

Andover Guildhall

by Andover History & Archaeology Society

The history of Andover's Market Hall/Town Hall/Guildhall is contained in the Andover Borough records held in Hampshire Record Office ref 37M85/6/TH.

The present Andover Guildhall is the third on the site.

1584

In 1584, the Andover's Guild Merchant was provided with a Market Hall by local landowners Lord Lawarr, Sir William Kingsmill and John Thornborough. It continued as the Town Hall for the Andover Corporation created in 1599 by the Great Charter of Elizabeth I. By the 1720s, after 140 years of use, it was needing frequent repairs. It was decided that it should be replaced by a new Georgian-style town hall.

1725

Subscriptions for the new building were invited and Mr Thomas Switzer supervised the construction on 2 days a week. Completed in 1725, the new Town Hall was an imposing building 40 feet square, built of brick and Chilmark stone, with an open ground floor. Its pediment contained a large sundial, later replaced by a clock, and it had a cupola housing the market bell.

When it was nearly complete, the corporation made it known that it should be called the Guildhall.

This new building needed costly maintenance throughout its life. In 1820 an estimate for repairs came to £431.2.0d which the corporation hesitated to approve. In 1824 it did its own survey which resulted in a proposal for rebuilding which would preserve the form of the existing frontage.

1825

The new building was designed by John Harris Longdon. Andover's two MPs, Sir John Walter Pollen and Thomas Assheton Smith the younger, each provided £1000 capital and there was a loan of £2000 from Robert Sutton of London towards the cost of building. Money was also raised by public subscription. The foundation stone was laid with great celebration on 3rd May 1825.

Among the contractors were William Gibbs stone mason, William Lansley carpenter, Joseph Turner bricklayer, John Windover slater, Robert Tasker for ironwork, William Herberts for plumbing and glazing, and Mr Beare for painting.

The new Council Chamber on the first floor was first used on 8th June 1826. Until 1971, the chamber was also used for the Quarter Sessions, which had been held in the town since the granting of the Town's Charter in 1599. It was also used for the Magistrates Court until the new Court House in the Cricklade complex opened in 1976.

When built, the ground floor of the Guildhall had open arches giving access to the space and market stalls under the building. In 1850, these arches were fitted with new glazed doors and in 1855 the forecourt was paved with flints. Until the 1970s, the farmers' Corn Exchange was held on Friday mornings on the ground floor and the forecourt of the Guildhall. In the second half of the 20th century it was also home to the popular Women's Institute market.

The portrait hanging in the Upper Chamber of the Guildhall is of **Alderman William Gue** (1800–77)

As a penniless young man with no proper shoes, William Gue walked from Romsey to Andover to find work. He became a very prosperous builder and was a great benefactor to the town in many ways. In 1875 he gave the land and £1,500 for the building of the town's cottage hospital in Junction Road.

He was Andover's mayor in 1870 and 1871. In 1871 he was to represent the town at the International Exhibition in London. Unhappy to be seen wearing the existing, poor quality mayoral chain, he commissioned a new one and presented it to the Borough. In the picture he is wearing the new mayoral chain.

Gue's chain was stolen from the Council Offices at Beech Hurst in December 1962 and was never recovered.

The portrait is by Henry Grant and was paid for by public subscription. Gue died before its completion.