

HULL'S VICTORIA SQUARE AND ITS BUILDINGS

At about 1890 and beyond this large, impressive open square, would have been a warren of slum houses, back streets, narrow alleys and declining businesses, smoke and grime. At this time Hull's Mayor, an Architect called Alfred Gelder drew up a plan of demolition and clearance and in 1900 the Council started work on what was then called the Junction Street scheme which involved the formation of the Square named Queen Victoria Square and one of its main buildings, the City Hall and close consultation was held with an Architect called Frank Matcham who was a nationally known theatre designer.



The foundation stone for this fine building was laid by the Princess of Wales in 1903 and the building opened in 1909. 2 years later the huge organ was installed at the back of the main hall.

The Ferens Art Gallery is one of the best outside London and was opened in 1927, occupying the site of a former church and paid for by local benefactor and Mayor, Thomas Ferens.



Before Ferens Art Gallery, the main art gallery for the City was in the City Hall and called the Victoria Art Gallery and continued in this life until 1927 when it moved to the building that was to be called Ferens Art Gallery, named after Hull's Mayor and benefactor Thomas Ferens. The first photograph is of both the Punch Hotel which you will see to your left as you face the City Hall and further left the Ferens Art Gallery, featured in this photograph which is closed in 2016 but reopens in 2017 and includes the Turner Prize for that year.



The City Hall (photographed above) fronts on to the Square. Up the grand entrance leads to the main Hall and behind that there are three reception rooms. The main hall has side and rear galleries and can accommodate about 3000 people. There are shops down each side of the outside of the Hall.

In 1941 the building was badly damaged in a bombing raid. The roof and main hall was damaged and the organ totally destroyed but by 1950 the building had been restored and re-opened and in 1951 a new organ was installed. There is more in the Want to Know More Section Hull and the 2 World Wars part of this website.

What else ought you to see? Look up towards the magnificent green copper dome to a frieze and statues representing the arts, science, music and the classics.

It really is quite a building and today holds frequent concerts of music of all sorts, comedians, exhibitions and many other events.

If you turn away from the City Hall, in the centre of the square is a statue of Queens Victoria standing proudly on what is a very fine public toilet (her throne?)



The monument was designed by an Architect J.S. Gibson and the sculptor H.C.Fehr and its was unveiled in 1903 by the Prince of Wales (before the building of the nearby City Hall). The Prince of Wales later became King George V.



Moving round we come to the unique and stylish Dock Office, opened in 1871 for that purpose but now the City's Maritime Museum. It was the main working office for the Hull Dock Company – the first main office had been at the far end of Queens Dock and still exists as a building today. It has three domes and unusually is a triangular shaped building. It is that shape because that was the shape of the land it was built on. The

architect who designed this fine building was someone called Sir Christopher Wray, who entered a design competition and won, and was award the sum of £100 for the design, a considerable sum in those days. The local favourite, a Hull born architect, designed a rectangular building to fit on to a rectangular site!. Visiting this free museum really is a must, with whaling galleries, fishing galleries and commercial galleries set out to a very fine standard. Note also an overhead tinted photograph of the area, with the site of Ferens Art Gallery clearly visible before construction. Note also the factories and housing close to Victoria Square.

Next to this is a modern café but housed in a building built at the turn of the last century for the Yorkshire Penny Bank (inflation makes the name look redundant). This is a very fine building, 5 stories high.

Also in the Square was a large building with an imposing tower, called the Prudential building. This was bombed in the Second World War, and because of its condition the tower was demolished soon after and nothing now remains.