

= Victoria Rooms , Bristol =

The Victoria Rooms , also known as the Vic Rooms , houses the University of Bristol 's music department in Clifton , Bristol , England , on a prominent site at the junction of Queens Road and Whiteladies Road . The building , originally assembly rooms , was designed by Charles Dyer and was constructed between 1838 and 1842 in Greek revival style , and named in honour of Queen Victoria , who had acceded to the throne in the previous year . An eight column Corinthian portico surmounts the entrance , with a classical relief sculpture designed by Musgrave Watson above . The construction is of dressed stonework , with a slate roof . A bronze statue of Edward VII , was erected in 1912 at the front of the Victoria Rooms , together with a curved pool and several fountains with sculptures in the Art Nouveau style .

The Victoria Rooms contain a 665 @-@ seat auditorium , a lecture theatre , recital rooms , rehearsal rooms and a recording studio . Jenny Lind and Charles Dickens performed at the Victoria Rooms . It was also the venue for important dinners and assemblies , including banquets to commemorate the opening of the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the quatercentennial anniversary of Cabot 's discovery of North America , meetings which led to the establishment of the University College , Bristol , an early congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and sufragettes " at @-@ homes " . The building was purchased and given to the University in 1920 as a home for the student union and , circa 1924 , it spent a brief period as a cinema . Following a fire in 1934 , the building was refurbished by the University . It remained as the base of the student union until purpose built facilities were opened in Queens Road in the 1960s . The Victoria Rooms then became an exhibition and conference centre , before housing the music department in 1996 . They remain in use in the 21st century for concerts , exhibitions , plays , recitals and lectures .

= = The building = =

The Victoria Rooms , also known colloquially as the Vic Rooms , are situated at the junction of Queen 's Road and Whiteladies Road , in Clifton , Bristol , " occupying one of the finest sites in Clifton , " according to a 1906 visitor 's guide . Gomme , in Bristol : an architectural history (1979) , described it as a key building on a prominent intersection . The building was designed as assembly rooms by Charles Dyer . The foundation stone was laid on 24 May 1838 , the 19th birthday of Queen Victoria , in whose honour the building was named . Building works in the Greek revival style , incorporating an eight @-@ columned Corinthian portico which is 30 feet (9 @.@ 1 m) tall , were completed in 1842 . It is constructed of ashlar (dressed stone work) with steps leading up to the portico . The roof is of slate . Two sloping ramps were built to allow the passage of carriages into the building . The pediment in the blind attic above the columns has a relief carving attributed to Musgrave Watson " depicting Wisdom in her chariot ushering in the morning , and followed by the Three Graces " , according to Andrew Foyle in Pevsner 's Guide . He adds that the main hall was disappointingly remodelled in 1935 , following a fire the previous year . In 1838 , the design of the interior was described as " nothing either particularly remarkable or new in regard to design " in the Civil Engineer and Architects ' Journal . In 1849 , the interior of the hall was described by Chilcott , in his Descriptive history of Bristol as being decorated in a Greek theme , to match the exterior of the building . Gomme describes the pediment sculpture as " Minerva in car driven by Apollo , accompanied by the Hours and Graces " , attributing the sculpture to Jabez Tyley . Henry Lonsdale , writing in 1866 , explains this anomaly by revealing that Tyley created the sculpture in Bath Stone from a plaster of paris model by Watson . The architecture of the building is described by English Heritage as " a product of European trends of the time , moving away from Neoclassicism and towards Roman Corinthian design . " It has been designated by English Heritage as a Grade II * listed building .

Inside the main entrance is a vestibule which then leads via an octagonal room , with a bowed cast @-@ iron railed balcony and a domed ceiling , to the main auditorium . A correspondent of the Bristol Mercury , in 1846 , described an ingenious central heating system consisting of a cast iron stove which heated and circulated air , " using less than half a cwt . [25 kilograms (55 lb)] of

Welsh anthracite in twenty @-@ four hours " , kept the interior of the building some 30 to 40 ° F (16 to 22 ° C) higher than the external temperature . Much of the interior was remodelled in the mid @-@ 20th century , although some period plaster decorations remain in the Regency room . From 1873 the main auditorium housed a large organ originally built for the Royal Panopticon of Arts and Science in Leicester Square , from where it was removed to St Paul 's Cathedral and thence to the Victoria Rooms . In July 1899 it was decided to replace this with an electric organ , which could be played from a keyboard at a considerable distance from the organ itself . The organ was built by Norman & Beard , and was first played by Edwin Lemare on 31 October 1900 ; On 1 December 1934 , a fire started under the stage of the great hall or auditorium , quickly spreading . The Times reported that " The brigades were able to no more than prevent the fire from extending to the Lesser Hall and the recreation rooms . The fine electric organ was completely destroyed . "

In the 21st century , the building houses a 665 @-@ seat auditorium and rehearsal rooms . The auditorium is approximately 418 square metres (4 @,@ 500 sq ft) , with an adjacent lecture theatre of some 119 square metres (1 @,@ 280 sq ft) and a recital room of 139 square metres (1 @,@ 500 sq ft) . The purpose built composition and recording studios are in regular use for research and the creation of works . Other facilities include a bar , common rooms , a resource centre and practice rooms .

= = Forecourt = =

The building was originally surrounded by iron railings as shown in 19th century photographs , but these are no longer there , possibly removed during the Second World War as part of a nationwide scrap drive .

A memorial statue of Edward VII , designed by Edwin Alfred Rickards and executed by Henry Poole RA , was erected in 1912 at the front of the Victoria Rooms , together with a curved pool , lamps , steps , balustrades , ornamental crouching lions and fountains with sculptures in the Art Nouveau style . Two sphinxes , which had previously guarded the building , were removed for these new works . The statue and fountains are regarded as fine examples of Rickards and Poole 's work and have been Grade II * listed . An interesting feature of the fountains is that the water flow is controlled by an anemometer " so that on windy days the pressure is reduced in order that the water does not blow across the adjacent roadway . "

= = History = =

The Victoria Rooms were opened on 24 May 1842 ; building had begun in 1838 , and cost £ 23 @,@ 000 . The money was raised by a " body of Conservative citizens " . Jenny Lind and Charles Dickens were just two of the artists known to have performed there . Numerous private subscription balls were held at the rooms , in competition with those organised at the assembly rooms in the Mall , Clifton . This rivalry occasioned disputes between the promoters and accusations of prejudice and snobbery . Other uses included what was the first public demonstration of electric lighting in Bristol in 1863 . It was also the scene for large banquets , such as that to celebrate the opening of the Clifton Suspension Bridge in 1864 , and the celebrations , in 1897 , of the four hundredth anniversary of John Cabot 's discovery of North America .

On 11 June 1874 the Victoria Rooms hosted a meeting to promote what was described as a College of Science and Literature for the West of England and South Wales , which became University College , Bristol , an educational institution which existed from 1876 to 1909 . It was the predecessor institution to the University of Bristol , which gained a Royal Charter in 1909 . The meeting was attended by the then President of the British Association and Sir William Thompson (later Lord Kelvin) . This meeting has been described as a partial success , as it gained the support of Albert Fry and Lewis Fry , members of the influential Fry family (the Fry name being known for the chocolate business set up by their grandfather and developed by their father Joseph Storrs Fry) . Lewis Fry was a Quaker , lawyer and later a Liberal and Unionist Member of Parliament from 1885 ? 1892 and 1895 @-@ 1890 for the constituency Bristol North . In 1898 the third congress of the

British Association for the Advancement of Science was held at the rooms .

In the early twentieth century , Annie Kenney and Clara Codd , local organisers of the Women 's Social and Political Union (the suffragettes) used the Victoria Rooms to host " at homes " , to which all were invited . In 1920 , the rooms were purchased from the original private company by wealthy local industrialist Sir George Wills and given to the University to house the students ' union . It appears that the University briefly leased the building for use as the Clifton Cinema which was situated there in March 1924 , when local photographer Reece Winstone took a photograph . All seats were priced at 1 / 3d . The Victoria Rooms remained the base for the student union until 1964 when a purpose @-@ built facility was constructed in nearby Queen 's Road . The building then became a conference and exhibition centre , hosting occasional concerts such as those by Pink Floyd in 1967 and 1969 . In 1987 the building housed the first incarnation of the Exploratory founded by Richard Gregory ? a hands @-@ on science centre and precursor of At @-@ Bristol ? until 1989 . The University Music Department was moved into the Victoria Rooms in 1996 .

The venue , in the 21st century , has a regular programme of concerts , theatrical performances , lectures and conferences , serving a similar purpose to that for which the building was constructed in the nineteenth century .