

Advocate's Close gets a makeover but preserves its history



Developers breathing new life into Advocate's Close in Edinburgh's Old Town have revealed some of the fifteenth and sixteenth century building features which will now take pride of place in new and contemporary serviced apartments for visiting tourists.

Advocate's Close is a mix of buildings constructed over the centuries which is now undergoing £45m regeneration led by The Chris Stewart Group designed to open up some of the Old Town's hidden lanes into a thriving leisure and business destination.

A site of great historical significance, at its heart is possibly Edinburgh's oldest town house, which records show pre-dates 1490. Its solid stone walls, original fireplaces and even painted wall panels and beams are currently being restored and according to local historian, Robin Tait, the result will help form a unique city centre dwelling.

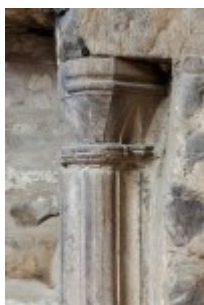
Robin said:-“The oldest structure in Advocate's Close is the Bertram / Cor House. Andrew Bertram was a wealthy merchant involved in the import-export trade and he was recorded as carrying out his business here and in the town's nearby Tollbooths in the High Street in 1480 and 1482. So his home put him right at the centre of trading activity of the time.

“It was later, when the property was purchased by the Cor family in 1553, that it received its first real upgrade. Clement Cor, another merchant, was a very prominent figure in both the burgh and national administration and the re-

decoration can be attributed to his desire to have a home equal to his status.

“Clement Cor added two more floors, one since demolished, while internally installed high quality painted ceilings and beams which through tree ring analysis were found to be of Norwegian oak felled between 1589 and 1591. The date corresponds almost precisely with the inscription and armorial dated 1590 above the doors at the top of the Close. One of these inscriptions – loosely “blessed be God and all his gifts” – also bears his merchant’s mark.

“It is fairly unique to have these features still in existence and for them to be part of a thriving new future for the Close is very exciting.”





The Advocate's Close redevelopment project, which began in 2009, has created a new 208 room hotel, 29 serviced apartments, three restaurant spaces and office accommodation from a mix of 11 different, tightly packed buildings.

Remarkably, the whole redevelopment has been achieved without the disruption of large cranes or heavy plant machinery, making it a model for city centre regeneration.

The new future for the Close follows almost two centuries of decline when in the late 1700s many of the moneyed people moved to the New Town, leaving the Old Town to become increasingly run down. The old buildings were often occupied by workshops, small factories and large families often crowded into single rooms.

At this time Robin explains that the Bertram/Cor house found another use:

"The old house became a small brewery for some years, during which time the old fireplaces probably dating from the late 1400s were bricked up and thus preserved, only to be revealed in the 1980s."

Chris Stewart is the CEO of The Chris Stewart Group, the property development and investment business behind the project.

He said:- "Advocate's Close is a labour of love with every

detail meticulously planned and executed. We have designed-in open spaces and a new 'square' as well as ways to create vistas from the top of the close out and over Princes Street Gardens beyond. The serviced apartments and restaurants emerge from the solid remains of fifteenth century Edinburgh, rising above the rooftops to offer a unique 360 degree aspect of the city using materials that will stand the test of modern times and tastes.

"It is a privilege to develop such a site and an opportunity to make an impact with our ethos for quality construction and design."

The Chris Stewart Group has grown its reputation for complex transformational developments in city centre locations over the last 16 years.