

Bridge Building, Barnstaple



A new phase of work was undertaken during 2013 to carry out repairs to the timber brackets on the underside of the projecting cornice of this prominent listed building. The opening up has revealed that the hand carved timber brackets which support the underside of the cornice (in visual terms only) were considerably more rotten than appeared from the outside, where they were encased in many coats of heavy paint which maintained the outside form while the timber inside rotted away. These are now being re-carved by hand in hardwood, with the sections touching the masonry protected with epoxy resin as a damp proof coat, before being repainted.

Other associated works include reforming the lead valleys to improve maintenance access and re-slating roofs. These require largely new slate as the originals have been reused twice before and have too many holes for effective reuse. Work is due to complete early 2014.



Entablature prior to strip



Prior to strip



Bracket removed



Stripping under way



Stripping and dentil repairs



New and existing brackets



The building is part of the portfolio of The Bridge Trust; a local charity which lets to business and domestic tenants, and gives grants to benefit the inhabitants of Barnstaple within a 5 mile radius of the centre of the town.

The Grade II listed buildings were put up in two sections – those facing The Square in 1844, The Strand (Brewer Harding and Rowe offices) in 1888, and the whole exterior remodelled and redecorated to look the same.

The project was a logistical challenge due to its prominent town centre position, commercial and residential tenants and continued pedestrian and vehicle access around the building and involved replacing the flat sections of plaster, repairing structural fractures, defects to the stone and brick and the mouldings around the windows and doors removal of inappropriate and damaging modern paint. A more sympathetic breathable paint system was applied which allows moisture to evaporate before it can cause significant damage. This should minimise the process of weathering and reduce the frequency of repair and redecoration. Local contractor Morgan Sindall and specialist stonemasons completed the work on time, within budget and with minimal interruption to the numerous businesses in the building.