

New Central Library and Archive



Aerial view of library and archive construction site

Work on site

The construction work on the new Library and Archive is all about preparation, preparation, preparation – but on a large scale!

The piling for the Piece Hall extension that will adjoin the new library is now complete and the pile caps being applied. This will enable the start of the steel framework for the new library: when this commences the development will become visible above the hoardings.

Work has also been completed on the retaining wall along the access road which will serve the new Library and Archive, the Piece Hall extension and Square Chapel. Two mature lime trees have been preserved and at this time of year they cast their pale green light over this corner of the site.

The contractor's offices had been located to the edge of the site - these would have to be moved around the site

periodically as ground works progress. A neat solution has been found which involves the site office being relocated into an area within the Industrial Museum. As part of this solution, Grahams will at the end of the project undertake some decoration and minor improvements for the Calderdale Industrial Museum Association (CIMA) - supporting their plans for the future of the museum.

The Square Church

Much of the remains of Square Church will be absorbed into the new library and archive – creating that marriage of old and new architecture which is a key feature of the interior. However, the support buttress to the church transept had to be removed. This was painstaking work to ensure the stability of the church remains, requiring additional steel pinning. A machine could not be used, so the buttress was dismantled stone by stone from a scaffold platform.

West Yorkshire Archive

The basement that will accommodate West Yorkshire Archives' strongroom has been excavated. During these works an undercroft that was originally part of Square Church was discovered – although (apart from some old heavy lifting tackle) it contained nothing of real interest. An extensive search was undertaken in West Yorkshire Archives but no detailed architectural plans for the church could be found. The void was filled and the excavation for the strongroom continued.

Image from the past



The Reference and Local Studies Team in Halifax Library has discovered this 'prospect' of Halifax, from Beacon Hill/Southowram Bank, showing the Piece Hall, Square Church and wider Halifax in all its glory. The lithograph was printed by M & N Hanhart from a painting by S. Baldwin and published on 31 March 1873 by A. Baldwin & Son, Princess Street, Halifax.

Planning ahead

Although focus is currently on the physical construction of the new building, the library team continues to plan the internal design and furniture. The new library and archive will be designed to appeal to all users – from children through to older people. Much has been done to ensure the children's area will be vibrant and inviting. On a similar note, the library team is also working with the architect to consider how the new facility might be 'dementia friendly'. There is much in the news currently about how facilities can be made welcoming to those experiencing dementia, by just small changes and tweaks to building design. There will be more on this in a future newsletter.

Critical friends

The Library and Archive Reference Group continues to meet on a 6 weekly basis and feeds back on development and proposals. The library team recently met with Calderdale College students to check their needs from the new library - particularly in the areas of IT and study space - wi-fi will be a must.

Student photography project

A new project with local film and photography students from Calderdale College will allow them access to the site of the new library and archive throughout the transformation to photograph and film the progress on site. Their images will be featured in this newsletter, on the website and social media feeds. At the end of the project there will be an exhibition and a competition for the best photograph.



Taking to the skies

The church spire has been home to a number of birds over the years. Steve Blacksmith who represents the Halifax Scientific Society on the Reference Group undertook an observation session of the spire on May 24th. He recorded any bird flying around the spire, when breeding could be possible, fly past birds were not noted. His notes record a kestrel, jackdaws and feral pigeons. Construction work will be planned so as not to disturb any nesting birds. We'll give an update in the next newsletter.

