



FRIENDS OF THE OLD TOWN HALL



FOTH: THE FUTURE

It's been an exciting start to the New Year. We got the final report from our consultants, Creative Heritage, who undertook an initial appraisal of potential new uses for the Old Town Hall.

What the consultants have actually done is carry out a very practical exercise; a market test, in effect. They have talked to a variety of organisations and individuals, to gauge the potential interest in using the building and the practicalities involved, and to assess what will make sense financially. There are some very important conclusions here.

First, we now know for sure that the OTH is not a lost cause and new, productive uses are possible. No-one said we should give up on it! A big factor, inevitably, is its shape and configuration. This isn't an easy building to adapt, having been developed for very specialist uses as courtrooms, cells and the like. Some potential uses, we are advised, are very unlikely to fly; for example conversion of the whole building for residential use won't work (though conversion to a boutique hotel just might). Nor is it likely to work simply as offices. But there is exciting potential for mixed use, for example restaurants, space for digital/creative businesses, managed workspace (for artists and others) and possibly performance use.

The point of the 'mix' would be to find the right balance between uses generating a good commercial return, and others that maybe cover their costs and a bit more but can't manage the full commercial input. In any mix, needless to say, financial sustainability is crucial.

Alongside the judgements about future use are some more sobering comments. Two stand out. Neither is a surprise but the points needed to be made as starkly as they have been in the report. The first is that **potential investors are finding it hard to understand what is the City Council's strategy for Castlegate as a whole**, and especially when serious efforts at regeneration will begin. We are in the same boat, of course. And without clarity on these issues, attracting investment – rather than just talking about it – will be very hard indeed.

(continued below)

FRIENDS OF THE OLD TOWN HALL AGM 2016

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Old Town Hall will be held at the Friends' Meeting House, St James's Street, Sheffield at 7.15 pm on Wednesday 16 March.

Agenda

1. Minutes of general meeting March 2015
2. Chair's report
3. Treasurer's report
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 speaker.

Nominations are sought for chair, joint hon secretaries, treasurer and committee members, and should be forwarded to one of the joint hon secretaries by Wednesday 9 March.

FOTH: THE FUTURE (continued from first page)

The second point, and it follows, is that **the regeneration of the OTH and the regeneration of Castlegate as a whole are mutually dependent**; we are unlikely to get one started without progress being visible on the other. The reduction in footfall in Castlegate now the markets have gone is a huge factor in shaping the attitudes of people who might in principle be ready to consider investing in Castlegate and the OTH. But if they can see life starting to come back, that will make a difference.

There's no question that commercial investment will be needed, alongside grant funding – the 'conservation deficit' will be large. That's the difference between what the OTH will cost to restore and re-use, and what its value will be once the work's done. For the OTH, that's going to be quite a big number.

Where does this leave FOTH? Not cast down. There isn't a lot in the report that we didn't expect. But it's based on research and expert judgement now. And the report will open doors in a way we couldn't expect without it. The committee has embarked on a round of discussions with important players, starting with senior council officers, and we're taking up the report's recommendation to run a workshop bringing together major stakeholders to work through the issues, identify potential partners and funding strategies and organise the next stages of our work. What's clear is that we've done the 'easy' bit; the hard work is just beginning!

GENERAL POST OFFICE, FITZALAN SQUARE

What we all want is a sensible and sustainable new use for the Old Town Hall. Now, just up the road, is a great example of how to do it.

The former Head Post Office in Fitzalan Square was abandoned by Royal Mail in 1999, and left empty. By 2012 it was seen as a candidate for the Victorian Society's annual list of the 10 most endangered buildings list – the Old Town Hall was on the very first of these, as far back as 2008. Then it emerged that regeneration plans were afoot. It

took a while, but the scaffolding went up last summer. It's been refurbished and is now home to Sheffield Hallam University's Institute of the Arts. So the G2 listed building has been saved, restored and brought back into productive use. It looks very good, too, its freshly-cleaned stonework lifting what had been a dingy corner of Fitzalan Square.



I was lucky enough to be as invited to visit, with others, in October, while the builders were still in. This was exciting; a high-quality restoration job was almost complete, with many original features still present. Some former PO workers who'd worked there explained how the sorting and delivery side of things worked. Also present were staff from SHU who have been involved in the conversion and have now moved in. They are delighted with the building's potential. The former

postal hall where you bought your stamps is a public space again, with a cafe and potential as an exhibition and events space. You can call in and see what can be done with a sympathetic and respectful restoration.



The contribution to the regeneration of the whole of Castlegate will be considerable, as students and staff come to the area. That has to be a good thing. We need more of this kind of regeneration in Sheffield. A lesson here, if only the OTH's owners would learn it.

“UNDER THE CLOCK AND IN THE DOCK”: Sheffield Town Hall Prisoners 1845-1846 Part 2 (continued from the last newsletter)

The town hall prison list has recently been fully transcribed by a Sheffield Family History Society volunteer, Kevin Bennett. The resulting transcript allows the stories of miscreants who spent time in the cells “under the clock” 170 years ago to finally escape from the prison list pages and enter into wider consciousness. A selection of prisoners held in the old Town Hall, Waingate (taken from the Sheffield Town Hall prison list, 1845 - 1846) and the crimes they were charged with is listed below:

George Armitage, aged 36, charged with “neglect of family”

Martha Elliott, aged 40, charged with being a “disorderly pauper”

Thomas Burkinshaw, aged 16, charged with being a “rogue and a vagabond”

George Shaw, aged 34, charged with “bigamy”

George Burgin, aged 16, charged with “stealing potatoes”

William Cecil, aged 9, charged with “garden robbery”

Joseph Hodson, aged 29, charged with “stealing a dog”

William Shimeld, aged 18, charged with being “drunk and ringing bells”

Charlotte Smith, aged 14, charged with “maliciously setting fire to furniture”

William Hill, aged 14, charged with being a “disorderly apprentice”

John Wilson, aged 23, charged with being “drunk and furiously riding a horse”

Matthew Nelson, aged 17, charged with “pigeon stealing”

Samuel Marsden, aged 25, charged with “rescuing a prisoner”

Sarah Smith, aged 16, charged with “attempting to drown herself”

Peter Hibberd, aged 12, charged with “gaming”

Jane Marrior, aged 28, charge with “sending her children to beg”

John Ellis, aged 15, charged with “stealing of handkerchiefs”

Peter Crusey, aged 20, charged with “ill-treating a monkey”

Thomas Pearson, aged 26, charged with “bathing in a public situation”

George Barker, aged 26, charged with “shooting with intent to maim”

William Webster aged 16, Henry Raynor aged 16, and John Hodson aged 15, charged with “bathing in the canal”

Henry Hill, aged 18, charged with “killing a duck”

Joseph Grayson, aged 70, charged with being “a wandering lunatic” (magistrate rules that he is to be sent to the workhouse...)

PRESS RELEASE ON LISTED BUILDINGS:

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies welcomes Heritage Counts 2015

The owners of England's listed residential buildings say they feel privileged to be custodians of our heritage, according to this year's Heritage Counts report published today (3 December).

Over 1,000 listed building owners across the country were surveyed for Heritage Count with the results revealing that owners are proud to be conserving heritage for the future and enjoy being a part of our collective history. The survey also found that 93% of owners believe their home is very important to the character of the local area, with 88% recognising the importance of the listed building consent process for protecting the special character of their property and provides local people with a clearer picture of the resources committed locally to protecting and managing heritage assets in their local area.

Craig Mackinlay MP, newly elected Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies, commented "Heritage Counts 2015 confirms what many MPs have known for a long time, that people care deeply about the historic environment. As an owner of a listed building, access to expert advice is vital in ensuring that change, in particular through the planning system, is managed in a way that supports what it is that makes places special and heritage assets significant. A lack of access to advice puts local heritage at risk". (From a press release of December 2015)

Comment: The owners of the Old Town Hall are not residents, but we in Sheffield are, and we have to put up with a decayed building in our midst. The owners have all the advice that residents have in the form of Sheffield City Council conservation officers and expert staff at Historic England in York.

Why don't they make use of this and make a difference ?

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

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

BRIAN HOLMSHAW



Brian chairs 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 consultancy - sheafvalleyheritage.co.uk

TIM KNEBEL

Many thanks to Tim for his article on Old Town Hall prisoners of the 1840's. Tim works at Sheffield Archives.



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.