

THEATRE: *Grand***Listed:** Grade II**Address:** Station Road, Doncaster DN1**Local Authority:**

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

2nd Floor Danum House

St Sepulchre Gate

Doncaster DN1 1UB

Tel: 01302 734922

Email: peter.lamb@doncaster.gov.ukwww.doncaster.gov.uk**Current Freehold Owner:** A W T Shiells**Current Leasehold Owner:** Vacant**Current Operator/Manager:** None**Local Contact:** Margaret Herbert, Chairman, Friends of Doncaster Grand Theatre, 92 The Boulevard Edenthorpe, Doncaster DN3 1QJ. Tel: 013 0288 1299 Email: margaret.herbert2@btopenworld.com**The Theatres Trust Contact:** Suzanne McDougall. Tel 020 7836 8591Email: Suzanne.mcdougall@theatrust.org.uk

Original theatre architect(s): 1899: J P Briggs & Chapman.**Building Description**

The *Grand Theatre and Opera House* opened on 27 March 1899. It had an intimate auditorium originally seating around 1,600. Today it would seat around 800/900. It had two curved balconies, a decorative proscenium and attractive plasterwork. Its façade is Baroque in style, with a complex rhythm of bays articulated by coupled and single pilasters and groups of arched windows and doorways. It is built of brick with the front façade finished in stucco now painted in pastel pinks and blues. Original colours Terracotta, Cream and Gold.

Theatre Use

The *Grand Theatre's* last stage production was Showboat in 1962 after which it was converted to a bingo hall. In the 1980s a ring road was built around the theatre and as a consequence a corner of the stage was chamfered. In 1995 the bingo closed and the theatre was due for demolition but was saved by the Friends of the Doncaster Grand Theatre along with Doncaster Civic Trust who succeeded in getting it statutory listed Grade II. Some 60,000 signatures were received. In 2005 The Frenchgate Shopping Centre and Transport Interchange was constructed next to the theatre.

Occupancy: Vacant**Building Location**

The *Grand Theatre* originally stood in a prominent site in a shopping street facing the railway station. The ring road built in the late 1980s skirts the building and took off a corner of the stage house. The ring road is double-laned, and enclosed by railings, which cuts off pedestrian access from the Transport Interchange. A crossing is due to be reinstated shortly. Access to the theatre is currently only through the Shopping Centre.

Risks

The Frenchgate Shopping Centre was sold in 2006 to A W T Shiells and in 2008 underwent a £250 million refurbishment. The future of the *Doncaster Grand*, the town's only listed Victorian theatre, is uncertain. The Friends of Doncaster Grand want to see the theatre brought back into theatre use and are raising funds to buy the building. They are also talking to the Local Authority about using it for a mix of amateur and professional productions, and improving the built environment around the theatre and making it more accessible. The Friends have over 1,000 members. The new Interchange has given them 1,400 parking spaces, safe access to the Bus and Railway Stations all with 24 hour security. However, there is slow progress in negotiating with the owners and the building has suffered water penetration damaging much of the historic plasterwork.