provide temporary council meeting rooms and of the second floor as offices for the 'Shadow Unitary Authority'.<sup>151</sup> This was the Isle of Wight Council which was formed on 1 April 1995. This application was followed in April 1994 by a second application to convert the ground and first floors to a museum.<sup>152</sup> Both applications were granted but the museum proposal prevailed and a listed building consent application was submitted in October 1994 for the conversion. This received consent in January 1995.<sup>153</sup> The alterations to the ground floor were fully implemented but not all of the proposed changes to the upper floors were carried out.<sup>154</sup> The remodelled building reopened in August 1996 as the Museum of Island History, with some rooms in council use.

The alterations of 1995-6 were said to cost £340,000.<sup>155</sup> They included the removal of most of the court fittings, restoration of some of the interiors and creation of ground-floor exhibition spaces.<sup>156</sup> The three royal coats of arms were moved to the new court building. Externally, new lettering on the pediment was proposed, to spell 'Museum', but this may never have been executed as it currently has the inscription 'The Guildhall'. The two remaining gates in the arches of the north-west corner were removed.

In the former market hall area, the existing partitions were removed and replaced with a new partition inserted one bay further to the east to form two main spaces, an entrance hall and an exhibition room. The intention appears to have been to give the entrance hall a circular plaster ceiling over the admissions desk, giving the impression that it was supported by the remaining original cast-iron columns. It is not clear if this was executed, as the current arrangement is different. A visitor's toilet was partitioned off from the entrance hall. In the extension, the former magistrates' retiring room and the toilets just to the north were combined into another exhibition room, with an additional steel beam in the ceiling to support the rooms above.<sup>157</sup> The spiral staircase was removed but the detention cells were retained.

On the first floor in the main rooms of the Guildhall the two door openings to either side of the partition were blocked up and a new door created in the centre of the partition, which was probably replaced at the same time. In late 1995 and early 1996, the conservation department of the Victoria & Albert Museum took paint samples of the Town Hall, which revealed a sequence of 16 layers.<sup>158</sup> This was intended to inform the redecoration of the main first-floor rooms as the second phase of the museum conversion which would have brought these into use as exhibition spaces. Stephen Calloway FSA was commissioned to prepare a redecoration scheme but it was never executed because of concerns over floor loads.<sup>159</sup> Instead, the two rooms were used for museum and archive storage.

On the first floor, two door openings were made in the party wall between the 1960s extension and the neighbouring building in Quay Street, where rooms were temporarily leased for council use.<sup>160</sup> (These openings were blocked again about ten years ago.<sup>161</sup>) On the second floor, the partitions in the offices facing Quay Street were altered, creating three spaces and a corridor which led to the easternmost office.

In 2001, there were proposals to strengthen the floors of the Town Hall and Council Chamber but these remained unexecuted.<sup>162</sup> In a more recent minor alteration a partition has been removed from the second-floor office in the extension. Most of the smaller rooms on the upper floors of the building are currently used as offices for museum and heritage staff.

## PHASING PLANS

The following phasing plans are based on historic plans and our current understanding of the building's evolution. They are intended to be read in conjunction with the next chapter.



Figure 32: Ground-floor plan showing the different phases of the building. [Plan based on the asset management floor plan of the Isle of Wight Council's Corporate and Facilities Management team]



Figures 33 and 34: Plans of the first (above) and second floors, showing the different phases of the building. [Plans based on the asset management floor plans of the Isle of Wight Council's Corporate and Facilities Management team]



## SURVIVAL OF HISTORIC FABRIC

The following account focuses on the surviving historic fabric and features of the Guildhall and is not a full description of every space, although the dates of the main alterations are given where known.

### Exterior

The exterior of the original building largely survives. The outer openings of the ground-floor arcade remain open but the inner openings to the former market hall were incrementally infilled with windows and doors during the late 19th and early 20th century although this infill appears to have been largely replaced in the 1950s. On the north elevation most of the current ground-floor sash windows date from the 1950s. The original doorway to the principal stair survives although the door does not appear to be original. Similarly, the door to the secondary stair, located inside the north-west corner, also appears to have been replaced at some date.

The render over the brickwork on the north, south and west elevations has been replaced and renewed several times. The original cast-iron railings between the columns on the west and south elevations survive. Some of the first-floor sash windows suffered war damage in 1943 and have been sympathetically repaired and reglazed. Most of the other windows on the upper floors appear to be substantially original. The stone-faced Jubilee Tower of 1887-8 retains the original bell, clock mechanism and clock faces, with some modern reinforcements.

Three original lead hoppers of an oblong, moulded design survive: one in Quay Street at the junction of the original building and the extension; another to the left of the west portico; and the third in the return of the High Street elevation, where the original building and the extension meet (Figure 35). In the latter the upper parts of the lead downpipe appear to be original, as they are of sections and not cast in one piece. A closer inspection of the other two downpipes would confirm if the lead pipe survives there too. The circular hopper and downpipe between the clock tower and the colonnade appear to be Victorian additions.

### Roof and roof structure

The structure of the main pitched roof was not accessible and therefore has not been inspected but it may be substantially original. What is known is that in 1967-8, the roof battens were replaced, all the chimneystacks removed, the existing ridge vents removed, two additional dormered vents installed, and the main pitched roof re-covered in asbestos-cement tiles. However, the small, hipped roof towards Quay Street is still covered with slate. The flat roof to its west is covered in lead, which might be the original covering.



Figure 35: The historic lead hopper and lead downpipe in the angle of the High Street elevation.  
[Photograph by Oxley Conservation Ltd]

## Interior

### Ground floor

The ground floor has been much altered over time. Originally, this was a rectangular market hall, with a smaller, more irregularly shaped market spaces on the north side, separated by two stair compartments. These spaces were open to the street, with ground-floor arcades on the west and south side and three open arches to the north. The main hall was supported by twelve cast-iron columns, eight of which were removed in 1967-8 and replaced by a steel frame. But four columns are said to survive within later square pillars in the reception area. The eight half-columns in the main exhibition space date from 1957-8 and were originally in the entrance hall (see Figure 28). The internal layout of the former market hall dates from the 1990s but the arrangement of the rooms to the north is the result of alterations in the mid-19th century and the 1960s. The main remnant of the building's use as a courthouse between 1968 and 1994 are the four detention cells in the north-east corner of the original building (Figure 36).



Figure 36: The four detention cells of 1967-8 on the ground floor.



Figure 37: The principal staircase photographed from the first floor looking down (left); and the smaller staircase, looking down from the second floor (right).

The best surviving original features are the two staircases with oak handrails and plain iron balusters, which provided access to the upper floors (Figure 37). The worn Portland stone treads of the smaller stair have been cut out and replaced; the treads of the larger stair are covered over with linoleum.



Figure 38: The former Council Chamber, looking south.

## First floor

This contains the least altered spaces in the building, that is the two staircases and the two main rooms – the former Town Hall to the east and the Council Chamber to the west. Their surviving features include windows shutters and the coved ceilings with plasterwork modillion cornices and guilloche bands (Figures 38, 39). The dadoes and skirtings in both rooms appear to be original but further investigation is required to confirm this. The original Corinthian columns remain in the Town Hall room and were restored in the 1960s, when the capitals were painted gold. Recent water damage in the Council Chamber has resulted in the loss of a patch of plaster; through this hole the original lath and plaster ceiling structure can be seen, which, it is presumed, is attached to the original roof beams.

The circular grilles, from which the chandeliers in both rooms are suspended, appear to be of Victorian date and probably functioned as part of the ventilation system that was probably installed in the 1880s. The Anaglypta or Lincrusta wallpaper on the ceiling of the Town Hall probably also dates from the late 19th century. A section of the floorboards at the east end of the room has been cut out and replaced, possibly in conjunction with new, fixed court furnishings in that area. In the former Council Chamber, the small room off the south-west corner has since 1887-8 housed the clock tower stair. An area of the Council Chamber's floor suffered fire damage in 1921 or 1922. The window pelmets in the Town Hall and Council Chamber were replaced in 1950, possibly to a design by Richardson & Houfe, and the original



Figure 39: The former Town Hall, looking north-west. [DP301388]

chimneypieces were removed in the 1960s. The partition between the two rooms appears to have been replaced several times, possibly in the late 19th century, in the 1960s and in the 1990s, when the present arrangement with a central door was formed. As part of the same phase of works the original doors in the dividing wall on either side of the partition were blocked. The door opening in the south end of the east wall of the former Town Hall was made in the 1960s.

The first-floor rooms on the north side have also lost their original chimneypieces and have been reduced in size in order to create a corridor. The first to be altered was the small room between the staircases, when a lobby was created to its south in 1937. In the 1960s, a corridor was carved out from the former town clerk's office to the east, which was partitioned into two rooms at the same time.



Figure 40: The large second-floor office, looking east towards the 1960s extension.

Only a few door frames are original and retain their original doors, such as the WC off the secondary stair landing. But most of the replacement doors are close copies of the original, four-panelled doors and making it hard to distinguish between the originals and the copies.

## Second floor

The second floor was always the plainest of the three floors. Originally, there were three rooms and a WC off the stair landing. The two easternmost rooms were thrown into one in 1967-8 and the wall to the corridor was removed, creating a single open-plan office (Figure 40). The WC retains its original doorframe and door.

## The 1960s extension

The interiors of the extension are of a functional character, as is the staircase (Figure 41). The easternmost room on the second floor was originally an interview room and retains some in-built shelving of the 1960s. A few doors retain their door handles (Figure 42).



Figure 41: The staircase in the 1960s extension, looking down from the second floor.



Figure 42: A 1960s door handle with keyhole escutcheon and cover in a first-floor office facing Quay Street.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Guildhall is a rare civic building by the prolific architect John Nash, who is best known for his country houses, his work for the Prince Regent, particularly the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, and major developments in London, such as Regent Street. It continues a long tradition – which includes its precursor, the audit house of the 1630s – of a building type which combined civic, court and market functions. From the 1820s, it was erected in parallel with the first examples of the fully-enclosed, single-use market hall which came to be the dominant building type for markets later in the century.<sup>163</sup>

A slightly later, local example of the dual-use type is the Town Hall at Ryde, which was built as a town hall and market in 1830-31 to a design by James Sanderson.<sup>164</sup> The histories of the two buildings have many parallels, such as having two first-floor rooms which could be thrown into one, the temporary accommodation of the town's fire engine (at Ryde between the 1850s and 1860s), the later addition of a clock tower, the permanent commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (at Ryde with a three-manual Walker organ in the assembly hall), the eventual decline of the market and the conversion of the building to other uses. All of these are common themes to many civic buildings across the country.

As detailed in this report, the Guildhall has been altered over time, particularly in the 1960s. However, a large part of the original fabric survives. The best-preserved rooms are the former Town Hall and Council Chamber on the first floor, with their coved ceilings enriched with original plaster cornices and guilloche bands, window shutters, and scagliola columns. Any future proposals to bring the first floor back into full use will need to take account of the significance of these spaces.

### Suggestions for future research

This report aims to provide a fuller account of the Guildhall's initial development and subsequent phases of alteration and to identify the level of survival of its historic fabric. Nonetheless, some aspects of the Guildhall's history remain poorly understood and would benefit from further research and fabric analysis.

Major gaps in our knowledge include:

- Was there a balcony gallery in the Town Hall and when was it removed?
- How much of the original roof structure survives?
- Do four of the original cast-iron columns survive in the present entrance area within the four boxed-in supports?



- Where were the original wells located? They were discovered within the ground floor of the building in the 1960s, some filled with oyster shells, but no archaeological recording seems to have taken place.<sup>165</sup>
- When did the fire station move into part of the market hall?
- When were the original court fittings removed from the Town Hall?
- Where is the plaster statue of Sir Thomas Fleming, which was removed from the building in 1949?

There are also opportunities for further research in a number of areas:

- There are very few known historic depictions of the interior of the Guildhall. The discovery of additional photographs, drawings or prints would add to our understanding how the building was used and altered over time.
- It is likely that further information is contained in Nigel Temple's research files on John Nash's work held by the RIBA Library, including a folder on his work on the Isle of Wight, which were not accessible for this project.<sup>166</sup> This may shed further light on why Nash was given the commission in 1813.
- Further research into the social and economic significance of Newport in 1813 might also illuminate the reasons why the borough initiated the building of the Guildhall at that time.
- In 1951, the Building Research Station of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research undertook research into 'the failure of cementseal primer and sandfaced paint on pillars' of the Guildhall.<sup>167</sup> A file exists in The National Archives that could not be consulted for the project.
- The files of the former county architect's department, if they survive, might contain further information on the extent of the 1960s works.

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## APPENDIX: SPECIFICATION OF 1813

N.b. This is a transcription of the printed specification of late 1813 which was the basis for the tenders in 1814. It varies only in minor details from the handwritten specification bound with Nash's drawings. Both are in the collection of the Isle of Wight Record Office.

### **Specifications for Building the Guildhall, in the Borough of Newport, in the Isle of Wight.**

Contract, No. 1 - Carpenter's, Joiner's, Smith's, and Ironmonger's Work.

#### Carpenter's & Joiner's Work.

The wall timbers, lintels, and wood bricks and plates to floors and roof, to be of square English oak; the plates scarf'd at the different lengths, and lapped at the angles. A plate round the arcades under each end of the ceiling joists 5 by 4; a like plate under the ceiling joists of the colonnade; two plates, 5 by 4 each, on the walls within the arcade, and also over the arcade, for the girders of the Town-hall floor to rest upon; the like plates for the tie beams of the roof to rest upon; also for the joists of the colonnade floor to rest upon; the like plates under the girders of the rooms behind the town-hall, and attic floor over them. Three tiers of bond, 4 by 2 1/2 round the rooms called the town-hall and the council-room; and two tiers of the like bond in the walls forming the rooms behind the town-hall, and also of the attic rooms over. None of the aforesaid plates or bonds to lie nearer than 12 inches to any flue or chimney opening. Wood tossels, 4 by 2 1/2, under the ends of all lintels. Wood bricks in all the windows and door jambs. The lintels to be six inches thick.

The timber of the floors, roof, and flats, to be of Memel fir; to be framed according to the several designs. No timbers, except the ends of girders and binding joists, to lie on the walls; but all other timber to be framed into trimmers. The scantlings of all the floors and roofs to be as specified on the drawings. All timbers lying on the walls to have their ends charked; and air-holes, 1 1/2 diameter, made in the outer walls to circulate the air among the timbers of the floors and roof, and flats. Trimmers to be framed before all the chimney openings with feather-edge board, as springers to the brick hearths under the slabs. 2 1/2 deal rounded ridge roll to the roof. Centerings to be provided for all the arches and apertures. The quarter partitions to be also of Memel fir, framed. The scantlings, 5 by 3; and door posts and heads, 5 by 5.

The walls of the town-hall, council-room, and rooms behind the town-hall, to be battened with 3/4 yellow deal; and the town-hall and council-room to have elm cove bracketing, as shewn in the section. All the floors to be laid with whole yellow deal in straight joints, one edge nailed, and headings ploughed and tongued. The town-hall and council-room to be laid with battens, framed grounds, and base and surbase mouldings, and rabbeted [i.e. rebated] plinths; the surbase to girt 7 inches, and the base 3 1/2 inches. Inch deal skirting, 6 inches high, to the rooms behind the town-hall, and rooms over. Inch deal scribed skirting to all the stairs and landings, and

Torus skirting to the principal stairs and water closets; mahogany seats, risers, and clamped flaps to the water closets, with brass hinges.

Full 2 inch oak sashes (astragal and hollow) to all the windows; and deal frames with oak pully pieces, beads, and stops; and oak double sunk sills to all the windows. Extra false heads to the windows of the town-hall and council room, for the lower sashes to slide up to the middle rail; the meeting rails to be rabbeted [i.e. rebated], brass-boxed pullies, patent line, and iron weights. All the sashes to be double hung, except the attic sashes, and sashes of stair-cases and water-closets; the water-closet sashes to be circular, in a solid frame, and hung on centres; framed, splayed, and beaded boxings, with ovolo mouldings round them, to form architraves; and 1 ¼ deal OG flat and bead butt front shutters; and inch deal bead butt and square back flaps; and bead butt back linings to all the windows, except the stair-case windows, which are to have plain plaster linings, without boxings or shutters, and except the water-closet windows, which are to be circular, plastered; quirked staffs to those linings of plaster. The shutters of the town-hall and council-room to be hung in three heights: one level with the first pane of glass, and the others level with the meeting rail of the sashes; those in the town clerk's office to be hung in two heights, and those on the attics in one height. The backs, elbows, and soffites [i.e. soffits], to be of whole deal, and framed, to correspond with the front shutters.

Fir wrought, rabbeted [i.e. rebated], and beaded door frames to the two entrances; and 2 ½ deal framed and moulded doors: that to the principal stair-case to be folding; 1 ½ deal framed linings, deal frames, and grounds, and moulded architraves 9 inches girt round the inside of the said doors. Deal outside architraves round the folding doors

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10 inches girth; and deal cornice, 8 inches girth, over the said doors; an oak semi-circular fan-light over the said folding doors, and deal circular architrave, as shewn in the elevation. Oak moulded hand-rail, glued up in thicknesses, to the two staircases. The inside doors in the quarter partitions to have 2 inch deal rabbeted [i.e. rebated] linings, inch deal framed and beaded grounds, and ovolos round them, to form architraves; 2 inch four-paneled O G flat both sides doors to all the door openings, according to the respective dimensions figured on the plans, 2 inch deal rabbeted [i.e. rebated] linings to all the door-ways which are in walls, framed to correspond with the doors, with the like grounds, and ovolos round them.

The opening between the town-hall and council-room to be enclosed with four single doors, 15 feet high each, reaching from the floor to the top of the capitals of the columns; the two outer doors to be hung to deal framed posts at the backs of the columns, as shewn in the plan; and one other door hung to each of the said outer doors. The said doors to be hung to each other and to the posts, with ruled joints, the hinges forming and answering to the staff beads which form the joints; four hinges to each door; the top and bottom hinges of the outer doors to be centres; and a brass quadrant plate let into the floor for the doors to run upon, with small brass rollers under the doors to work on the said brass plates; and the doors, when shut, to bolt

up into the sofitte [i.e. soffit] with strong brass flat bolts, let flush into the doors. The doors to be 3 inches thick; the panels to be flush on each side with the stiles, each panel being 1 inch thick, and each door three panels high. The faces of the doors on each side, from staff bead to staff bead, to be lined with canvass, and painted to imitate the stucco of the room, - so that the opening between the town-hall and council-room, when closed up, may look like the stucco'd walls of the other sides of the rooms. The doors, when folded back and thrown open, will lie against and conceal the doors which at other times form the entrances to the council-room.

The partitions, doors, seats, and benches, which form the court, are to be temporary, and screwed to the floor into brass plates, let into the boards of the floor, to receive the screws, which are to be hung by small bits of chain to the several parts which are to be moved and taken away. The partitions and doors are to be five feet high; frames of two inch deal, bead flush and square, with slit deal beaded cappings; the framing to be one panel in height, and the doors framed to correspond with the partitions to be hung to them, and moved away with them; the benches and brackets under them to be inch deal, with rounded edges, and being first fastened to the floors by the screws before-mentioned, will stiffen and support the wainscoting, which are to screw to the seats as well as to the floor. False floors and trestles under them, in order to raise the floors of the magistrates' seats, jury boxes, and witness and prisoner's boxes 2 ft. 8 in. above the general floor of the town-hall; which trestles and false floors being also fastened as before to the floor, will likewise contribute to the support of the partitions, to which they will also be screwed. Moveable steps, also screwed to the floors, to go up to the false floors so raised, as shewn in the plans.

#### Smith's work and Ironmongery

Cast-iron columns, six inches diameter, cast hollow, the iron an inch in thickness, with circular base spreading to a diameter of 18 inches, also an inch thick, & flanced [i.e. flanged] cap 9 inches wide and 18 inches long; each column, cap, and base cast in one piece, to support the girders over the market, which form the floor of the town-hall and council-room; cast-iron trusses for the girders in the floor of the town clerk's office and room over; trusses 6 inches broad and 1 ¼ thick, with flanches at each end and plates to press against, and wrought-iron screw king bolts; and ¾ wrought-iron screw bolts to fasten the flitches of the girders together; cast-iron cramps to be provided for the Bath stone mason; cast-iron straps, and bolts and screws for the king posts of the roof; cast-iron chimney bars to the chimney openings; shutter hinges, and shutter bar spring fastenings to all the shutters, and brass knob latches to open the shutters; patent spring sash fastenings to all the sashes; best brass mortice locks to all the inside doors, except those on the attic story, which are to be 6 inch iron rim brass-knob locks; 2 ½ butt hinges to all the doors; 2 inch butts to the doors in the partitions forming the court; brass plate flat bolts to the doors inclosing the aperture between the hall and council-room; and brass quadrant plates to let into the floor for doors to run open, and brass rollers under the doors; brass plates let into the floor for the temporary partitions of the court to be fastened to, and brass screws and chains to fasten the said partitions; 10 inch iron rim brass-knob spring locks to the outside doors, and two iron plate bolts to each door, and three inch butt hinges; a strong framed iron scraper to each outside door-way.

Wrought-iron bar balusters, and iron top plate for railing to the two stair-cases.

A panel of cast-iron balcony railing between each opening of columns in the colonnade, according to the design, with wrought-iron top rail and standards.

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Contract, No. 2 - Digger's and Bricklayer's work.

*Digger* ... Foundations to be dug (vide section) below the present surface of the Pavement, and the superfluous ground carted away.

*Bricklayer* ... The whole of the walls to be built of bricks, (except such parts as are described to be of stone); the bricks to be hard and sound, the mortar made of stone lime and drift sharp sand, and worked with as flat a joint as possible, and grouted every fourth course; the outer walls left with influshed joints, to receive Parker's cement; rough brick arches to be turned over all the lintels, and gaged [i.e. gauged] unrubbed arches over all the arcades and window openings and chimney openings; brick trimmers turned before all the chimney openings 2ft. 3in. wide, and 18 inches longer than the openings; all the flues to be pargetted; the wall plates and window frames bedded in mortar; the footings to piers, arches, and walls, to be three course, and to spread half a brick each course; rough dry brick arches turned over all the timbers which lie on the walls; bricks corbelled out to form fascia in the front to Quay-street.

Contract, No. 3 - Mason's Work

The plinth of the arcade all round to be of Bath stone, those under the piers of the arches to be each in one stone; the moulded fascia under the columns to be of Bath stone, and the key stones of the arches under the columns; each key stone and part of the fascia over it, to be in one stone, as shewn in the elevation; the bases of the columns to be of Bath stone; the plinth of the bases to be of one stone, with part of the fascia underneath it, as shewn in the elevation; the shafts of the columns to be of Bath stone, and the fillet and hollow at the bottom of the columns to be sunk out of the lower bed of the columns; the architraves of the entablature over the columns to be of Bath stone, in one bed, and each stone to extend from centre to centre of columns, and to be back rabbeted [i.e. rebated] to receive the joists of ceiling of portico. The frieze to be of Bath stone in one bed, and 8 inches thick, with bond stones over the columns, the rest backed up with bricks; the cornice to be of Bath stone in two beds, the lower bed 8 inches thick next the frieze, the upper to extend to the back of the architrave; the stones forming the cornice and frieze, and blocking course, to be in stones not less than 4 feet long each; the blocking course to be of Bath stone 8 inches on the lower side, and 3 inches thick on the upper side. The chimney shafts to be coped with Bath stone. Bath stone window sills, throated and weathered, to all the windows, 4 inches thick in front. The floor of the colonnade to be laid with 2 1/2 inch Portland stone, the joints grooved, and set in pure Parker's cement, and to current 3/4 of an inch; the floor of the market, and the foot-ways under the arcades, to be laid with Purbeck paving, squared, and the joints bedded and filled



with mortar, with sunk-channel stones to convey the water to the kennels [i.e. the surface drains in the street]. Purbeck curb stones next the carriage way of the streets 6 inches thick, the ends dove-tailed together; Purbeck stones 6 inches thick under the iron columns, sunk to receive the iron bases of the columns, the masons to find their own moulds. Bath stone lintels over the windows, to project  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch beyond the brick-work, in order to be flush with Parker's composition when laid on the walls; the same cornice as that to the colonnade, and the same blocking course to continue along the front towards Quay-street. A black Derbyshire marble chimney-piece and slab, with fire stone covings, value £45, for the town-hall; a like chimney-piece, value £36, for the council-room; Portland stone chimney-piece and slab, and fire stone covings, value £5, for the town clerk's office; a like chimney-piece, value £4, for the room over; the like for three other small chimneys, value £2 each. Portland stone steps and landings, hung geometrically, with plain beveled [sic] soffites [i.e. soffits] to the two stair-cases, and the iron railing let into the same and run with lead. The balcony railing between the columns of the colonnade to be let into the stone-work, and run with lead.

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#### Contract, No. 4 - Plasterer's work.

The ceiling of the market, and arcade over the foot-paths, to be lathed, plastered, floated, and whited. The ceilings of the rooms behind the town-hall, and of the principal stairs, to be lathed, plastered, and whited. The ceiling of the town-hall and council-room to be lathed, plastered, floated, and set in putty. The ceilings of the attics and private stairs to be lathed, plastered, and whited.

All the walls, except the attics to be lathed, plastered, and floated, for paper; the attic rooms to be rendered, set, and whited. The walls of the town-hall and council-room to be lathed, plastered, stucco'd, and floated smooth for painting; and plain plaster coves in each room, with cornices at the foot of the coves, 9 in. girth, with two members enriched, and a plaster moulding at the top of the coves, 5 inches girth, one member enriched. Two scagliolo columns, with Corinthian plaster capitals, and stone bronzed bases, value £20 each, in the aperture between the town-hall and council-room.

The outside faces of the three fronts, which are to be built of brick, as also the face of the arcade on the inside of the foot-way, and the piers of the arches all around, to be covered with Parker's composition, coloured and jointed to match with the Bath stone.

N.B. The plasterer to find his own scaffolding.

#### Contract, No. 5 - Plumber's, Painter's, and Glazier's work.

*Plumber* ... The ridge of the roof to be covered with milled lead, 5 lb. to the foot superficial. Flashings of milled lead, 5 lb. to the foot superficial round the edges of Ld. Stanhope's composition on the flats; 4 inch lead water trunks and cistern heads

to convey the water from the roofs and flats into the drains. Apparatus complete, and cistern and soile pipes to the water closets and stink traps; and a lead pump to supply the cistern; and a bog steened [i.e. lined with stone] under the street to receive the soil from the water closets, domed over with brick, and a stone and ring at the top to empty the bog.

*Painter* ... All the outside and inside wood and iron work to be painted four times in oil; and the walls of the town-hall and council-room, and the dadoes in the other rooms, five times in oil; and the oak sashes varnished.

*Glazier* ... All the sashes to be glazed with the best Newcastle crown glass.

Contract, No. 6 - Slater's work.

The roof over the town-hall and council-room to be slated with the best dutchess [sic] slating, laid on boards, and nailed with copper nails.

The flats to be battened with  $\frac{3}{4}$  deal, the battens 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide, and laid  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an in. a -part, and rendered with lime and hair; and plain tiles laid on the lime and hair, to make a platform to receive Lord Stanhope's composition; two coats of composition to be laid on the tiles, and the last coat to be paved with small Welch [i.e. Welsh] slates, squared and laid flat.

Tayler & Co. Printers, Newport.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Historic England, National Heritage List for England, 1278563.
- 2 See for example, Summerson 1980, 154; Mansbridge 1991, 193; Tyack (ed) 2013, xiv.
- 3 Lloyd 2006, 171.
- 4 Letters 2013.
- 5 Eldridge 1952, 13.
- 6 Corp. MSS. Add. MS. 24789, fol. 122 d., 287, 287 d., quoted in Page (ed) 1912, 260, footnote 15.
- 7 Jones and Jones 1987, 42.
- 8 Eldridge 1952, 12.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 10 Page (ed) 1912, 260.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 260, footnote 15.
- 12 Sources disagree about the date of demolition: for example, Eldridge has 1637 and Page has 1638. Eldridge 1952, 13; Page (ed) 1912, 260, footnote 15.
- 13 Page (ed) 1912, 260, footnote 15.
- 14 Other known illustrations include that in Stone 1891, volume 2, 115; and an engraving by J. Walker, reproduced in Eldridge 1952, frontispiece.
- 15 Jones and Jones 1987, 17.
- 16 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes; *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 17 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes.
- 18 Schmiechen and Carls 1999, 61-2.
- 19 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/670; Albin 1818, 22.
- 20 Quoted in Eldridge 1952, 59.
- 21 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 22 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 3 January 1814, 3.
- 23 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/5/A-C, 20/6-23.
- 24 Isle of Wight Record Office, Nash letter, 10 February 1814.
- 25 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/680.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Albin 1818, 22.
- 28 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/25-29.
- 29 Albin 1818, 22.
- 30 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 September 1816, 4.
- 31 Eldridge 1952, 24-5; Page (ed) 1912, 260.
- 32 Isle of Wight County Record Office, NBC/1/710, 718, 823, 1027.
- 33 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 September 1816, 4.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 It now hangs in the former Council Chamber. Museum of Island History, IWCMS:1995.LG63.
- 36 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 September 1816, 4.
- 37 Albin 1818, 20.
- 38 Bullar 1818, 50.
- 39 Isle of Wight Record Office, OG/CC/325.
- 40 The drawings and the specification are bound in one volume, held by the Isle

- of Wight Record Office (reference: NBC/20/Nash), which also has a printed set of specifications. Copies of some of the drawings by Nash's pupil, George Stanley Repton, also survive in the RIBA Library's drawings collection (reference: SD110/1).
- 41 Parker's 'Roman' Cement was a grey-brown cement patented by the Revd Dr James Parker in 1796.
- 42 Sickels 1987, 308-9.
- 43 The system of naming slate sizes after female nobility ranks is said to have been invented by General Hugh Warburton at Penrhyn Quarry in 1738.
- 44 'Lord Stanhope's Composition' was a tar-based cement invented by Charles, 3rd Earl of Stanhope, in the early 1800s. Sickels 1987, 300-1.
- 45 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/Nash.
- 46 Albin 1818, 20-21.
- 47 Ibid., 22.
- 48 Ibid., 21.
- 49 Victoria & Albert Museum 1996.
- 50 Albin 1818, 20.
- 51 Bullar 1818, 51.
- 52 Brettell 1840, 83-4.
- 53 Venables 1860, 61.
- 54 Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls 1889, 378.
- 55 Albin 1818, 21-3.
- 56 Eldridge 1952, 44.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Brodie and Brodie 2016, 14.
- 59 Ibid., 4, 7.
- 60 Tyack 2009; Tyack (ed) 2013, xi, 37.
- 61 Tyack 2009; Tyack (ed) 2013, xii.
- 62 Davis 1973, 62 and footnote 4; Colvin 1995, 689-694; see also Temple 1987 and 1988.
- 63 Tyack 2009; Tyack (ed) 2013, xvi.
- 64 Summerson 1980, 154.
- 65 *The London Gazette*, 10 November 1966, 12158.
- 66 Richard Smout, pers. comm. (15 July 2021).
- 67 Information from a 1971 telephone directory, kindly provided by Richard Smout.
- 68 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes.
- 69 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/34-5.
- 70 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/20/37, 1828 tenders.
- 71 Isle of Wight Record Office, AC87/54/2/1A.
- 72 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes.
- 73 Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 701468.
- 74 The 1840s are suggested by an undated typescript in a file on the history of the Guildhall in the Museum of Island History; the bell is depicted in engravings commemorating Garibaldi's visit.
- 75 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 29 January 1887, 5.
- 76 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes.
- 77 Davenport Adams 1882, 105.
- 78 Hill 1879, 283.

- 79 Eldridge 1952, 59.
- 80 Corina Westwood, pers. comm. (2 June 2021). In September 1949 the sculpture was dismantled, the statue put into storage and the side panels deemed to be beyond repair. Isle of Wight Record Office, *Borough of Newport Corporation Council Minutes*, September 1949.
- 81 F.V.B. Waterworth of Ventnor quoted £112, G.N. Haden & Sons of Trowbridge quoted £91 plus over £70 in additional costs, such as heating the town clerk's office. Isle of Wight Record Office, 1888 estimates.
- 82 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 29 January 1887, 5.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 16 April 1887, 5.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 11 June 1887, 5.
- 89 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 July 1888, 5.
- 90 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 28 July 1888, 8.
- 91 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 2 July 1887, 3.
- 92 Ibid.; Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript notes.
- 93 He is also occasionally spelled 'Perress'. On the 1911 Census return, Perres spelled his surname with one 's', which is the spelling adopted in this report.
- 94 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 28 July 1888, 8.
- 95 Brodie et al, volume 2, 357. By 1911, he had retired and was dividing his time between his house in Newport and Boscombe, now a suburb of Bournemouth. 1911 Census; *Bournemouth Graphic*, 29 April 1915, 5.
- 96 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 9 March 1889, 6.
- 97 Isle of Wight County Council 1990, 36.
- 98 Hill 1879, 282.
- 99 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 8 June 1895, 6.
- 100 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/1434.
- 101 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/1498.
- 102 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2281; Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817.
- 103 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/1814.
- 104 One window was completely destroyed and had to be completely replaced and another window required repairs. Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/1828.
- 105 See for example, Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2033 (1925); Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2861 (1936).
- 106 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2259.
- 107 The builder was John Bulstrode of Newport. Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2281 .
- 108 The alterations were designed by the borough surveyor, G.A.M. Gentry, and the contractors were James Ball & Son, who were to work on several further alterations, including those of the 1960s. Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/2891.
- 109 Isle of Wight Record Office, *Borough of Newport Corporation Council Minutes*, 1942-3, 217.
- 110 Ibid., 251 and 278.
- 111 Ibid., 376.
- 112 Isle of Wight Record Office, *Borough of Newport Corporation Council Minutes*, 1943-4, 140.

- 113 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press* 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 114 Isle of Wight Record Office, *Borough of Newport Corporation Council Minutes, 1943-4*, 315.
- 115 Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/3484.
- 116 In September 1949 G.E. Banks & Son signed an agreement for the repair and redecoration of the Guildhall at a cost of £1349 2s 6d. Isle of Wight Record Office, NBC/1/3484.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Isle of Wight Record Office, *Borough of Newport Corporation Council Minutes*, Finance Committee report, 3 May 1949.
- 120 There is also one drawing in the Richardson & Houfe practice archive at Bedfordshire Archives (reference: RGH6/132/4). Pamela Birch, County Archivist, Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, pers. comm. (18 May 2021). The contract with Bentalls Ltd is in the Isle of Wight Record Office (reference: NBC1/3519).
- 121 Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817. The drawings are not reproduced here due to copyright restrictions.
- 122 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 123 In 1957, there were gates in the easternmost bay in Quay Street, in the two arches of the north-west corner, and in the second bay from the east in the High Street.
- 124 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping; *Isle of Wight County Press*, 24 September 1966, unpaginated news clipping.
- 125 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 24 September 1966, unpaginated news clipping.
- 126 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 25 March 1967, unpaginated news clipping.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 The only remaining works were the installation of the court furnishings and the completion of the floor tiling. Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder, Instruction no. 43 (3 January 1969).
- 130 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 131 Ibid.
- 132 Ibid.
- 133 Ibid; Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder.
- 134 Isle of Wight Record Office, bill of quantities, January 1967, 2.
- 135 Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder, instructions no. 12 (4 October 1967) and no. 33 (1 July 1968).
- 136 This method is also known as electro-osmotic damp-proofing. Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 137 Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder, undated schedule of 'provisional sums'; Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated typescript.
- 138 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 139 Ibid.; Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder, instructions no. 8

- (25 August 1967) and no. 11 (26 September 1967).
- 140 Isle of Wight Record Office, 1960s correspondence folder, instruction no. 17 (15 December 1967).
- 141 Isle of Wight Record Office, undated sales particulars for 136 High Street and 26 Quay Street .
- 142 Isle of Wight Record Office, bill of quantities, January 1967, 2.
- 143 Their response may be summarised in the Council's planning minutes (not consulted) and in the Commission's own minutes at The National Archives (not consulted).
- 144 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 145 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated news clipping of May 1987.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Isle of Wight County Council 1990, inside cover.
- 148 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, undated news clipping of May 1987.
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 29 March 1996, 51.
- 151 Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/B.
- 152 Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/C.
- 153 Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/D. The drawings have not been reproduced in this report because of copyright restrictions.
- 154 Confusingly, some of the 1990s drawings showing the plans 'as existing' are in fact a redrawing of the 1960s proposals with additional annotations.
- 155 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 29 March 1996, 51.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Historic England Registry, file COEN 017005, drawing of December 1994 by B.E. Willis and Partners.
- 158 See Victoria & Albert Museum 1996.
- 159 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, photocopies of sketches by Stephen Calloway. The sketches are not reproduced in this report because of copyright restrictions. Letter by M.J. Holder of the Pritchard Wilmott Partnership to R. Sedgely of the Isle of Wight Council, 10 March 2001, reproduced in Appendix 5 of Oxley Conservation 2021.
- 160 Isle of Wight Council, planning file TCP/5817/C.
- 161 Corina Westwood, pers. comm.
- 162 Historic England Registry file COEN 017005.
- 163 Schmiechen and Carls 1999, 61-2, 72.
- 164 See Harwood 2021.
- 165 Museum of Island History, information files on the history of the Guildhall, *Isle of Wight County Press*, 21 September 1968, unpaginated news clipping.
- 166 RIBA Library, TeN/31/1.
- 167 The National Archives, DSIR 4/3059.



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