



OPENING DOORS

Newsletter of the York Mansion House Restoration Project



In this issue

Updates on the recent activities as part of the Restoration Project - including all the work undertaken to pack up the contents of the house; the photography of all areas of the Mansion House before, during and after restoration; the removals process; the Empty House Open Weekend; plus some interesting early finds.

Latest News

An update around the new contractors that have been appointed.

Details of future public access to the Mansion House in 2016.

Plus updates on the status of the Restoration Fund.



Welcome to the first edition of the 'Opening Doors' newsletter.

Since March this year, when we heard that our application for Heritage Lottery Funding had been successful, a lot has been happening - though much of it behind the scenes!

Now that the Mansion House is closed, we've decided to issue a regular newsletter to keep people informed on how the project is progressing.

Issue 1 will bring you up-to-date on events so far, further editions will follow every six weeks. All newsletters will be made available to download from our website, Facebook and Twitter account.

Restoration Project Update

Packing

As you can imagine, packing up everything in the Mansion House was a huge task. Work began in June, months before the house closed to the public. Under the direction of Education & Learning Officer, Gillian Waters, members of York Past & Present (now part of our newly expanded



Friends group) did a wonderful job of packing, recording and labelling over 5,000 individual items - an amazing achievement! Thanks once again to all who took part.

Photography

To supplement the photographs taken by the Friends group as they packed up the house, York Camera Club were invited to produce a photographic record of all areas of the Mansion House before, during and after restoration - plus key pieces from the Civic gold and silver collection before these were placed into secure storage.

This project began in July and August, two members of the club then returned in November to photograph the empty house.



More photography will follow once the building work gets underway and all the photographs will form part the Mansion House archive. We'll also be making lots of them available online, via the Mansion House website and Historypin.



Removals

On the 29th August we held the last of our guided tours and on the 1st September the Mansion House closed its doors to the public.

The next stage was to empty the house completely - another big challenge! Much of the work was carried out by our own staff and packers, but specialist removal companies were hired to pack, remove and store the artworks, furniture, clocks and chandeliers. Removals were completed over a busy two weeks in September, attracting much interest from passers-by in St Helen's Square.



Empty House Weekend

On the 26th & 27th September, to celebrate the closure of the house for restoration, we held one final open weekend - with a difference. This was a unique opportunity for members of the public to see the 'bare bones' of the Mansion House, emptied of all its furniture, carpets, paintings and porcelain. Vespertine also livened up the Sunday evening with music, drama and art in the Dining Room, State Room and Yellow Room.

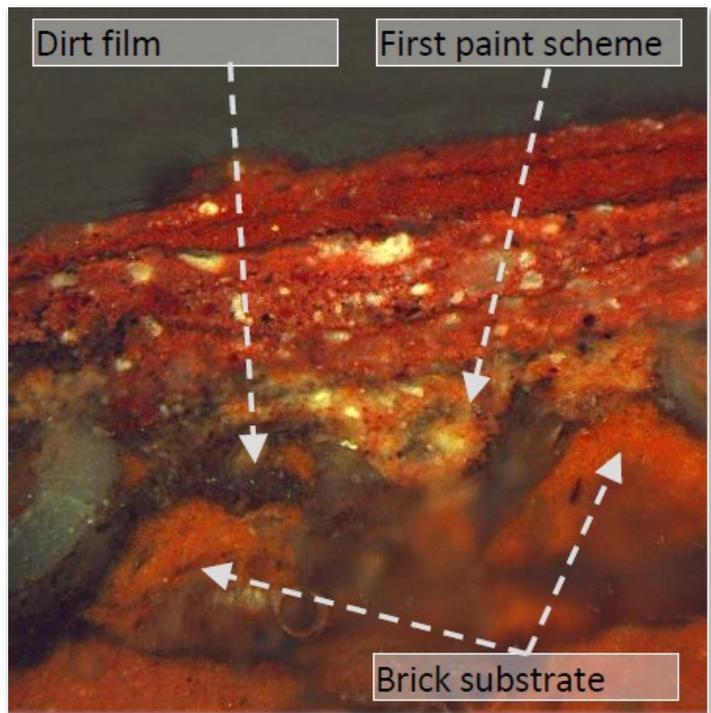


The whole event proved very popular and brought a grand total of 1,365 visitors through the door! A big 'thank you' to those Friends who acted as room stewards and helped make the weekend such a success.

Paint Analysis

One thing for the project team to consider is how the outside of the Mansion House should look after restoration. Should it be repainted? Or should the stonework and bricks be left exposed? To help decide this question, an expert analysis of paint samples has been carried out to discover how the house might have looked throughout the ages - and the condition of the brick and stonework beneath.

The analysis revealed up to 46 layers of paint! It seems that the building may originally have been left unpainted until it became dirty, at which point it was painted in colours to match the stone and brick, in order to brighten it up. Then when fashions changed in the late 18th century the whole façade, including the coat of arms, was repainted in a stone colour. By the late 19th century, the brickwork was again painted red and the coat of arms was multi-coloured, as it has remained to this day.



Detail of substrate and early layers of a sample showing remains of paint and condition of the brickwork.

Image supplied by RMP Architects.

So for much of its life the Mansion House has been painted in various shades of red and light stone colours. We plan to consult Historic England and York residents on the final colour scheme

Some interesting 'finds'

Unexpected things are often discovered in the course of a restoration project. An early structural inspection revealed this exotic box from the 1940s, concealed under the floorboards of the Yellow Room. We hope the dates were enjoyed!

Nearby was a metal object, tentatively identified as a 'bell pull' to summon the servants. If you have any better ideas as to what it might be, do let us know.





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More recently, a 'false' door in the Dining Room was removed to reveal...a brick wall! This had formed the back of the safe where the civic silver was once kept.

Before the wall was built the door way led to a passageway which ran underneath the main stairs to the butler's room.



We'll keep you updated as more finds and information come to light.

Latest News

Appointment of contractors

We are delighted to announce that York-based company William Anelay Ltd. has been appointed to carry out the building work on the house. Appropriately, the company was founded in the 1700s and has a wealth of experience in historic building projects, so the Mansion House will be in safe hands! This appointment means that the main building work will soon be underway.

Public access

Along with the details shared of how to keep informed with the project, we will be running a series of hard hat tours throughout 2016. Dates will become available in the next newsletter and via local media.

Restoration Fund

We still have a funding shortfall, so donations to our Restoration Fund are always welcome!

For further information please get in touch.

