
Several notes on the Guildhall Buildings plus photographs

Location: London EC2

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Introduction: About the Guildhall Buildings

When I was walking through the London financial district, the so-called Square Mile,¹ my eyes caught a square near Poultry and Old Jewry that has fascinated me for some time: the Guildhall Buildings. This collection of buildings inside the City of London hosts one of the most powerful institutions worldwide: The City of London Corporation.

Guildhall was built between 1411 and 1440 and designed by John Croxton.² The buildings were designed to impress, and so they do: having courted Ancient monarchs and merchants to create laws and regulations in finance, the place has withstood trials and tribunals, fires and plane bombings, the latter of which took place during WW II.³ It is now home to the City of London Corporation. This Corporation upholds and promotes the value of London's financial sector, and has its own government, Lord Mayor and police force.⁴



So what else makes the City of London Corporation so powerful? Perhaps the fact that it was established in approximately 1189 and has ever since been a separate elected democracy within

¹ <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-city-of-london-corporation/our-role-in-london> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

² <https://www.guildhall.cityoflondon.gov.uk/visual-guides/the-many-lives-of-guildhall> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

London, whose tradition predates British Parliament, the latter was a term first used in 1236 in reference to the Great Council, established following the approval of Magna Carta (in 1215).⁵

Great Hall

The oldest Guildhall building that is still in place since 1411 is the Great Hall, which can be seen on the pictures below. With a height of 27 metres and a depth of 46 metres,⁶ this location has hosted the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet since 1502.⁷ During this annual event, the Lord Mayor gathers with the Court of Aldermen and marks the retirement of previous year's Lord Mayor (so the post is reserved for one year each time). The event, during which achievements of the Corporation are discussed, is oftentimes introduced by a speech of the Prime Minister.

It is hard to find an exact date of establishment of the Court of Aldermen, yet early accounts of the list of Aldermen date back to around 1115 based on documentations by Price's *Descriptive Account of the Guildhall* as referred to by British History Online.⁸ Originally, Aldermen were responsible for each Ward and collectively responsible for the governance of the City, yet their tasks were reduced in scope after the 14th century and delegated to the Court of Common Council, whereas the Lord Mayor of London presides over this committee of twenty-five,



becoming Senior Alderman during his reign, according to Livery Committee.⁹

⁵ <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/originsofparliament/birthofparliament/keydates/1215to1399/> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

⁶ <https://www.easymalc.co.uk/guildhall/> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

⁷ <https://www.guildhall.cityoflondon.gov.uk/spaces/great-hall> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

⁸ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-aldermen/hen3-1912/pp362-371> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

⁹ <https://liverycommittee.org/about/city-of-london-corporation/court-of-aldermen/> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

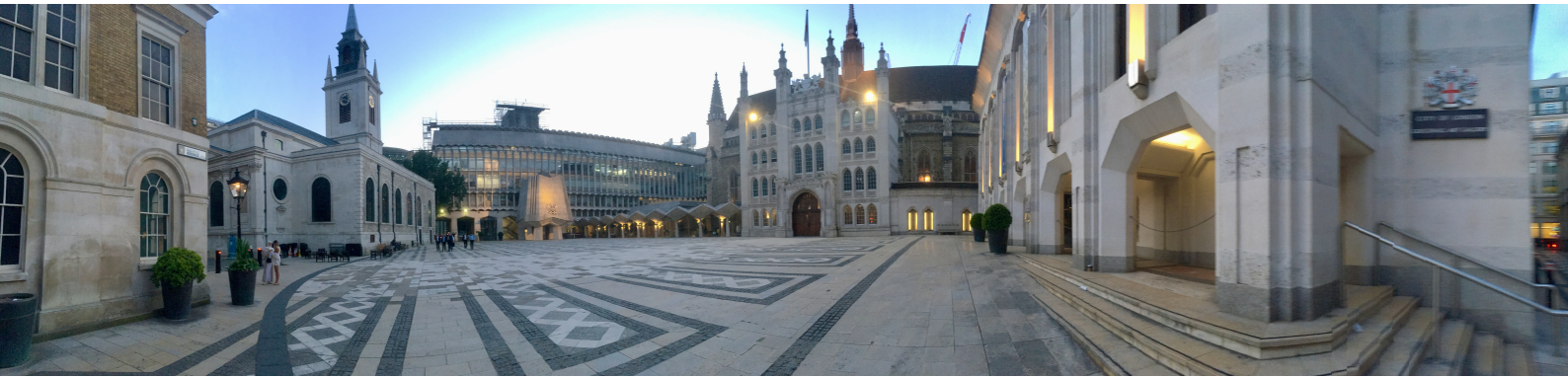
West Wing

The newest part of Guildhall comprises the West Wing, with the current building having been finished in 1974. The bottom right picture displays the first stone to embark its construction, having been placed in 1970 by then Lord Mayor, Sir Bowater and celebrating the design by architect Richard Gilbert Scott.¹⁰ It forms an extension to the Great Hall where the reception room is located, as well as office space.



¹⁰ <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/grade-ii-listing-for-richard-gilbert-scotts-guildhall-west-wing> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

Next to Guildhall: St Lawrence Jewry



There are several other sections at Guildhall which will have not been covered, so here is another interesting one: Saint Lawrence Jewry. This church was built based on the design by Christopher Wren in 1670.¹¹ As an Anglican Church, it is the official church of the City of London Corporation.¹² As apparent from the bottom right picture, the church has been built next to an ancient synagogue, hence the name 'Old Jewry' on the street corner next to Guildhall.



On a final note

The Guildhall Buildings are a place of awe and historical fascination, as well as a factor of relevance in contemporary law and economics! On a final note, the Guildhall Art Gallery hosts an expanding collection of art collected by the Corporation, a building I will definitely visit when I am back in London! For comments/feedback, please send an E-mail to quero@discounted-by-a-lightning-strike.com. Thank you for reading and watching!

¹¹ <https://stlawrencejewry.org.uk> (Accessed 11 June 2024)

¹² Ibid