

# Case Study

## Exeter Guildhall



Craftsmen in the  
Conservation of  
Historic Buildings

*Trades – Masonry, Stone cleaning, Conservation, Carpentry  
Leadwork and Decorating.*

### History of the Building

Exeter Guildhall in High Street, Exeter, Devon has been the centre of civic government for the city for at least 600 years. Much of the fabric of the building is medieval, though the elaborate frontage was added in the 1590s and the interior was extensively restored in the 19th century. It is now a Grade I listed building and is still used for a range of civic functions.

It is certain that the hall has been on its present site since the 14th century and most probably since the second half of the 12th century. It is also known that there was a guild in Exeter by 1000 AD whose hall was most likely here too. On this basis it has been claimed to be the oldest municipal building in England still in use.

Many of the dramatic events of Exeter's history were played out here. Since the Middle Ages kings have been received and entertained here. In the 15th century men were confined overnight in the hall before facing execution the next day on a scaffold outside. Here the Tudor Chamber met to take action against rebellious armies outside the city walls, and determined the city's course as it rose to commercial prosperity. Judge Jeffreys presided over sessions of the 'Bloody Assizes' at the Guildhall following the defeat of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion in 1685. Members of Parliament were chosen here. During the tumultuous mayoral elections of the 18th century rival mobs fought with fists and clubs outside its walls and respectable citizens were pelted with mud and offal. As late as the early 19th century men were sentenced to death here for crimes as minor as stealing a sheep or a cow; others suffered transportation for such offences as stealing a purse containing 1s 6d (7.5p). By contrast, during the Second World War the Guildhall's use sometimes changed to that of a dance hall, the court benches being cleared for the purpose, whilst the frontage was encased in brick to avoid bomb damage.



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## Description of work completed by Ellis & Co

Ellis & Co. undertook the essential repairs and maintenance to the main High Street elevation which involved the cleaning of the façade and conservation of the external masonry by application of sheltercoat. In conjunction with the conservation works the flagpoles were repaired and replaced and the external joinery repaired and redecorated. The Mace Sergeant's Office, the Entrance Hall and lower staircase were all redecorated as part of these works.

To the rear of the Guildhall the roof of the boiler room was replaced and a new Code 6 lead roof installed with a new structure and ceiling.



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| <b>Client</b>               | Exeter City Council |
| <b>Consultants</b>          | Exeter City Council |
| <b>Total Contract Value</b> | £40,904.59          |