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Exploring the Market Place: past and present

Heritage Open Days
Organised by Salisbury
Civic Society

Market House: Library/ Young Gallery

Market Walk

The Market house or Corn Exchange was built around 1858. The site, between Cheesemarket and the river, was occupied in medieval times by a courtyard house known as Deverell's Inn, later the Maidenhead Inn, demolished to make way for the Market House. The desire for a railway connection saw the selection of the current location. The railway line from Fisherton station to the Market House opened in 1859. Locomotives never entered the building, railway wagons were hauled by horses into the building, over the mill leat.

The Market House was intended to act as a Corn Exchange, to store corn in sacks, to accommodate butchers, greengrocers and other traders on market days, and to include a Cheesemarket. The building was of ashlar and brick, built around a cast iron frame. A glass roof supported on girders covered the interior including first floor balconies. The balconies were intended for the storage of corn, accessed by a steep stair. The ground floor was a central rectangular platform raised above a trackway for railway wagons on one side and carts on the other. The front of the building had three large arched doorways with wrought iron gates. The middle arch is taller, wider and pedimented. The clock you see now was given by Salisbury Rotary in 1977. The enterprise was so successful that within nine months there was a demand for additional facilities, and in 1879 the central platform was extended to allow for a cheese store. The building continued in use for agricultural purposes until the 1950's but the cheese market closed in 1903, the railway was taken up with the rise of motor transport, and the wool trade ceased in 1940. The Market House features in *Jude the Obscure* when Jude tries to have a quiet talk with his beloved surrounded by empty market stalls and a floor littered with rotten cabbage-leaves (p221 of Penguin Classics edition 1985)

As uses declined other activities filled the gap. From 1906 parts of the building served as a drill hall and for parades and meetings, but it also provided badminton courts and storage for market stalls and agricultural machinery. In 1941 it was requisitioned by the Ministry of Food until 1951. It continued thereafter as a Corn Exchange on a limited basis as well as providing space for a host of miscellaneous activities including the Three Counties Cat show. The company owning the building was wound up in 1965.

Between 1973 and 1975 much of the building was pulled down although the façade and the iron gates in the outer arches retained. The Public Library will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in Market house in 2025. Its move to the Market House site also provided display space for the City's art collections. Gallery spaces on the first floor show works from the Edwin Young Collection and, later, the John Creasey Museum. These collections have since merged to become the Young Gallery, an independent charitable trust and free art museum. It now houses over 4000 objects, including paintings, prints, sculpture, books and photography.

The Library and the Young Gallery have both mounted displays for the Heritage Open Days