

= Liverpool Town Hall =

Liverpool Town Hall stands in High Street at its junction with Dale Street , Castle Street , and Water Street in Liverpool , Merseyside , England . It is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade I listed building , and described in the list as " one of the finest surviving 18th @-@ century town halls " . The authors of the Buildings of England series refer to its " magnificent scale " , and consider it to be " probably the grandest ... suite of civic rooms in the country " , and " an outstanding and complete example of late Georgian decoration " .

It is not an administrative building but a civic suite , Lord Mayor 's parlour and Council chamber ; local government administration is centred at the nearby Municipal Buildings . The town hall was built between 1749 and 1754 to a design by John Wood the Elder replacing an earlier town hall nearby . An extension to the north designed by James Wyatt was added in 1785 . Following a fire in 1795 the hall was largely rebuilt and a dome designed by Wyatt was built . Minor alterations have subsequently been made . The streets surrounding its site have altered since its initiation , notably when viewed from Castle Street , the south @-@ side , it appears as off @-@ centre . This is because Water Street which ran to the junction with Dale Street , the west @-@ east axis , was continuous and built up across the junction so that the Town Hall was not visible originally from that aspect . The structures were removed 150 years after this to expose the building from this position .

The ground floor contains the city 's Council Chamber and a Hall of Remembrance for the Liverpool servicemen killed in the First World War . The upper floor consists of a suite of lavishly decorated rooms which are used for a variety of events and functions . Conducted tours of the building are arranged for the general public , and the hall is licensed for weddings .

= = History = =

The first recorded town hall in Liverpool was in 1515 and it was probably a thatched building . It was replaced in 1673 by a building slightly to the south of the present town hall . This town hall stood on " pillars and arches of hewen stone " and under it was the exchange for merchants and traders to carry out their business .

Building of the present town hall began in 1749 on a site slightly to the north of its predecessor ; its foundation stone was laid on 14 September . The architect was John Wood the Elder , who has been described as " one of the outstanding architects of the day " . It was completed and opened in 1754 . The ground floor acted as the exchange , and a council room and other offices were on the upper floor . The ground floor had a central courtyard surrounded by Doric colonnades but it was " dark and confined , and the merchants preferred to transact business in the street outside " . Above the building was a large square dome with a cupola . The Town Hall was bombarded by striking seamen during the 1775 Liverpool Seamen 's Revolt .

The very last act of the American Civil War was when Captain Waddell walked up the steps of Town Hall in November 1865 with a letter to present to the mayor surrendering his vessel , the CSS Shenandoah , to the British government .

Improvements began in 1785 with an extension to the north designed by James Wyatt . Buildings close to the west and north sides were demolished , and John Foster prepared plans for the west façade . In 1786 Wood 's square dome was demolished and plans were made by Wyatt for a new dome over the central courtyard . In 1795 , before the new dome was built , the hall was seriously damaged by a fire . Wyatt 's north extension was not significantly damaged , but Wood 's original building was gutted . The building was reconstructed and Wyatt 's new dome was added . The work was supervised by Foster and completed in 1802 . Under the dome the central courtyard was replaced with a hall containing a staircase . In 1811 a portico was added to the south side . The construction and decoration of the interior was completed by about 1820 .

In 1881 an attempt to blow up the town hall by the Fenians was aborted . In 1899 ? 1900 the portico on the south face was rebuilt and extended , and the northern extension was enlarged to form a recess in the Council Chamber for the Lord Mayor 's chair . In 1921 a room on the ground floor was made into the Hall of Remembrance to commemorate the military men from Liverpool who died in

the First World War . Part of the building was damaged in the Liverpool Blitz of 1941 ; this restored after the end of the Second World War . Further restoration was carried out between 1993 and 1995 .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Exterior = = =

The town hall is built of stone with a slate roof and a lead dome . Its plan consists of a rectangle with a portico extending to the south and Wyatt 's rectangular extension to the north . The extension is slightly narrower than the rest of the building , and also has a projecting portico . The building has two storeys and a basement ; the stonework of the basement and lower storey is rusticated . The south face , overlooking Castle Street , has nine bays . Its central three bays are occupied by the portico . This has three rounded arches on the ground floor , and four pairs of Corinthian columns in the upper storey surrounding a balcony . The east and west faces also have nine bays in the original part of the building , plus an additional three bays to the north on Wyatt 's extension . The middle three bays of the nine original bays project slightly forward and are surmounted by a pediment . The roof of the north face is higher than that of the main building . This face has five bays , with a central portico of three bays . On its first floor are four pairs of Corinthian columns and standing on the roof above these are four statues dating from 1792 by Richard Westmacott ; these statues have been moved from the Irish Houses of Parliament . Above the upper storey windows on all faces are panels containing carvings , some of which relate to Liverpool 's foreign trade . The dome stands on a high drum supported on Corinthian columns . Around the base of the dome are four clock faces , each of which is supported by a lion and unicorn . On the summit of the dome is a statue , representing Minerva . It is 10 feet (3 m) high and was designed by John Charles Felix Rossi .

= = = Interior = = =

= = = = Ground floor = = = =

The main door in the south face leads to the Vestibule or Entrance Hall . It has a floor of encaustic tiles which include depictions of the arms of Liverpool and the liver bird .

The room is panelled and on the east side is a large wooden fireplace containing 17th @-@ century Flemish carvings . It has a groin @-@ vaulted ceiling , and in the lunettes are murals painted in 1909 depicting events in Liverpool 's history . Below these are brass tablets containing the names of the freemen of Liverpool . Also in the entrance hall are bardic chairs from the two Eisteddfods held in the city .

At the rear of the ground floor in Wyatt 's extension is the Council Chamber . This has mahogany @-@ panelled walls and can seat 160 people . Adjacent to the Council Chamber is the Hall of Remembrance . On its wall are panels bearing the names of the military men who lost their lives in the First World War , and eight murals painted by Frank O. Salisbury in 1923 .

In the centre of the ground floor is the Staircase Hall described in the Buildings of England series as " one of the great architectural spaces of Liverpool " . A broad staircase rises between two pairs of Corinthian columns to a half @-@ landing , and narrower flights climb from that on each side to the upper floor . On the ground floor on each side of the staircase are display cabinets holding the city 's silver . On the half @-@ landing is a statue of George Canning dated 1832 by Francis Chantrey , and hanging on the wall above this is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II by Sir Edward Halliday .

Above the staircase the dome is carried by four pendentives ; it rises to a height of 106 feet (32 m) and its interior is coffered . Around the base of the dome is inscribed Liverpool 's motto , " Deus Nobis Haec Otia Fecit " , and in the pendentives are paintings dated 1902 by Charles Wellington Furse depicting scenes of dock labour .

= = = = Upper floor = = = =

All the rooms on this floor are designed for entertainment and they have connecting doors that allow for a complete circuit of the floor . The middle room on the south side of the building is the Central Reception Room . It has a circular ceiling with pendentives , and plasterwork in neoclassical style designed by Francesco Bernasconi . The room leads to the balcony overlooking Castle Street . A door to the right leads to the West Reception Room , with a segmented @-@ vaulted ceiling ; it contains a marble chimneypiece with brass and cast iron fittings . This room leads to the Dining Room which occupies the west side of the building . It has been described as " the most sumptuous room in the building " . Around the room are Corinthian pilasters . The plaster ceiling has moulded compartments , and under these is a frieze decorated with scrolls , urns and crouching dogs . The roundels between the capitals of the pilasters contain paintings of pairs of cupids .

The next room on the circuit is a small room which leads into the Large Ballroom . This occupies the whole of Wyatt 's north extension and measures 89 feet (27 m) by 42 feet (13 m) ; the ceiling is 40 feet (12 m) high . Around the room are Corinthian pilasters and on each of the shorter walls is a massive mirror . In the south wall is a niche for musicians , over which is a coffered semi @-@ dome ; on each side of this is a white marble chimneypiece . Hanging from the ceiling are " three of the finest Georgian chandeliers in Europe " ; each is 28 feet (9 m) high , contains 20 @,@ 000 pieces of cut glass crystal , and weighs over one ton . They were made in Staffordshire in 1820 . The floor is a maple sprung dance floor . Most of the east side of the hall is occupied by the Small Ballroom , also known as the East Reception Room or Music Room . This room is surrounded by pilasters and at each end is a shallow apse ; the apse in the north wall has two niches for musicians . Suspended from the ceiling are three 19th @-@ century chandeliers . Completing the circuit is the East Reception Room , similar in style to the West Reception Room . The rooms contain a number of portraits ; one of these is of James Maury , America 's first consul .

= = Current use and surroundings = =

The city council meets every seven weeks in the Council Chambers to conduct the business of the city . The town hall is open to the general public each month when conducted tours take place . The hall is licensed for weddings and , in addition to providing a venue for the ceremony , catering facilities can be supplied for a reception or a meal . Catering is also available for other events and functions .

Immediately to the north of the Town Hall is a paved square known as Exchange Flags ; this is surrounded on all sides by modern office buildings . In the square is the Nelson Monument , celebrating the achievements of Horatio Nelson . It is a Grade II * listed building and is the earliest surviving public monument in the city .

= = Gallery = =