

The Piece Hall Transformation and New Central Library and Archive

# Piecing together Halifax's past, present and future

**October 2014**

/ The build commenced

**August 2017**

/ The duration

Humble in origin, with its roots as a trading post for 'pieces' of cloth tracing back to 1779, The Piece Hall has been ambitiously reinvented as a vibrant cultural and commercial hotbed for the town of Halifax. Fittingly opened on August 1st 2017 to coincide with Yorkshire Day, the multi-million-pound transformation of this stunning Grade I listed building, and its surrounds, augmented by the construction of a new Central Library, represents one of our most prestigious conservation projects.

## The Brief

Reconciling the preservation of The Piece Hall's heritage while furnishing it with an innovative, modern twist in the delivery of a new, high quality visitor experience was at the forefront of Calderdale Council's vision. The construction of a new Central Library and Archive, to blend in with, and match, the aesthetics of the site completed the aspirational thinking.



"I was blown away when I saw it, it's absolutely fantastic. I feel Halifax lost all this when Piece Hall shut now we've got it back and we've got it back 10 times better"

Hannah Cockroft,  
the Halifax-born British wheelchair racer and Paralympian, who rang the bell to mark the start of trading on Yorkshire Day 2017

“One of our Council priorities is to become much more sustainable, so the new Central Library and Archive will be a real flagship building for Calderdale”

Robin Tuddenham  
Calderdale Council's Director of Communities and Service Support

“This stunning example of urban renewal should spur on the councils of every major city and town in Britain to do something similar”

Lord Lloyd Webber

#### Outputs & Benefits

#### The challenges

The age of The Piece Hall, and the complexity of the work requirements, such as the replacement of the large columns on the Arcade level, presented challenges throughout the programme. Accordingly, experts such as Conservation Consultants were sourced and utilised. The Piece Hall's constrained location within Halifax Town Centre, and its proximity to live operational commercial premises, meant we appointed a local Community Liaison Officer to coordinate engagement. Furthermore, the commissioning of a bat survey identified three roosts of species. As all bats and their breeding sites are legally protected, a license from Natural England had to be granted before work could continue.

#### The solution

Recognised as one of the UK's most significant heritage sites, the multi-million-pound refurbishment and redevelopment of an existing Grade I listed building, has delivered a new, high-quality visitor destination for the people of Halifax. Encompassing shops, restaurants and a Heritage Interpretation Centre, it also includes a redesigned central courtyard as an eye-catching, accessible centrepiece with the capacity to welcome 7500 people for concerts and events at any one time. Painstakingly detailed, over 30,000 locally handmade bricks, drawn individually, make up the walls of the new building. Mirroring The Piece Hall, the new Central Library and Archive is a similarly inspirational building which provides state-of-the-art community amenities and facilitates the creation of an improved pedestrian route from the train station to the town centre. Leveraging off the community spirit that pervades within the town, we initiated a programme of work placements throughout the build.

- / **Heritage Expertise:** The transformation and refurbishment of Grade I and II listed buildings
- / **On Time:** The project was handed over on time to coincide with Yorkshire Day – 1st August 2017
- / **Craftsmanship:** 30,000 locally handmade bricks, drawn individually by hand, make up the walls of the new building
- / **Charity Appeal:** Five members of The Piece Hall site team helped raise over £3000 for the Countess of Chester Babygrow Appeal in September 2016
- / **Going Green:** The roof of the Library is fitted with 115 SunPower 327W solar panels, providing a CO<sup>2</sup> reduction of 20%
- / **Mitigating Disruption:** The appointment of Community Liaison Officer (Gary Richardson) to coordinate engagement with surrounding stakeholders



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