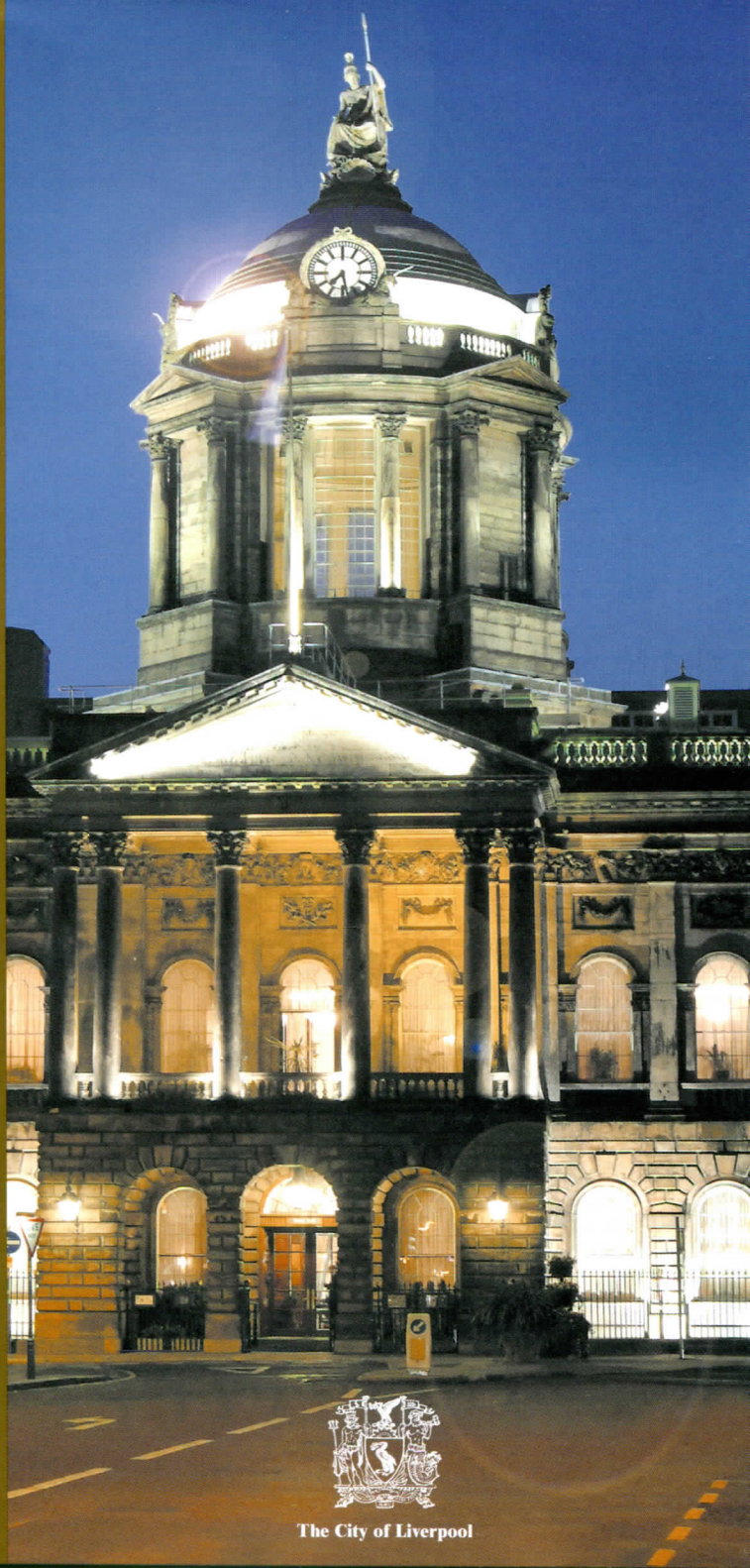


Liverpool's Historic **TOWN HALL**



The City of Liverpool

Liverpool Town Hall & its History

Liverpool Town Hall has grown in size and splendour over the centuries as the city's prosperity has increased.

In 1207 a charter from King John first created the free borough of Liverpool. Still only a village, Liverpool had a population of less than 2000, a small fishing fleet and livestock and produce markets serving the immediate area. As yet there were no real port facilities and very little industry.

In 1515 the Reverend John Crosse, a member of a wealthy and influential Liverpool family, presented the first recorded Town Hall to the City.

The Town Hall was in fact little more than a thatched barn and would eventually prove inadequate as a suitable civic venue, but for over 150 years the Mayor held court there, wedding ceremonies were performed and plays were produced.



By 1673 Mayor James Jerome felt that Liverpool's increasing importance made a modern building essential and orders were issued for a second Town Hall be constructed. The new building was known as the Exchange because the ground floor had an open colonnade for merchants and market traders to carry out their business, but inadequate foundations meant that the building was not destined to stand for long.



In 1748 the authorities called on John Wood, a famous architect from Bath, to design a new Town Hall. The foundation stone was laid the same year and great celebrations marked the opening of the new, supremely elegant Town Hall and exchange in 1754.

A little known fact is that the building of the Town Hall was funded by Liverpool businesses and entrepreneurs many of whom had benefited from the slave trade. In fact sixteen of Liverpool's Mayors are said to have been slave merchants. Three centuries of slave and other overseas trading bequeathed the City with a rich diversity of peoples, cultures, financial wealth and architecture much of which survives to the present day.

However, the abolition of the slave trade was one of the critical steps leading to reform and reconstruction in 19th Century Liverpool, when the City became more conscious of the need to improve the living conditions of its citizens. The City has acknowledged its involvement in the Slave Trade and a formal apology was made to the black community in the year 2000. Liverpool champions equal opportunities and diversity issues and both recognises and values the contributions made by the black community to the prosperity of the City. Liverpool is also a leading light in the development of a variety of successful cultural diversity projects i.e. Chinese New Year Celebrations and the International Street Carnival which have contributed to it being named European Capital Of Culture for 2008.

In 1775 the approach of the American War of Independence had brought a depression in trade with the New World and when sailors' wages were cut a bitter strike ensued. At the height of the riots 50 ships were anchored in the Mersey and a ship's cannon was used, albeit unsuccessfully, to attack the Town Hall.



Having survived the riot almost unscathed, 20 years later, in 1795 fire broke out and destroyed much of the building. By that time the Town Hall had become such a vital part of city life that the civic authorities ordered restoration to begin immediately, under the supervision of London architect, James Wyatt. Wyatt completed the work over 15 years, rebuilding and expanding on Wood's design. The result of his work is basically the Town Hall as it is today.

The Town Hall had another lucky escape in 1881 when the Fenians attempted to blow up the building. Fortunately a police constable managed to drag the device away from the building before it exploded but the two conspirators were soon caught and each received a long prison sentence.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the Council had the collection of treasures removed to safety. Although the Blitz of 1941 brought devastation to large areas of Liverpool, the Town Hall survived but with extensive damage to the Council Chamber and Ballroom. The weakened structure underwent immediate restoration work and today remains one of the oldest and finest buildings in the City.



The Town Hall

The Town Hall was constructed between 1749 and 1820. The Dome with its impressive statue was added in 1802, the Council Chamber in 1811 and the ballroom, the last major addition, was opened 1820.

The buildings are of ashlar stone, with a slate roof and a lead dome. Around the dome are four clocks flanked by lions and unicorns and on top is a statue of Minerva, Roman Goddess of wisdom and protector of cities. Designed by Felix Rossi, Minerva is made of terracotta and covered in 87,000 square inches of gold leaf.

Along the south, east and west sides are friezes with stone carvings of heads and animals which represent Liverpool's trading and nautical past. At the north

end are statues of the four seasons, which came from the Irish Houses of Parliament in Dublin. Also at the north end is the Queen's Balcony, named after Queen Victoria who stood there in 1851 to greet the city's merchants assembled in Exchange Flags and remarked that she had never before seen together so large a number of well dressed gentlemen. The front balcony has always been used by Royalty, not to mention Liverpool and Everton football clubs and the Beatles.

Edward VII compared the Town Hall's magnificent suite of rooms to the Czar's Winter Palace in St Petersburg as being 'the best -proportioned in all Europe'.

Entrance Hall

On entering the Town Hall you pass through an impressive entrance hall, which features a magnificent Flemish wooden fireplace from 1893. The floor is made up of hand-painted tiles and features Liverpool's Coat of Arms.

J H Amschewitz painted the frescoes in 1909. They depict important events in Liverpool's history

including the granting of the Charter by King John in 1207. Below the frescoes are brass tablets bearing the names of those who have been given honorary freedom of the City.

The two Bardic chairs were given to the Town Hall to commemorate the two Eisteddfods, which were held in Liverpool before the First World War.

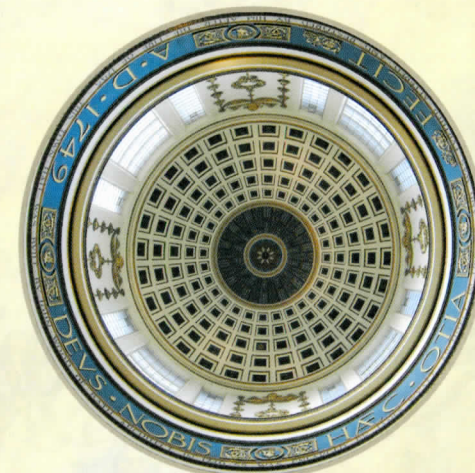
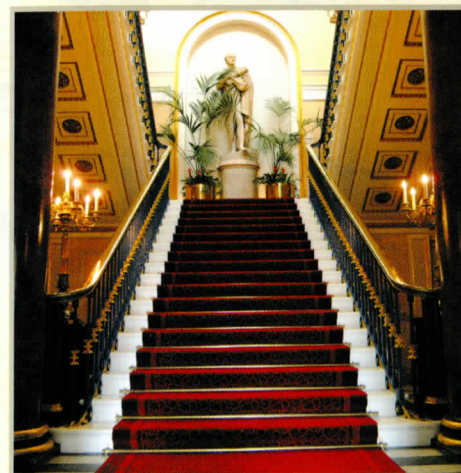


The Staircase

The Town Hall has an exceptionally grand staircase, at the top of which is an impressive painting of Queen Elizabeth II painted by the Liverpool artist Sir Edward Halliday. On the landing of the main staircase there is a statue of George Canning, a local MP who became Prime Minister for a short time in 1827. The town's silver is contained in two large display cabinets at each side of the staircase.

Above the staircase is a stunning blue and gold dome, which stands 32.3 metres (106 feet) above ground level.

The Latin inscription around the edge is the City's motto which, translated, reads "God has bestowed these blessings upon us". Around the base of the dome are paintings by Charles Furse showing scenes of early dock labour.



Reception Rooms

The landing leads to the centre, east and west reception rooms. All three rooms have been redecorated in their original colour schemes and contain fine examples of Regency furniture and a number of paintings.

The centre reception room is just off the main staircase and is used by the Lord Mayor to receive guests. Outside is the balcony, which has been used for civic receptions and where a number of famous people have stood, including Royalty.

Small Ballroom

The east reception room, or music room, as it is now often called, leads into the small ballroom. This room has been used for a number of grand civic receptions and at the end of the room are Minstrels' Galleries where the musicians would play. Today the room is usually used by the Lord Mayor as a refreshment room during civic receptions. The small ballroom has three early 19th century crystal chandeliers.



Large Ballroom

The large ballroom is 27 metres (89 feet) long and 12.8 metres (42 feet) wide with a 12 metre (40 feet) high ceiling. This room contains three of the finest Georgian chandeliers in Europe. Made in Staffordshire in 1820, each chandelier is 8.5 metres (28 foot) long, contains 20,000 pieces of cut glass crystal and weighs over one ton.

The room has a sprung maple dance floor specially made for dancing. At each end of the room are two massive mirrors specially designed so

that people could admire themselves during balls and banquets. Standing in between these two mirrors it is possible to see one's image reflected into infinity.

During major official functions the civic regalia is displayed. This comprises three maces,

the Sword of State, the Silver Oar and the Staves. The latter are symbols of the coach levers, which were once carried by running footmen to prise the wheels of the mayor's coach out of ruts in the road. Part of the collection was stolen by Charles John Coney in 1784 and although he was convicted of theft and hanged, only part of the regalia was recovered.



Dining Room

The dining room has hosted innumerable banquets over the years.

One of the room's most outstanding features is a beautiful moulded plaster ceiling. The elaborate cornice incorporates a series of gilded panels featuring cherubs and roundels. These were only recently rediscovered and renovated having been obscured with paint in the nineteenth century.

The room also houses two huge vases of unknown origin thought to be from the Far East.



Council Chamber

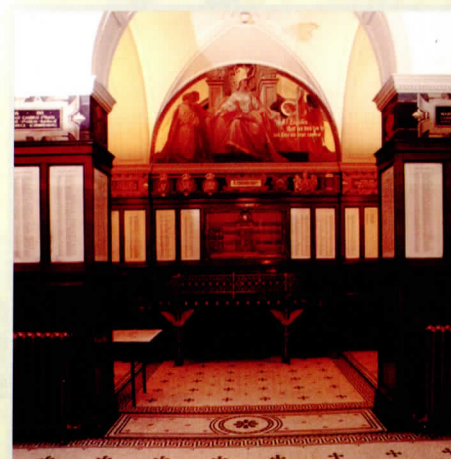
Returning to the ground floor one of the most important rooms is the Council Chamber. An impressive room built for the conduct of civic business the chamber features outstanding oak and mahogany woodwork. The Councillors' benches can seat 160 people, but today the council has 99 members who meet every seven weeks to discuss the City's affairs.

At the front of the Chamber is a raised Dais where the Lord Mayor presides flanked by the Deputy Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive. Below the dais is a bench for the press and below the windows on either side are the public galleries.

Hall of Remembrance

When leaving the Chamber visitors pass by the Hall of Remembrance which was opened by the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales, in 1921. The Roll of Honour carries the names of over 13,000 military men from Liverpool who died during the First World War.

Eight lunette fresco panels painted by Sir Frank Salisbury decorate the walls.



Room Hire

Many of the Town Hall's rooms are available for private hire. A complete package, including quality in house catering, can be provided.

For further information and room hire charges please telephone 0151 225 5530. The Town Hall is licensed for weddings and the sale of alcohol.

Other Formats

Translation available on request

Marka la soo codsado ayaa la turjumi doona.

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