

dewsbury town hall

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History of Dewsbury Town Hall

Foundation Stone

The foundation stone was laid on the 12th October 1886 by the Mayor Thomas Bateman Fox JP. According to the Dewsbury Reporter “a day as it proved so rich with rain, the foundation stone was laid amid great rejoicing. There was a general holiday, decorations, a procession and bands of music illuminations”



Architects

The Town Hall was built during the reign of Queen Victoria and was completed to the plans of Holtom and Fox, a local firm of architects within the town. The total build cost was £40,000.

Office & Civic Accommodation

The new Town Hall was built to cater for the towns increasing needs for the many civic offices such as town clerks, schools, highways, lighting, sewerage, rating, town planning, police and courts, merchant exchange, Council Chambers, Concert Hall and mayoral proceedings!

The Grand Opening

Dewsbury Town Hall was officially opened on Tuesday 17th September 1889 by the Mayor of the time, Alderman John Walker JP.

As with the laying of the foundation stone the official opening of the town hall was declared a general holiday in the town. The main event was a grand procession assembling at Saville Town marching through the borough to the new park known as Crows Nest. From there they followed the route through crowded streets finally finishing outside impressive new the town hall. The guests were then seated within the magnificent Victoria Concert Hall

The Turret Clock

In 1888 the then mayor of Dewsbury Alderman Mark Oldroyd expressed his desire to present the town with a clock for the town hall. The offer was kindly accepted by the council. The clock was supplied by William Potts and son of Leeds. It was started by Mrs Oldroyd at 11.55am on Tuesday 2nd April 1889. The costs of the clock was over £1,000.

Stained Glass Windows

The stained glass windows within the Town Hall are fine specimens of the glass stainers art.

On the 1st floor to the right of the doors leading to Victoria Hall are two superb windows.

The first was unveiled on 1st May 1952 after the previous window was destroyed in 1940 during the 2nd World War. The current window depicts various aspects of Dewsbury's trade, shopping, textiles, electrical goods and market in the fifties. The former window also depicting trade was donated by Dewsbury and District Tradesmen's

The second window shows the coats of arms of various Dewsbury Lords of the Manor dating back to Edward the Confessor in 1058, right up to Mr Charles H Marriott the then Lord of the Manor of Dewsbury who financed the window in 1889. Several of the coats of arms on this window are also seen within Dewsbury Minster

On the second floor above the main staircase the three windows depict St Paulinus preaching Christianity to the heathens on the banks of the river Calder in 627 AD. The side panels also show King Edwin and Queen Ethelburga who were among the first converts to the Christian faith they were baptised in York on Easter Day 627.

At the top of the stairs on the second floor, the first stain glass window was donated by The Chamber of Commerce in 1889. It depicts the early woollen industry and shows a female figure holding a distaff spindle and whorl, both were used for hand spinning.

The second window depicts science and the figure is surrounded by scientific apparatus such as a prism, telescope, dividers, globe and scroll. The lower part of the window shows a scene of Dunford Bridge reservoir near Huddersfield, for many years it was Dewsbury's main source of drinking water.

Paintings

Dewsbury Town Hall is fortunate in having a collection of some 36 paintings, chiefly the result of two generous donations in the early 20th century – The Austin Bequest in 1903 and the gift of the Charles Brooke Crawshaw Collection in 1928.

In terms of quality the works on display within the town Hall represent a cross section of British painters from the 19th Century – with two spectacular exceptions. Within Dewsbury's collection are two remarkable and outstanding paintings one by 1. John Martin and the by 2. William Strutt.

1. **JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL UPON GIBEON**
Oil on canvas 1848 Gift of Charles Brook Crawshaw 1928
Reception Room

This painting is a full size replica version of a work originally painted in 1816, based upon the Old Testament story (Joshua X 10-12). It was martin's first attempt at a large scale epic composition, exhibited in the Royal Academy of 1816

2. STOCKS CLOSED FIRMLY WITH AN UPWARD TENDENCY
Oil on canvas 1889 Gift of Charles Brook Crawshaw 1928
Committee Room 3

This is Strutt's first picture in 18th century dress, it is a bright and colourful scene showing a scarlet coated soldier imprisoned in the stocks under an enormous oak tree.

The village beadle, befuddled by grog, sleeps against the wall of the nearby lock up and a girl, who has stolen his keys, is preparing to release the soldier. A small terrier is barking furiously to wake his master, while the bulldog looks on stoically.

Silverware

Originally Dewsbury's Insignia would have consisted of a Mace, Mayor's collar and badge, the Mayoress's chain, medallions for the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress and the Mayor's Chaplain jewel.

Unfortunately, in February 1981 all of Dewsbury's Chains of Office were stolen from the Town Hall, only the Mayor's chain was recovered and was found in the bottom of a nearby canal.

The Mace

The Mace is silver gilt and is almost 3 feet long. The mace was made by T&J Bragg of Birmingham. It was the gift of 23 local women to mark the 25th anniversary of the Incorporation of the Borough on 11th April 1887.

The Mayor's Collar

The mayor's collar consists of 18 gold medallions, in whose centres are alternatively a white sapphire and a representation of a fleece. The mayor's badge is gold and carries the former coat of arms and the town's motto in enamel. The collar and badge were also designed and manufactured by T&J Bragg in 1864.

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Images of Dewsbury Town Hall



Opening of the New Town Hall, Dewsbury.

Tuesday, September 17th, 1889.



Tuesday, September 17th, 1889.

BY

→ HIS WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF DEWSBURY, ←

JOHN WALKER, Esq., of Lees House, Dewsbury.

At 11-30 a.m.

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME.

A GRAND PROCESSION

■ NINE SECTIONS, will be formed in SAVILE TOWN, at 12-30, and will March through the Borough to the NEW PARK, "CROW NEST," by the following Route, viz. :-

Wilton Road, Church Street, Market Place, Bradford Road to Batley Carr, Town Street, Carr Top, Malkroyd Lane, halting at the Industrial Hall for the Mayor, Corporation, Heads of Public Bodies and Visitors, who will join the Procession to the Park by way of Market Place, Westgate, Daisy Hill, Nelson Street, Wellington Road, Webster Hill, Huddersfield Road and Cemetery Road to the Gate at the West Town End.

Mr. J. HUTCHINSON,
" BENJN. OATES,
" HENRY MASON,

} Secretaries.

- ABM FOSTER, Chairman of Committee.

WM. FREDERIC FOX, Head Marshal





The Corporation of Dewsbury
request the honour of the Company of

AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW TOWN HALL,
BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR, (JOHN WALKER ESQ.)
ON THE 17TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1889.
AT NOON.

AN EARLY REPLY ADDRESSED TO THE TOWN CLERK IS REQUESTED.

Opening of the Town Hall

The Mayor & Mayoress of Dewsbury
request the honour of the Company of

At a Reception in the Town Hall.
on September 17th 1889, at 8-30, o'Clock.
Dancing at 10-30, p.m.

Lees House,
Dewsbury

EVENING DRESS OR UNIFORM.

R. S. V. P.