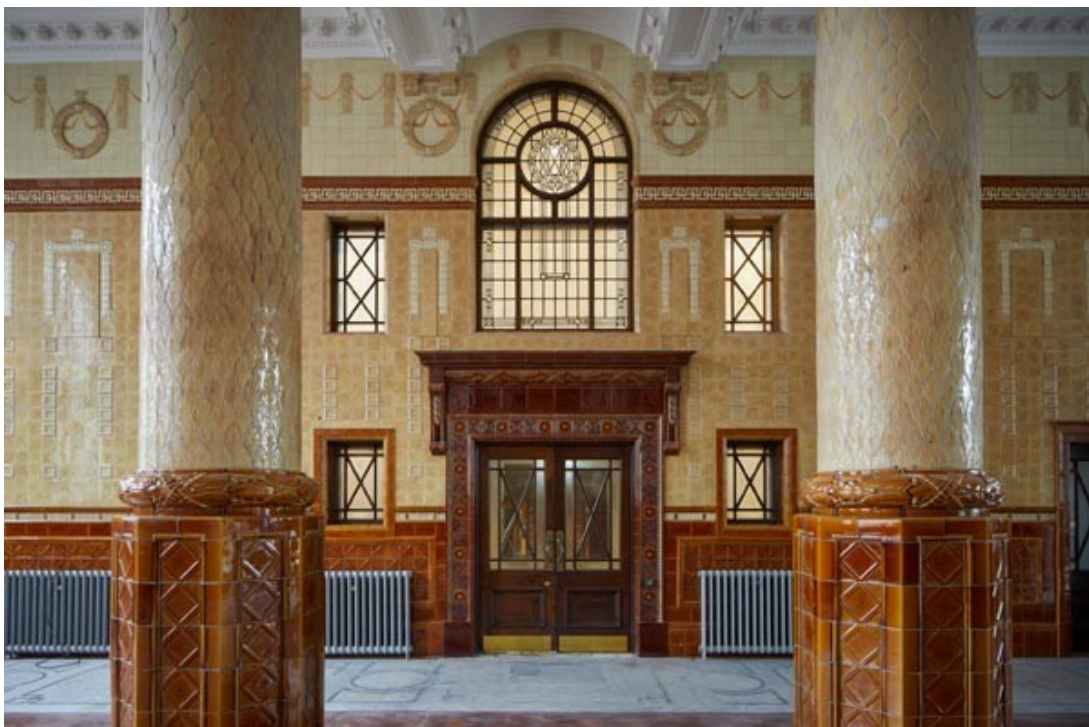




## NEWS RELEASE

### The Transformation of Oldham Town Hall

In 2009 Oldham Town Hall was named by the Victorian Society as one of the top ten endangered buildings. After a £37 million re-development, it has been transformed and is now a major cinema and leisure complex, complete with its rich architectural heritage. A major element of the recently completed project was to replace over 2,000 of the original ceramic wall tiles, in 55 different formats and designs, which dated back to 1917. The preservation of the Grade II listed building's heritage is testimony to the innovative and meticulous restoration approach adopted by Craven Dunnill Jackfield. The company employed traditional techniques so as to achieve a virtually seamless match to the remaining original tiles.



In 2012, plans by the Council to re-develop the building as a state-of-the-art, seven-screen cinema and leisure complex were given approval. The result is generally considered to be magnificent. The Grade II listed building's heritage has been preserved thanks to innovative restoration work, whilst a large, glass light-box addition to the side allows for new circulation areas and services.



Craven Dunnill Jackfield was commissioned by the specialist contractor Heritage Project Contracts to painstakingly copy and manufacture matching wall tiles for the centrepiece Egyptian Room and anti rooms. The Shropshire based manufacture is acclaimed for its specialist skills in restoration ceramics, having successfully completed many other prestigious projects, including Leeds Library, the London Underground, Newcastle Cathedral, St. George's Hall in Liverpool, and is currently working on a major project at The Palace of Westminster.

Richard Baister of Heritage Project Contracts appreciated Jackfield's expertise and exacting quality standards: "With projects like these you need to work collaboratively and Craven Dunnill Jackfield worked closely with us at each stage. Their vast expertise and understanding of Victorian glazed tiles ensured the accurate replication of the original Pilkington tiles and meeting the strict production schedule demanded by our requirements on site. Fine craftsmanship like this is very hard to find in the UK and we are so lucky that Craven Dunnill is close to us in Shropshire".

The project comprised over 55 different tile types and 2,000 decorated and plain field tiles, which all required precise matching to the surviving Pilkington originals. For most of the 55 designs, new moulds needed to be made as many of the tiles are unique sizes and embossed with a variety of decorative features. Striking, tile-clad pillars dominate the room, for which Jackfield produced three variations of the embossed, yellow leaf design to cater for the tapered dimensions. For the base of each pillar, eight different styles of tiles were required, all with intricate embossed detailing. The Greek Key pattern around the upper section of the room's walls likewise required the creation of numerous moulds to accommodate the left and right window



reveals. This running border also involved the hand-manufacture of bulb-glazed, square tiles in two colours, accurately matched in hue. Rising towards the ceiling is a band of plain yellow tiles for which Jackfield manufactured some 1200 replacements.

The project entailed extensive trials to ensure the seamless and historically accurate transition from original to replacement tiles, and required the approval of the designated Conservation Officer and Planning Authority. Craven Dunnill Jackfield started work on the project the summer of 2015 and the hand-manufacture of the tiles was completed a year later; installation took a further six months.

Gemma Ball, Senior Sales Manager at Craven Dunnill Jackfield managed the project from the outset. "We worked to a detailed survey supplied by Heritage Project Contracts and were fortunate to have original tiles from which to make the new moulds. Such complex projects require a team of ceramic experts with a wealth of skills in restoration work, from detailed mould-making to specialist glazes. Unexpected challenges are common, once you start to work with tiles on a heritage site. However, this project went smoothly from the outset and we have been complimented on how the new tiles blend perfectly with the originals."



*Editor's background information:*

Sited in a unique heritage setting next to Parliament Square in the heart of Oldham, the Town Hall was originally constructed in 1841. It was then extended in 1879 to provide additional civic facilities, namely a court room and police station. In 1917, it was once again expanded to encompass an Egyptian themed room, complete with ornate pillars and decoration, where local citizens could pay their rates and for local utility bills. However, in 1977 a new Civic Centre was

constructed and the original Hall gradually fell into disuse: by 1995 it was empty. Over the ensuing years the building steadily and extensively decayed due to wet and dry rot and in 2009 the Victorian Society, which campaigns to protect Victorian and Edwardian buildings in England and Wales, placed it on its list of the ten most at-risk buildings.

*Suppliers:*

Tile manufacturer: Craven Dunnill Jackfield [www.cravendunnill-jackfield.co.uk](http://www.cravendunnill-jackfield.co.uk) T: 01952884124

Restoration specialist: Heritage Project Contracts Ltd: T: 01743 460035  
[www.heritageprojectcontracts.com](http://www.heritageprojectcontracts.com)

Main contractor: Morgan Sindall [www.morgansindall.com](http://www.morgansindall.com)

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