

The Main Guard
John Mackintosh Square,
Gibraltar.

A Report on the Proposed Repairs, Additions and Alterations
for
The Gibraltar Heritage Trust
prepared by
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1. Historical Development of the Site. (researched by Sam Benady)

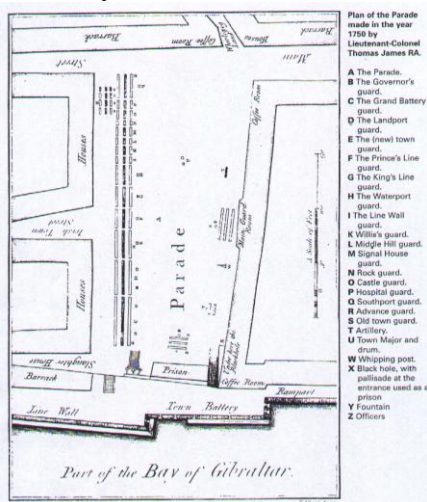
1.1. Origins of the building.

It is not clear when the building was constructed. The first references to it date to the middle of the 18th century. Dr Robert Poole visited Gibraltar in 1748 and stayed in a hotel on the "Parade", probably on the South junction with Main Street, where Griffiths Hotel was later situated:

‘A little below my lodging is what is called the grand guard house, which is one of the neatest buildings in these parts, though it is but low, being but one storey high, which indeed is the common height for the buildings in the city... Before the guard house, a little upon the Parade, is the whipping post, where almost every day soldiers are brought to feel the scourge....’

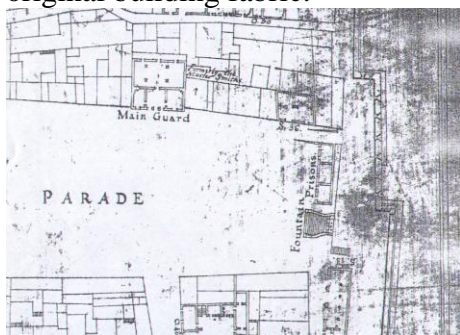
1.2. The 1750 plan.

In a plan of the parade made in 1750 by Thomas James (published in 1770) it is clearly visible, labelled "Main Guard Room," with soldiers mustered outside it.’



1.3. The 1753 plan.

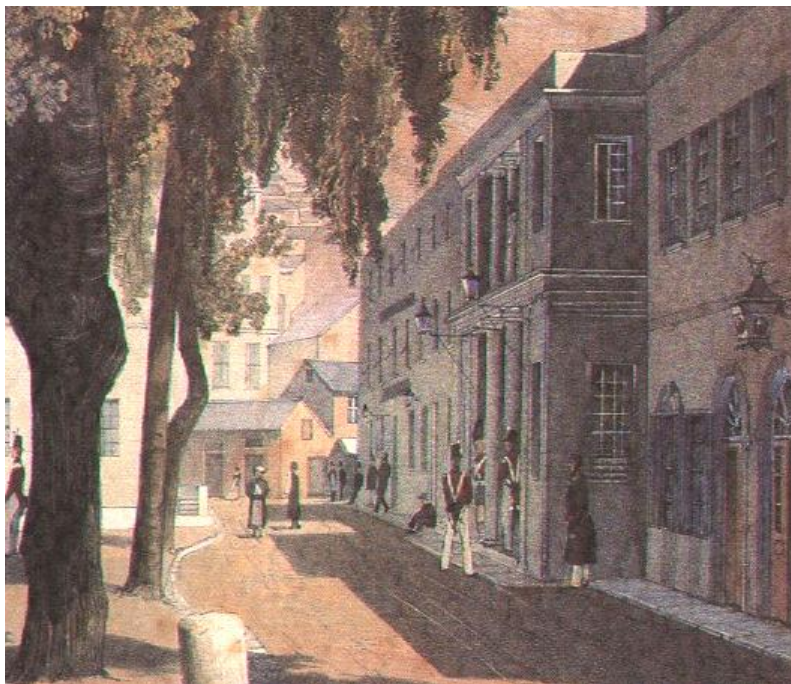
It is depicted in the 1753 plan of the Town as "The Main Guard". The plan of the building does not show any staircases, confirming Dr Robert Poole's single storey description, however, it does show a loggia with the two central columns, two side windows and a projection of the building line beyond the adjoining buildings very much like the existing. It is therefore probable that the ground floor façade contains original building fabric.



1.4. The Great Siege 1779 – 1783.

It was almost certainly severely damaged by the bombardment during the Great Siege, and the second storey was probably added when it was rebuilt. The two-

storied building, with soldiers on guard, is shown in the Carter print of the Commercial Square (1830).



Detail of the Main Guard

1.5. The 1865 Model.

The building façade is in its present 2 storey form.



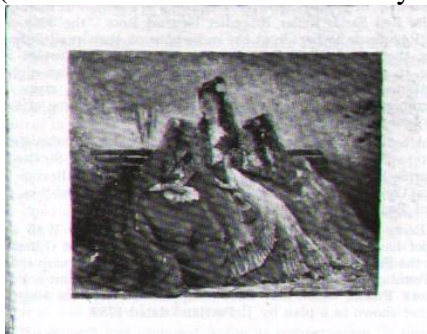
1.6. The Marsham Murals.

According to Dorothy Ellicott in her book 'An Ornament to the Alameda' '... a young officer of the 28th (now the Gloucestershire) Regiment, by the name of Marsham, occupied his leisure by adorning the walls of the Main Guard with a series of little pictures, described as being 'clever, amusing sketches'. Lady Airey was so impressed when she saw them that she commissioned the artist to execute large mural paintings all around the patio at the Convent' (Lord Airey was Governor in Gibraltar between 1865 and 1870)

1.7. Henri Regnault (1843 – 1871) paintings.

In the late 1860s, Henri Regnault, one of France's most promising painters, was a regular visitor to the Main Guard, whose officers he had befriended. He painted three pictures for them, and these hung in the building for many years- Eventually they were taken to the Museum, where they remain. When the building is repaired and redecorated, it is to be hoped that these paintings can be returned to their original home. Regnault returned to France to fight in the Franco-Prussian War, and was killed in the last battle. Two of his paintings can be seen in the Orsay Museum in Paris.

NOTE: There seems to be some confusion with the 'Henri Regnault paintings' and 'Marsham's wall little pictures' The ground floor walls of the Main Guard should be carefully examined for the possible remains of the 'Marsham's wall little pictures' (the 1st floor walls were recently completely plastered)



1.8. 1885.

The 1885 Gibraltar Directory says: 'The Main Guard, a plain Building, stands in the Commercial Square. On the ground floor are the Men's Guard Room and the cells... On the upper story is the Officers' Room'

1.9. 1896

It was still being used as a Guard House in 1896 (Gibraltar Directory).

1.10. 1911

Kenyon, writing in 1911, refers to the Main Guard in the past tense; evidently it had by then ceased to be a Guard House. He mentions that the 'Black Hole', or punishment cells had been nearby, possibly under the Haven.

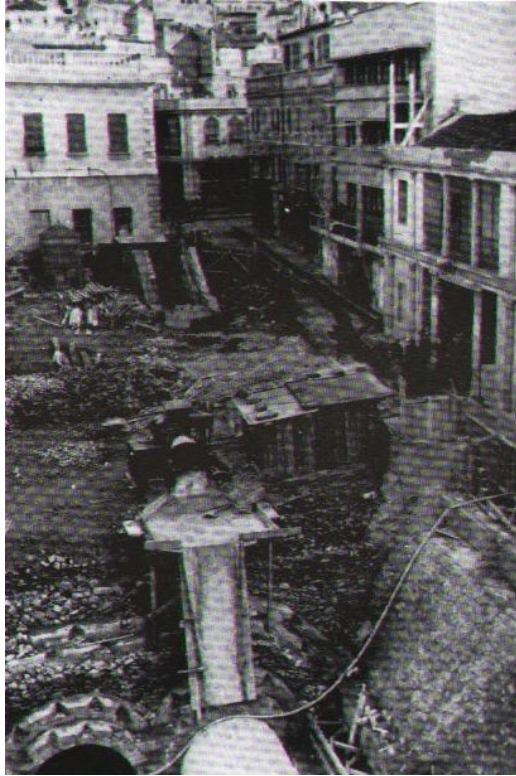
1.11. Recent times.

It was used as the City Fire Station between the wars.

Post WWII it was used for a time as a public bath-house

Throughout most of the 2nd half of the 20th century, was the payment office for rates and public utility bills.

The 1st floor became the headquarters of the Gibraltar Heritage Trust in February 2001 and is still so. The ground floor was occupied temporarily by the licensing department until recently and is now vacant.



2. Description and Condition of the Existing Building.

2.1. The Façade.

The façade of the building that gives onto John Mackintosh Square today retains much of its original built fabric, the ground floor built before 1753 and the 1st floor probably added after the Great Siege. It is delicately detailed with a central colonnaded loggia on two stories in the Doric order.

An interesting feature is the enlarged spacing between the central columns on the ground floor which was carried out as an alteration to the original in [date] to allow the fire engine to be driven into the building when it was used by the Fire Brigade. These alterations also included the replacing of the original raised timber ground floor with a solid concrete floor (the original air bricks for the raised timber floor are still evident), the removal of the inner wall of the ground floor loggia, the heightening of the central wall arched opening and the replacement of the original ceilings with corrugated steel sheeting.

The condition of the façade is not bad considering the number of years of neglect and unsympathetic alterations, such as the enclosure of the ground floor loggia, telephone and electricity cables and brackets. Beneath thick layers of paint, the plaster or stone mouldings are still evident and the original casement windows, as seen on the Carter prints, are still in place on the upper floor.

The upper floor loggia ceiling and floor require replacing.

2.2. The Roof.

The roof has recently been covered over with corrugated steel sheeting on new soft wood purlins and framing placed over the original timber roof structure and the chimney stack removed.

2.3. The 1st Floor.

Internally, the upper floor has been repaired and occupied by the Gibraltar Heritage Trust since February 2001. Unfortunately, the abutment gutter behind the façade parapet wall is in very poor condition and is allowing rainwater penetration causing damage to walls and ceilings on the north side, otherwise, apart from improving the window mechanisms and security, the upper floor requires nominal maintenance.

2.4. The staircase.

The staircase is made up of reused limestone blocks which are broken and worn in places and should be made safe.

2.5. The Ground Floor.

On the ground floor there are few original features left. In the rear yard there are modern out buildings which provided toilet and kitchen facilities and occupy most of the open space. These are not considered to have any historical significance and in fact remove natural daylight to the rear of the building. Careful examination of the building fabric will need to be carried out as and when repairs and alterations are being carried out.

3. Proposed Use.

3.1. Gibraltar Heritage Trust Headquarters.

It is proposed that the whole building be used by The Gibraltar Heritage Trust as their headquarters, providing areas for merchandising retail products, exhibitions and administration.

3.2. The ground floor loggia

The original loggia will be restored and will act as the entrance lobby to the whole building with access to the public multi-purpose areas, the secretary's office, toilets and kitchen on the ground floor, and staircase to the first floor administration areas.

3.3. The ground floor

On the ground floor the existing large hall will be for public use providing retail outlet areas for the merchandising and sale of books and other products supplied by the GHT and possibly a small catering outlet which could extend into the rear yard, a pleasant open area. This multi purpose space will also provide facilities to hold exhibitions and other public displays. Ancillary to these facilities on the ground floor, the secretary will have the office in an existing room and a new extension will house toilet facilities, including one for wheel chair users, and a small kitchen for the catering side. These facilities on the ground floor will greatly improve accessibility.

3.4. The first floor

On the upper floor, the existing facilities will require very little change; the existing spaces are suited to their proposed use as chairman's office, board room, library and store room.

4. Proposed Repairs, Additions and Alterations.

4.1. The demolition of all the out buildings in the rear yard.

The out buildings are of poor design and construction and spoil the inner side of the building and the yard, taking away natural daylight and through ventilation, the yard itself is not usable. The demolition will include the removal of redundant pipe-work, cables and other clutter.

4.2 The restoration of the façade.

The ground floor of the façade to John Mackintosh could date back to before 1748. The restoration will include opening up the loggia on the ground floor, retaining the widened space between the two central columns and replacing the windows on the N-W corner as seen on the Carter print. The whole façade will be stripped of cables and paint and the plasterwork or stone work examined and repaired to its original condition. This will be assessed when the fabric is exposed. Improvements will be made in respect of lighting and signage.

4.3 Reconstruction of the roof.

The original roof had two distinct areas, the front which is a pitched roof with a secret gutter behind the parapet wall and the rear roof which is a flat roof with corrugated steel sheeting. A recent 'repair' to the roof placed a new corrugated steel sheet roof on a sw frame over the original roof structure which had been stripped down to the rafters on the front and over the original corrugated sheeting at the back. The secret gutter is in very bad state.

The roof reconstruction will comprise the removal of the last repair; the reconstruction of the chimney stack (detail taken from photographs); repairs to the lead secret gutter and the timber roof structure. The front pitched roof will be covered in the traditional turned glazed clay tiles (there is evidence, in situ and in photographs, to show that the front roof was finished in these tiles) The rear flat roofing system will be improved using modern systems to be used in the new build.

4.4 Additions

After demolitions and an archaeological examination of the ground at the rear yard, a new structure will be built to house the new toilet and kitchen facilities and the interior patio. The constructional system proposed for this is load bearing brickwork walls bedded and rendered in lime plaster with raised timber flat roofs. The roofing is to be a warm roof system.

4.5 Alterations

The upper floor will only require repairs to the damage caused by the defective secret gutter, basic maintenance and an improvement to window and door security in order to be able to keep valuables on exhibition. An new alarm system will cover the whole building.

The ground floor, after careful inspection of the walls for evidence of remains of any 'Marshams' will need new wall, floor and ceiling finishes. Existing doors and windows will be retained and new will be purpose made to match.

4.6 Services

The existing electricity supply to the building is considered to be sufficient, it is not the intention to have any air conditioning or other heavy additional electrical loading, however the position of the meter will need to be changed to improve access

for meter reading to the utility company and the cables from the mains supply re routed to avoid damage to the fabric. Internally, the upper floor installations do not need any alterations but the ground floor will require a new installation which will include specialist lighting for exhibition areas.

The existing water meter position is inside the yard and will need to be changed to improve access for meter reading to the utility company. Internally, the upper floor installations do not need any alterations but the ground floor will require new installations for fresh, hot and brackish water distribution.

Rainwater installations to the existing and the new roofs will be new in titanium zinc instead of plastics. The soil and waste from the upper floor will be retained and the new installations on the ground floor will be carried out in uPVC.

The existing drainage system will need to be surveyed and adapted and improved to take the new arrangements.

There are existing telephone boxes and cables on the exterior of the building that need to be rationalized and improved by the telephone company. The existing telephone cable to the building is probably of sufficient size to carry the additional lines necessary for the enlarged building. New internal installations will be required.

There is no television land aerial or satellite cabling. The connection to the neighborhood cable system could be considered. Cable entry to the building is to be carefully carried out to avoid eye sores.

It is the intention of the GHT to have exhibitions on the premises, a security alarm system will need to be installed and the whole building looked at to be able to satisfy the necessary security requirements.

A fire detection and alarm system will need to be provided for the whole building to the requirements of the City Fire Brigade.

Computer network will also be a requirement.