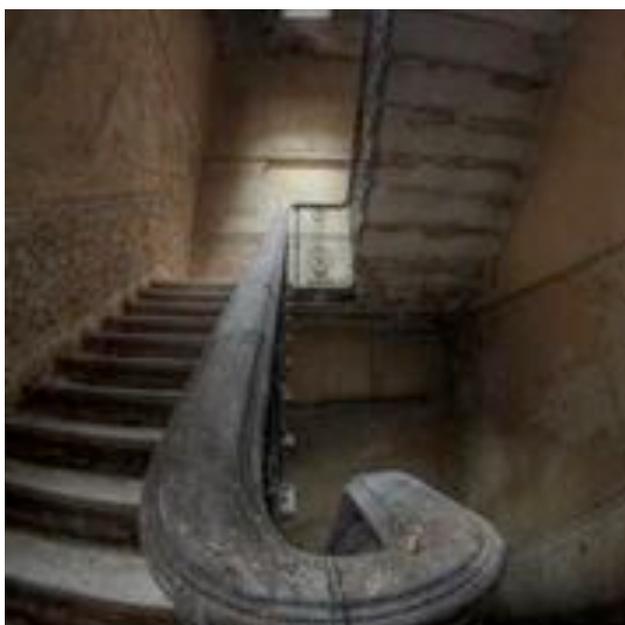




FRIENDS OF THE OLD TOWN HALL

OWNERSHIP OF THE OLD TOWN HALL : A QUESTION OF TRUST



We've always said that the Friends would not pursue ownership, should ownership be the only way to rescue the building, but that we were ready to set up an organisation capable of buying it.

We have now taken that step, by registering the Castlegate Preservation Trust as a charitable incorporated organisation (charity number 1170599). And FOTH bid successfully for a start-up grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund; this will be used mainly to get expert advice to develop business plans and a funding strategy.

We have a bid in with the Architectural Heritage Fund too, to allow more work on testing the viability of a business model or two for the OTH. If all that work can be done we shall be in a good position for approaching the Heritage Lottery Fund for the serious money that's going to be needed. The Trust's objectives go beyond the OTH, to cover preservation of all the heritage, of all kinds, in Castlegate and to help educate people about what's interesting and important there. But rescuing the OTH will be very much the top priority.

AGM

It's been busy since our last newsletter in November. And now we're gearing up for FOTH's third AGM, on 27 March. You'll find the details in this newsletter. Please come along to hear more about our activities and, importantly, our plans, as the work of rescuing the Old Town Hall moves into a new phase.

DEVELOPMENTS FOR 2017

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Yet again we can say that there is no sign of a commercial buyer for the OTH, which has now been on the market for 18 months, with a huge price hike in the middle of that time. You'd almost think the owners didn't want to sell it! Meanwhile they have patched up the smashed skylights over Court 2, though thin planks and weather-proof paint don't strike us as likely to make for a lasting solution. Our urban explorer friends were quick to let us know about the work. Meanwhile the City Council has still not made a start on urgent works to the roof as a whole.....yes money is very tight but the cost of repairs goes up the longer they are left.



Curiously some cosmetic tidying-up has been done, over Christmas and New Year. Some (but not all) of the vegetation growing outside was removed. Some (but not all) of the appalling litter stuffed into the window openings was removed. Some of the broken windows were blocked up with mdf. All good as far as it went. Not so the 'cleaning up' of the drinking fountain (left), part of which has been sprayed with gold paint, presumably to disguise the graffiti.

We remain determined to go on fighting for the OTH, in the interests of the city. Increasingly, that looks like finding a way to get the building into caring ownership. The last year has seen increased vandalism – graffiti inside and out, smashing of glass partitions

inside – and the risks to the building seem to be growing all the time. We've talked to some potential developers who might be interested in the OTH as well as other sites in the area. Indeed we were approached by a couple of them. So far no proposal has come forward. Of course we are realistic – we don't own the building, and it could be sold at any time (though see above!) on a purely commercial basis. In that case we will keep a close eye on any redevelopment plans, to ensure they don't damage the OTH's fabric and history. Our preference is for community leadership in the redevelopment and future use of the OTH, so that while it becomes financially sustainable – and that is essential – it becomes an asset for the city and its people. We know that can be done. And we think it's time to take some action.

THE 1832 CHOLERA OUTBREAK AND THE OLD TOWN HALL

In November 1831 cholera broke out in Sheffield with the deaths of a woman and a middle aged man. From its point of origin in Bengal the disease took five years to cross Europe, so that by the time it reached the UK, doctors were well aware of what cholera did. But they neither knew how to prevent the or spread of cholera or how to treat cholera patients. There were two medical theories related to the spread of disease in the 1830s. One was miasma theory, which taught that disease was spread by bad smells, bad air or 'poisonous miasma'. There were plenty of bad smells in Sheffield.

"(On Acorn Street...) they trail the dirt into the houses and the whole colony may be stunk out and suffocated with filth. Green Lane is scarcely what its name implies. Even now though no longer verdure clad, it is not free from scents, which are not very attractive" (*from The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*)

Orders were issued for the lime-washing of houses to try to clean them up. Barrels of tar and vinegar were burned in the streets to try to remove the bad smells. None of these efforts had any effect whatsoever.

As soon as it was obvious that cholera had struck Sheffield, the police in the Old Town Hall were mobilised to supervise the quarantine of patients, the removal and burial of bodies to be buried at night. As the disease progressed all graveyards were closed to the burial of cholera victims. Instead they were buried, rich and poor, by Claywood, where the cholera monument still stands.

By November 1832 the outbreak was over and 1347 people had died. Ironically although they did not know what caused cholera at that point the moves to supply clean water to keep people off the "demon drink" and introduction of better plumbing to cut out the "smells" did cut down the number of fatalities in future flare-ups of cholera in the town. The water fountain at the Old Town Hall was installed in the 1850s after a second cholera outbreak in the city. It is perhaps a monument to doing the right thing for the wrong reason.

GENERAL BOARD of HEALTH.

PRECAUTIONS
AGAINST
CHOLERA.

1. **Apply for Medicine immediately to stop Looseness of the Bowels, or it may bring on Cholera.**
2. Do not take any strong opening Medicine without Medical advice.
3. **Beware of Drink,** for excess in Beer, Wine, or Spirits is likely to be followed by Cholera.
4. **Drink no Water which has not been boiled;** and avoid that which is not quite clear and well tasted.
5. **Avoid** eating Meat that is tainted, decayed or unripe Fruit, and stale Fish or raw Vegetables. Cooked Vegetables, or ripe and cooked Fruit, in moderation, are a necessary part of diet at all times.
6. **Avoid** fasting too long; be moderate at Meals.
7. **Avoid** great fatigue, and getting heated and then chilled.
8. **Avoid** getting wet, or remaining in wet Clothes.
9. **Keep yourself clean,** and your body and feet as dry and as warm as your means and occupation will permit.
10. **Keep your rooms well cleaned and lime-washed;** remove all dirt and impurities immediately.
11. Keep your windows open as much as possible to admit fresh air; and, if necessary, use Chloride of Lime or Zinc to remove any offensive smells.
12. If there are any dust or dirt heaps, foul drains, bad smells, or other nuisances in the house or neighbourhood, make complaint without delay to the Local Authorities having legal power to remove them, or if there be no such authorities, or if you do not know who they are, complain to the Board of Guardians.

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FRIENDS OF THE OLD TOWN HALL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

This is to give formal notice that the third Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Old Town Hall will be held at 7.15 pm on Monday 27 March at the Friends' Meeting House, St James's Street, Sheffield.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the last AGM (available at the meeting)
2. Report from the Chair
3. Report from the Treasurer
4. Election of Committee
5. Any other business

The formal proceedings will be followed by an opportunity to discuss the group's work and by a talk by Matt Hill, who runs Union Street, the co-working operation on the corner of Union and Charles Streets in the city centre. What Union Street does may well have lessons for the future use of the Old Town Hall, which – if it is got into caring community ownership – will need a mix of uses to provide long-term financial security. Nominations are sought for chair, joint hon secretaries, treasurer and committee members, and should be forwarded to one of the joint hon secretaries by Monday 20 March.

THE GREAT CASTLEGATE CLEAR-UP - GET INVOLVED!

On Saturday 22 April from 10am-1pm we are hosting a litter pick in Waingate, Haymarket, Castle Street, Exchange Street, along the river and over to the canal basin. It needn't take a lot of your time but can you spare the odd hour? All clothing and equipment provided. It will be a chance for a social too as we are using Cafe Roma as our meeting place. More details to follow or email fothsheffield@gmail.com

How to contact us

We are on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/OTHSheffield> – and have a blog at <https://friendsofthsheffield.wordpress.com/>

We have a video, now with over a 1000 Youtube views and shot by **Juun Loh** of Sheffield University's Department of Journalism Studies. View it on the Locality website at <http://locality.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/cado/town-hall/>

We now have our own website: <https://sheffieldoldtownhall.co.uk>

Finally you can always email us at: fothsheffield@gmail.com

Contributors

VALERIE BAYLISS

Valerie Bayliss is a former civil servant and consultant with a long-standing interest in Sheffield's historic buildings.

BRIAN HOLMSHAW



Brian chaired the Making History for a Successful City conference (part of Year of Making 2016) and designs this newsletter. In any spare time he runs his own heritage interpretation consultancy - sheafvalleyheritage.co.uk



JOY BULLIVANT

Joy Bullivant, MA. joint secretary of FOTH is a local historian and co-ordinator for the Sheffield based Timewalk project.

CHARD REMAINS

Thanks to Chard for the page 1 photograph of the Old Town Hall.