

Assembly Rooms unveiled



The grand old dame of George Street, The Assembly Rooms, was unveiled to her waiting press this morning in all her newly renovated beauty.

The work has cost the council £9.3m, took 18 months and yes, Edinburgh has missed this venue. What we will be able to do now is not only go and see shows there during the Festival, or go dancing there on the odd occasion. Now we will be able to eat in the old Supper Rooms which have been transformed into a Jamie's Italian, and we will be able to shop in the two retail outlets to the front of the building. Kiehl's is already open for business but the Scottish jeweller Rox will not open till later this year.

✘ The Assembly Rooms will no longer be a dead space for most of the year. The idea behind the renovations is very much to bring people into the building all year round, and one of the principal changes is to Rose Street where an empty space has been filled which is intended to revive the back street and link it effectively to the main thoroughfare.

The building has a completely different air to it, and although there was much oohing and ah-ing over the newly painted rooms today, one of the most spectacular additions is that there is now wifi throughout the building and modern cabling has been installed to allow those hiring the space to plug in their iPods and play their own music.


A passenger lift has been installed and the access from Rose Street is now at street level. The floor level in that area used to be 3 feet above the level of Rose Street, but the area was excavated to form the new restaurant space. And the toilets have been renewed... Anyone who visited the conveniences before the closure in 2010 will appreciate that

this will be a great improvement!

Built in 1783 at a cost of £6,300 the building has been used through the centuries by many eminent Edinburgh residents including Sir Walter Scott who announced his involvement in the Waverley novels which was the mystery of its day. The building came into the ownership of the former Edinburgh Corporation at the end of World War II in 1945 and is the only building of its kind in public ownership.



The Music Room resonated this morning to the sound of Irish dancing with young dancers from the Haughey McAuley Academy of Irish Dance from Penicuik in all their finery and makeup.

 Aodhan Sheridan was the only boy dancing this morning. He has been learning Irish Dancing since he was three years old. The school's team achieved third place in the World Championships and Aodhan himself achieved a fabulous 12th place. Their sheer skill and enthusiasm was a magnificent way to reintroduce the Music Rooms to the public. We caught a little on video for you.

The Reporter spoke to the architect Mark Hopton who is rightly very proud of his company's involvement in the project. He explained the building was much smaller when it was originally built and that part of the idea behind the rearrangement of the building is to bring people in from different routes both front and back. The foyer area is now modern and minimalist with a beautiful stone floor.



[listen to 'Mark Hopton architect of Assembly Rooms project' on Audioboo](#)

Councillor Richard Lewis is the Convenor of Culture and Leisure, and is himself a freelance musician and conductor, so

fully realises the importance of the building to the audiences in Edinburgh. But as a newly elected councillor he told The Reporter he is arriving at this party a little late to take all of the credit!

[listen to 'Councillor Richard Lewis at The Assembly Rooms' on Audioboo](#)



Some figures for you:-

Half a million crystals in the 25 chandeliers.

The Music Hall curtains weigh 50kg each and there are 12 of them.

250,000 man hours went into the project

At its peak there were 150 workers on the site.

95% of the companies used to do the work were Scottish and 70% of those live within 25 miles of the Assembly Rooms.

400 working days on the site with no reportable accidents.

50 tons of structural steel was used half of which is in the new floor in the Music Hall which is an acoustic floor. It also provides a fireproof barrier to the restaurant below.

10 layers of soundproofing in the Music Hall floor.

1000 gallons of paint was used inside the building

20 tons of plaster was used to restore the interior

15,000 replacement slates were placed on the roof

The cabling in the building extends to 150km