

Press Release 21<sup>st</sup> August 2019

## THE OLD TOWN HALL, BELSIZE PARK TAKES PART IN OPEN HOUSE 2019

### COME AND EXPLORE THE OLD TOWN HALL THIS SEPTEMBER

**On the 21st and 22nd September, we are opening the Town Hall's doors to the public and will be holding tours, a fantastic opportunity to take a look around and find out about the heritage of this beautiful building.**



Image: 1910 Vestry Hall Hampstead, source unknown.



Image: The Imperial Staircase, Image: Nathan Greenwood

The Old Hampstead Town Hall is a restored Grade II listed building of three architectural styles: Victorian Italianate (1877), Edwardian (1910) and a striking 20C extension. The grounds contain air raid shelters used during WWII as well as a beautiful Council Chamber and Imperial Staircase.

Last year the Old Town Hall celebrated its 140th Birthday and as part of the celebration Wac Arts has been exploring the Old Town Hall's rich heritage. It was a place where suffragettes stood and rallied support, Lord Pitt gave an anti-racism speech, Madness played their first gigs and where, in the 70's the Gay Liberation Front held a LGBTQ + disco for just 50p a ticket and so much more.

### GENERAL OPENING HOURS

**10am–4pm** (last entry 3:15pm)

### TOWN HALL TOURS

**Saturday 21st September 2019 and Sunday 22nd September 2019**

**Tours: 11am, 1pm and 3pm** (tours last approx 1 hour)

*Please note: There is disabled access throughout the building except to the air raid shelters.*

To book onto a tour please email [Hayley.Butler@WacArts.co.uk](mailto:Hayley.Butler@WacArts.co.uk) with your preferred tour time and day. Please note capacity is limited per tour. There are toilets available and disabled access throughout the building.

To find out more about the Heritage of the Old Town Hall go to: [www.WacArts.co.uk/Heritage](http://www.WacArts.co.uk/Heritage)

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For further information on Wac Arts and the Old Town Hall please contact [hayley.butler@wacarts.co.uk](mailto:hayley.butler@wacarts.co.uk) or call 020 7692 5800.

## Notes to Editor

### About Wac Arts:



Wac Arts believes in the infinite power of the arts to unleash the extraordinary potential of young people. The charity offers fully inclusive weekend, evening and holiday programmes that celebrate diversity, with classes significantly subsidised to make them accessible to all young people aged 5-26. 62% of young people that benefit from Wac Arts live within the borough of Camden.

*"Wac Arts means an expanded life. A better life"*  
John Gaine, disability and inclusion ambassador

Wac Art's home, the Old Town Hall is a creative, community hub where young people build confidence, artists connect, and other arts and cultural organisations such as University of the Third Age and Akademi South Asian Dance call home.

### About the Old Town Hall:

An impressive example of a Victorian vestry hall, designed in the Italianate style (with a campanile tower) by H.E. Kendall and Frederick Mew, Hampstead Old Town Hall was hailed as 'a decided ornament to that part of Haverstock Hill' (*Ham and High*) when it opened in 1878.

The early twentieth century saw an increase in the responsibilities of local government, and with the establishment of the London Borough of Hampstead, the Vestry Hall became a Town Hall. To support its increased functions, architect John Murray designed a substantial two-storey Edwardian extension in 1910, built the following year on the Belsize Avenue side of the building.

In the 1960s Hampstead became amalgamated into the London Borough of Camden, and while the Old Town Hall continued to fulfil certain civic duties (not least as Hampstead's Registry Office) by the 1990s it had fallen into disuse and disrepair. In 1994 it was listed as Grade II, and an energetic campaign to save it, run by the Friends of Hampstead Old Town Hall resulted in the building being converted into an arts centre. The Atrium arts block extension, designed architects Burrell, Foley & Fischer, opened in 2000. This light-filled, mixed-use structure makes extensive use of glass and concrete, and was built on the site of two 1940s Air raid Shelters.

**As part of Open House 2019 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, Wac Arts will be opening the Old Town Hall's doors to the public with tours available 3 times a day.**

To find out more please go to [www.wacarts.co.uk](http://www.wacarts.co.uk).

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