

First Cloth Hall (465922)



First White Cloth Hall, 98 – 101 Kirkgate, Leeds LS2

Why is it important?

First White Cloth Hall is a Grade II* listed building which was opened on 29 May 1711. It was the first cloth hall to be built in Leeds, catering for the producers of undyed cloth who had previously sold their goods at the general cloth market in Briggate. Plans for the construction of the building were made in 1710, when Ralph Thoresby, a merchant clothier and Leeds historian made the proposal to build a secure and sheltered building for the trade, to include storerooms for the clothiers of individual townships and hamlets. Thoresby described it as 'a stately hall, built on pillars on arches in the form of an exchange, with a quadrangular court within'. Cossins' map (1725) shows the White Cloth Hall set back from Kirkgate and suggests that the principal facade was towards the south.

Building Description

The building is part brick, part rendered with stone dressings and a slate and concrete tile roof. It is a U-shaped plan parallel to the street and set back from it with a hipped roof wing at each end extending forward to street edge, the existing courtyard has been infilled by a later building. The front elevation has had 20th Century alterations including shop fronts to ground floor. The original interior roof structure consists of king-post type with braces from the posts to the ridge pole surviving in part.

Current State – April 2012

Two thirds of the building currently survives, while the west wing has been demolished. The original structure of Thoresby's 'stately hall for White Cloths built upon Pillars and Arches in the Form of an Exchange with a Quadrangular Court within' can now be seen. The three ground floor arches at the back of the courtyard have been boarded up, while the heads and pillars of what were once open ground floor arches can be seen in the wall of the east wing. The round headed windows at first floor level can be seen in the east wing while those at the rear of the courtyard have gone. The roof trusses of the demolished west wing have been put in storage as have the bricks and masonry of the demolished wing. Some attempts at weatherproofing the building have been made but it is still in a very critical state.

Current State – September 2010

The building is in a critical state, the ground floor is covered by a hoarding, and the entire building is covered in scaffolding. The majority of windows are missing, and any wood that remains is

almost rotted away. The gutters are leaking and the building shows signs of being very wet. There is a great deal of render missing on the front elevation. Many of the window lintels are failing and bowing into the street in imminent danger of collapse. One section seems to have lost its roof, and at the rear the temporary roof on one section looks as if it is beginning to fail. The building has a lot of plant life sprouting from the walls, roof and gutters. An original gold painted sign has been exposed and will soon be at risk.

Current Owner

The building is currently owned by EMCO / Vecktor.

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/1444801@N25/pool/tags/firstwhiteclothhall/>