

# Bishop Lloyd's Palace

A Grade 1 Listed building in the heart of Chester



## HISTORY MONOGRAPH No 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPERTY

***Bishop Lloyd's Palace (or Bishop Lloyd's House as it is sometimes called) stands on the south side of Watergate Street, about 100m from The Cross. It is, in fact, a pair of adjacent town houses, dating from the very early 17<sup>th</sup> century, only one of which was owned by the Lloyd family.***

***Both buildings are four storeys high, with the lowest level (the undercrofts) being the much older remnants of medieval properties. Today the buildings are connected together in common use at street level and on the two floors above the Rows.***



*A pair of early 17th century town houses: Listed grade 1 and now the headquarters for Chester Civic Trust.*

BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE was originally two separate town houses re-built over medieval undercrofts in the early 17th century. The two houses may have become one at this time or, more likely, later in the 17th century when the first of several major internal alterations took place.

The building is associated with George Lloyd, Bishop of Sodor and Man (1599-1605) and Bishop of Chester (1605-1615). It is one of the best examples of timber framing in Chester.

The western part (on the right when facing the building) displays an abundance of 17th century carving, including the arms of George Lloyd when Bishop of Sodor and Man. On the left hand side are the Legs of Man and on our right hand side are the arms of George Lloyd. Another panel contains the letters I and R, indicating the reign of James I. Another panel bears the date 1615. Surrounding these panels are carved Biblical scenes. On the upper storey of the building are many grotesque carvings including figures from bestiaries



The Chester Civic Trust

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Examples of the carvings on the western gable



The building was heavily restored by T.M. Lockwood in the 1890s and both the internal and external appearance owe much to his work. The eastern section (on the left when facing the building) was re-fronted to reflect the composition of the other gable. The mullioned windows with decorative leaded glazing date from this time. Lockwood also altered the Row running through both sections of the building and repositioned the Row posts supporting the chambers above. However, do look out for the bearded giants on the original Jacobean posts which are now set between the Row stall and the walkway.

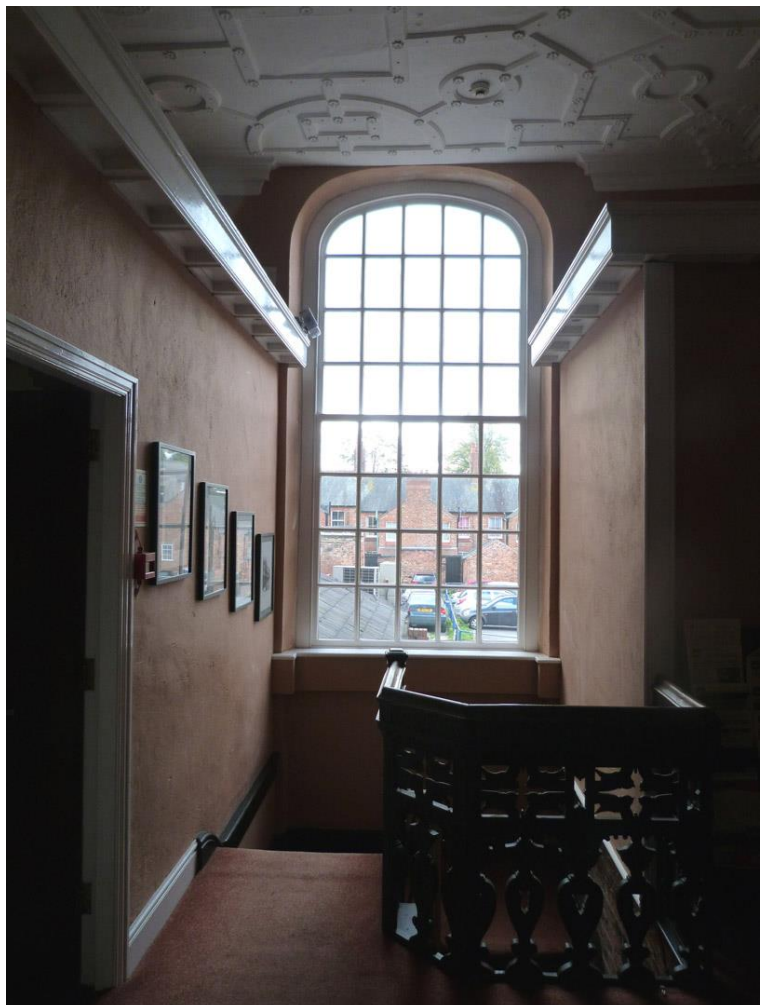
Entry to Bishop Lloyd's Palace is via an internal corridor which was formerly an open passageway leading into a courtyard with cottages and outbuildings to the rear.

## Entrance Hall

A staircase principally based on Chippendale's Chinese pattern leads to what is now the entrance hall. A huge 18th century window has been inserted into the room. There is also a fine geometrical plaster ceiling.

### *Restoration in the 1970s*

In 1948 the Brown family, who had saved the building from dereliction in the 1890s, gave Bishop Lloyd's Palace to Chester Corporation. A further restoration project became necessary in the 1970s and this included measures to stabilise the structure which had been weakened by Lockwood's earlier work.







## Large Room

The main features of this room are the elaborate 17th century plaster ceiling and the massive fireplace. The ceiling is now believed to be an original feature, although it does not appear to fit perfectly. Neither does the fireplace, the overmantle for which involved making a recess in the main ceiling. This is believed to be a later insertion and is topped by a phoenix which formed part of the Kilmorey coat of arms. This family occupied the building after the Civil War (1642-46).

## *Investing in our heritage*

Having established ourselves in Bishop Lloyd's Palace since 1996, the Civic Trust decided to embark on an internal refurbishment project in 2002/3. This entailed re-wiring, new lighting, new heating, new carpets and new curtains as well as specialist redecoration of the historic ceilings and panelling. Generous grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the then Chester City Council helped us to achieve this substantial improvement.

## Small Room

The plasterwork ceiling in this room is earlier and much simpler than that in the larger room. However, there are many interesting motifs including Tudor roses, horses, ship's wheels and starfish. Around the room is a sea-monster frieze, partly hidden by later wooden panelling. Watergate Street was the main route from the port of Chester so maritime designs are not unusual in this area.



The large decorated fireplace interrupts the pattern in the ceiling, suggesting that it is not original to this room. It may have been moved – possibly from the other room? The image of Eros astride a lion is a Jacobean emblem representing '*Love Conquers All*'. An earlier chimney flue is concealed behind the panelling to the right of the fireplace. Finally, to compound the confusion there is 400-year old panelling opposite the fireplace, while that alongside it is less than 15 years old and was part of the comprehensive refurbishment carried out by the Civic Trust in 2003.

### AVAILABLE TO HIRE

The large and small rooms at Bishop Lloyd's Palace are available to hire individually or together at modest hourly rates. Kitchen facilities and equipment are also available for teas, coffees and light refreshments. Please e-mail [admin@chestercivictrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@chestercivictrust.org.uk) or go to [www.chestercivictrust.org.uk](http://www.chestercivictrust.org.uk) to enquire about booking or to get further information

**Stephen Langtree**