

THE ROYAL EXCHANGE, LONDON EC3

This Grade I Listed building is one of the City's most prominent buildings. It was opened in 1844 by Queen Victoria. In 1980 Guardian Royal Exchange, whose headquarters building it was, commissioned us to refurbish the building and to create an additional 1300m² of offices. By this time, it had suffered a succession of unco-ordinated alterations and additions and the courtyard roof had become unsafe.

After close consultation with English Heritage, the RFAC and the City Corporation, we were able to extend the building by adding third and fourth floors. In the courtyard, we followed the precedent set by Michelangelo at the Palazzo Farnese, adding a Corinthian order above the existing Doric and Ionic, an apparently single stratum behind which are two floors of office space. The new work is steel framed, with extensive hand carving of magnificent column capitals, cartouche panels, swags and architraves. Externally they are rendered as an attic storey, set back and clad in Portland stone. Existing stonework was carefully cleaned and repaired where necessary.

A new glazed and panelled, shallow barrel vaulted roof was installed over the internal courtyard to replace the existing roof which had fallen into disrepair.

Two suites of Listed retained rooms at first floor were reordered and restored with advice from the V&A and provided with new concealed services for use as meeting and entertaining rooms.

The restoration of the Royal Exchange was opened by HM the Queen in 1991 and was joint winner of the City Heritage Award for Building Conservation in 1992.

Client: Guardian Royal Exchange
Project value: £37m
Completion date: 1991

