

**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**

Ministry for Health, the Environment,
Energy and Climate Change
Joshua Hassan House
Secretary's Lane
Gibraltar

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Ministry for Transport, Traffic and
Technical Services
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THEATRE ROYAL PARK INAUGURATION

The new park on the site of the old Theatre Royal and sitting on the roof of the Theatre Royal Car Park, was inaugurated this morning by the Minister with responsibility for Urban Renewal, Dr John Cortes, in the presence of Minister for Traffic, Paul Balban.

The park provides much needed urban open space in the heart of town. It is the first of three phases that will transform the area and will extend through from City Mill Lane, across the 'piazzella', and through Governor's Parade to St Andrew's Church.

A number of mature trees had been removed without warning in early 2011 and new ones have now been planted. The material taken from the site was recycled for use in the manufacture of soil for Commonwealth Park.

The Government hopes the renovated area, with benches and trees so close to the bustle of Main Street, will prove popular and draw people back into the town centre, giving life to an area sadly neglected in the past. It will also provide a direct pedestrian link from City Mill Lane to the Piazzella.

Commenting at the opening, Dr Cortes stated, "We are renovating Gibraltar in many ways at the same time. Apart from recalling the memory of the old Theatre Royal, this park will hopefully be popular, and will breathe new life into the area, while at the same time encouraging others to invest in our city centre. So many old towns around the Mediterranean have such character. My aim is to achieve the same for old Gibraltar."

Notes to Editors:

6000 m³ of soil had to be removed on 2m³ small trucks via City Mill lane, a logistical nightmare.

Over 2000m³ of concrete brought in in special 2.5m³ concrete mixer trucks.

All other materials had to be brought to site via Cornwall's Lane and City Mill Lane, crossing Main Street in small trucks capable of fitting through that pinch point. Disruption to residents was kept to a minimum.

6m deep excavations carried out next to historic adjacent buildings was carried out with minimal neighbour complaints and no damage to adjacent property.

Brief History of the Theatre Royal

The Theatre Royal was a very popular entertainment venue. It had a capacity for about 1000 persons. Visiting Spanish zarzuela companies, opera companies, and Gibraltarian and military drama groups would perform there regularly. In addition, the theatre was used for public meetings and even for balls. The theatre was inaugurated on 10th May 1847, with Verdi's opera.

The façade of the theatre was remodelled in 1893. The works took 5 years to complete. The emergency exits from the Dress Circle, across the façade of the building and straight down from the stalls, were unattractive but essential.

The Theatre was again remodelled in 1914. The unsightly fire escapes were removed, and provided in a less obstructive manner. Verdi's Aida inaugurated the rebuilt theatre on 16th March 1914. The height of the building was increased. The façade was brought down away from the building line and jugged into the square in front of the theatre. It was now completely symmetrical. The square was still known as Gunners Parade.