

# Royal Reuse

**Committee asked could you mention who the architect was who designed the work, or the contractor**



Image credits – Bicycle Face

Royal Hillsborough has had a busy number of years. In 2019 Hillsborough Castle and Gardens were reopened to the public including the magnificent walled garden, state rooms and garden trails by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP). It was then given the “Royal” prefix in 2021, due to it being the official Royal residence. Then with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022, Hillsborough was Northern Ireland’s destination for mourners to pay their respects. A total of 50,000 people visited in eleven days it is reckoned! The coronation of King Charles III in May 2023 also saw crowds flocking to the village to celebrate the occasion. Added to this in March, Hillsborough was awarded £20million through the ‘Belfast Region City Deal’ to make the village a world class heritage attraction. Whilst all this excitement and change has been occurring, on the ground there have been projects to realise the potential of the built heritage in the village.

Heritage at Risk knows no boundaries and indeed there have been and are heritage at risk structures within the village. The fantastic and transformative work in 2021 to 1 Arthur Street/21 Ballynahinch Street saw a long term vacant and shell of a building transformed back into commercial and private use. It is now well poised to take advantage of the tourism potential. Another property restored to its former glory recently is 4-6 Main Street, Hillsborough.



4-6 Main Street Hillsborough is a three-bay, two-storey-with-attic former townhouse and shop. The basement can be traced back to the late 1700s and its outline appears on a map of Hillsborough in 1800 and 1803. Griffiths Valuation in 1861 notes the property valued at £8 with a single storey rear return and a coach house. Then in 1872 a new owner Henry McDowell seems to have improved the building as its valuation increased to £13.

The building was rebuilt in 1904 by the Johnston family giving it, its current Edwardian appearance with two dormers flanking a central gable. The building is smooth rendered and the central gable has lively moulded volutes, making the building stand out from its mainly Georgian neighbours. It was originally a drapery and stationary shop with the family home above. It was later a hardware shop, general merchant, funeral parlour and even had petrol pumps to the front. More recently it was a ladies clothes shop.

Jonathan and Lynne McCabe bought the property in 2018 and were instantly drawn to the location and the building itself. Lynne saw the immediate need to save the building while giving it a new and productive use. The building was added to Heritage at Risk in 2020 when the owner knowing of its condition alerted UAH that it should be included on the register. With experience in another such building, the B1-listed Ralph’s 65 Main Street in Moira, Lynne saw the potential that 4-6 Main Street had for a similar purpose.

To just redecorate and reopen the building as a shop would not have been an economically viable. The building required a full restoration due to the water ingress and the roof condition, while the land and parking to the rear had already been developed. Judging by the media attention that Hillsborough has been receiving over the years, funding in place to make it a known tourist centre and historical importance of the village there is going to be a need to accommodate tourists. Additionally, finding that there was a gap in the market for boutique accommodation it seems that the stars had aligned, the right owner had found the right building.

The building had some notable challenges including water ingress from the roof where slates had cracked and slipped in some cases, woodworm to timber work inside and no reliable heating system in place. It also had to be fully rewired, and services installed. As a result, extensive work was required to remedy these issues. The benefit of reusing the building as guest accommodation is that it did not require changes to the layout of the rooms. One difficulty arose however, with the original staircase, it did not meet building control standards, so a new staircase was installed to the 1980s return allowing for the original staircase to be retained. Cornicing detail was also retained, and the shop front improved, sympathetically in keeping with the Conservation Area. The Edwardian shop front is unique in Hillsborough and a reminder of the building’s past. The owners maintained close communication with both Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Historic Environment Division throughout the planning process.

In January 2023 Arthur’s officially opened, Arthur has been the name of eight out of nine Marquesses of Downshire. Arthur’s consists of a ground floor coffee shop while the



lower ground floor, first and second floor contains twelve guest accommodation suites. Commonly when I ask owners would they consider rescuing a listed building again they are generally quite silent on the issue, but Lynne was adamant in the importance of the buildings, noting they are themselves a selling point, they are unique and finite. Tourists want to stay somewhere special with links to the surrounding area and Arthur’s provides just that. The rooms boast high ceilings, cornicing, ceiling rose and tastefully redecorated. The views to the rear provide a look to Hillsborough Forest and St Malachy’s Church, while the front shows the hustle and bustle of Hillsborough’s Georgian streets.

Royal Hillsborough looks set to grow as a tourist destination in the coming years. There are currently two other structures on the at-risk register in the village, one an unlisted house on Lisburn Street and the other the grade A listed Marquis of Downshire Monument which overlooks the village. 4-6 Main Street now has an economically sustainable future and will hopefully continue to welcome guests to this beautiful village. ○

**Sebastian Graham**  
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