

The Victorian Tiles



Corn Exchange, Blandford Forum

Following the Great Fire of Blandford in 1731, the Town Hall and Shambles were designed and constructed by the Bastard Brothers in 1734.

The Corn Exchange was added later, in 1858, and in 1891 the hall was richly decorated with faience tiles.

These decorative tiles were concealed beneath plywood boxing for several decades, and we can now enjoy their restoration and reinstatement as part of the refurbishment of the town's stunning Grade 1 Listed building, which is the jewel in the crown of Blandford Forum.

Among the decorative details is the face of Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, featured on some of the tiles (pictured).



As a revered figure in ancient Greek religion and the deity of harvest, grain, and fertility, her presence is especially fitting in the Corn Exchange, where corn was traded in the 19th century.



*This fantastic photograph
was kindly provided by
Tony Harrison from
The Gorge Café
and shows the tiles in the
Corn Exchange.*

*It is thought to have been
taken around 1910.*

As part of the refurbishment works in 2024/2025 a specialist consultant in historic tiling assessed the condition of the tiles and provided recommendations for their repair and replacement.

This was supported by a comprehensive report provided by the project architect, Malcolm Simmonds.

There are 23 different types of tile, with around 1,200 in total, and the restoration process took nearly 1,000 hours to complete.

The costs rose significantly on the tiles and the Town Council carefully considered the financial impact on the overall project but agreed to proceed. One of the six objectives for the refurbishment project that were adopted by the Town Council and have underpinned its development for the last few years is

'Beautiful'

The beauty of the building must be restored and enhanced wherever possible, removing inappropriate additions and restoring and enhancing historic features.

Reinstating the full tiling scheme is one of the most important aspects to delivering this objective. In addition, grant funding - such as the Government's Community Ownership Fund, The Pilgrim Trust and Dorset Council's Capital Leverage Fund - was significantly linked to restoring the heritage of the building. The full scope tiling scheme was a key part of this and one of the most important and significant characteristics of the building as a Corn Exchange.



These photographs were taken prior to the refurbishment works and show the boxing in of the tiles.

To help reduce overall costs of the project, Town Council staff set to work removing the boarding that was boxing in the tiles.

This proved to be a lot tougher than anticipated!





Removing the boarding meant the scope of works required could be assessed by the specialist and the architect. You can see some of the damage that had been hidden for decades behind the blue boarding.

*An account from the
contractor who carried out the works...*



Prior to works being undertaken, the scheme was documented bay by bay to act as a pre-condition record. All surfaces were then given a superficial clean to remove the accumulated dust, dirt and surface deposits which had accrued over the years. This enabled us to determine the true condition of the wall tiling prior to carrying out the proposed interventions. Following cleaning, we stabilised all areas of loose and friable material by grouting and spot fixing damage using specialist conservation consolidants. Repairs to the backing render were also completed to ensure we had a stable background to adhere the new tiles to.

Tiles were selected individually and inserted by hand to ensure they blended as much as possible and we maintained the relationship to the original scheme. On completion, a grout colour was matched to the older material to integrate these new units more seamlessly. Not all damaged tiles were replaced and we tried to retain as much of the original scheme as possible, to do this we completed small repairs using pigmented epoxy resin. The overall result we think has achieved the balance of repair and replacement - respecting the original material as much as possible, yet presenting the scheme as complete.

The key to the success of this restoration was, we believe, down to the traditional manufacturer's ability to reproduce the tiles so accurately and the skill of the craftspeople in the repair and reintegration of both new and old material.



The tiling scheme is a very visible change to the building and it has been clear for local residents to see the difference that the investment into the project has made in this area. Many of the other alterations and repairs are less visible and more complicated to communicate.

Councillors therefore approved a 'sponsor a tile scheme' at £30 per tile. This helped contribute towards the cost of the full scope scheme and increase community ownership of the project.

The Town Council is very grateful to the residents, businesses and organisations who have sponsored the tiles and they are listed in the following pages.

Just under £3,500 was received in donations towards the tiles, which cost approximately £120,000 to reinstate.

We have received very positive feedback from the community, which is reassuring that their restoration was the right decision.

Tile Sponsors

Forum Drama x 21

*The Worshipful Master and Brethren of the Lodge
of Honour and Friendship No. 1266 x 10*

Blandford & District Civic Society x 10

Blandford Evening Women's Institute x 10

Nocturn Lacey Clarke x 5

Allison Finch & Jeremy Adams x 4

Ferry & Yvonne Clarkson x 3

Colin Close Funeral Service x 3

Hugo & Yvonne Mieville x 2

Colin & Chris Stevens x 2

Mike & Elaine Lofthouse x 2

Clara Tavernor & Colin Fletcher x 2

Mr Nicholas & Mrs Debra Lambert x 2

Blandford ArtsReach Promoters Group x 2

Stour Valley Civils

The Forum Foot Clinic

Simply Sew Blandford

CBCA Services Limited

Bleckly Clarke Lodge No. 8290

*Chris Rodway - The Framing Centre,
West Street 1982 - 2006*

Knees Up

DW Sweets

Prestige Roofing

The Georgian Tearoom

Blandford Shoe Repairs

Blandford Community Fridge

NHS Retirement Fellowship Blandford

Clare Francis

Paula Clover

Sarah Jane Gray

Louis Joseph Naulin

Graham & Tina Sweetenham

Deirdre Sprackling & The Gatehouse Family

Nick Amey

Gwen Amey

Roger & Heather Carter

Steve & Lynn Hitchings

Mike, Shelley, Olivia & Lucy Shepherd

Lee, Abi, Arthur, Emilia-Rose & Louie Hitchings

Alan Cross

Coral Cross

Dawn Wills

Jan & Shona Smith

John & Jackie Stayt

Shaun O'Donnell & the Foot Family of

Blandford Forum

Ella

John Scott

The Cleal Family

Chris & Jim Atkins

Brian & Jacqui Rodgers

Jim, Sam, Nate & Will Hawkins

Charlie Eggar

Daniel Banks

Sue Marriott

Stewart Herring

Gina and Roy Hartwell

Claire Smith & Kevin Banks

Pamela Rees

A & M McIver

The Perkins Family

Jeanette England & Brian Leaman

Christine, Robert, Lindsay & Ben Acott

Peter, Diane, Michael, David & Kirsty England

The Verneys

Anne Forde

Jean Peach

Geoff Peach

The Taylor Boys

Liz & Nick Best

Sarah, James and Chieveley

Ella Lacey

Benjamin Lacey

Kaitlin Jeneson

Mr Dave Berry

Logann Holdsworth

Stuart & Rosalind Cannell

Simone Walls-MacDonald

To Wallace

Isla Robertson

Gerald Killingworth

Andrew John Clough

The Majury Family

Tony, Louise, Matthew & William

Sally Bellman

The King Family

The Dibley Family

Sue & Paul Hutchings

Jack Robert Harding-Wood

Breanne Helena Harding-Wood

Stanley Cook

Roger Bignold

Peter & Sandy Preen

Sue & Martin Roberts

Jacqueline & Kevin McKeown

Peter Hammond B.Sc. MCIOB



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

Corn Exchange Project Funding

The total project cost was £3.4m and the income included:

- Around £1.4m Town Council reserves and other accruals*
- £400,000 local charitable organisation*
- £250,000 Community Ownership Fund (part of the Levelling Up funding)*
- £20,000 Pilgrim Trust*
- £1,000 The Georgian Group*
- £102,000 Private Donations*
- £9,031 Awards for All - National Lottery funding*
- £3,800 Historic Chamber of Trade*
- Balance made up with £1.3 million of Public Works Loan Board borrowing being repaid over 25 years*

Key Consultants and Supporters of the Overall Scheme

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR

ESTD 1925
HAMMOND
BUILDING CONTRACTORS

ARCHITECTS

MALCOLM SIMMONDS ARCHITECTS

GRANTS & DONATIONS FROM



Funded by
UK Government

LEAD CONSULTANT & STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS



The Morton Partnership
Structural Engineers

SERVICES CONSULTANTS

QODA



QUANTITY SURVEYORS

walker associates
chartered quantity surveyors

CLIENT ADVISORS & GRANT ADVISORS

INGHAM
PINNOCK
ASSOCIATES

Pilgrim
Trust



ACOUSTIC CONSULTANTS

Kromers

Stubhampton Estates Ltd

Town Council Staff & Councillors at project completion

Linda Scott-Giles

Jon Goodenough

Cllr Steve Hitchings

Cllr Sheila Chapman

Amanda Crocker

Becci Brady

Cllr Hugo Mieville

Cllr Terry Clarkson

Rachael Harding

Zoe Bridgeman

Cllr Lee Hitchings

Cllr Yvonne Mieville

Kat Clark

Andy Reynolds

Cllr Colin Stevens

Cllr Maggie Putt

Gary Agriss

Jason Parsons

Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke

Cllr Gail Del-Pinto

Nick Chandler

Tom Clarke

Cllr Byron Quayle

Cllr Samantha Morgan

Chris Johnson

Neill Churchill

Cllr Alan Cross

Cllr Jacqueline Robinson

Gareth Alyson

Huw Lewis

Cllr Rosemary Holmes

Cllr Michelle Spruce