

Brackley Town Hall, a splendid Baroque building dominating the Market Place, is the focus of the centre of the town. It was built 1704-7, at the instigation of Scroop Egerton, 4th Earl of Bridgewater, the Lord of the Manor of Brackley. Its construction followed years of political wrangling within the town, and it could be said to represent the victory of the Bridgewater family in the struggle for dominance in local affairs.

Brackley's new Town Hall was one fruit of the establishment of this new relationship, and the most powerful symbol of the Egertons' dominant position in the town. The 3rd Earl's claim that the old town hall had fallen into decay as a consequence of the Corporation's neglect does not seem to have been forgotten, and the decision of the 4th Earl (Scroop Egerton – 1681-1744, created 1st Duke 1720) to build a new one at his own expense should perhaps be seen as a reminder of past misdemeanours as well as an olive branch for the future.

Scroop Egerton, who became 4th Earl of Bridgewater in 1701 when he was only nineteen years old, seems to have been a kindlier man than his father, the 3rd Earl.

The new 'market house', or town hall, was not on the site of the original town hall. Instead, it was built where the grandest of Brackley's three monumental mediaeval crosses had stood, the tall, almost spire-like clock stage, bell cupola and weather vane of the new building a faint utilitarian echo of the shape of its Gothic predecessor. The town's chief symbol and focus had shifted decisively from religious to commercial.

For much of the nineteenth century the upper room of the town hall was used by the County Court, and also for balls and celebrations. Until a purpose-built police station was built in 1851, a constable's room and lock-ups were incorporated below, but most of the open arcaded ground floor was used for a corn exchange. Subsequently, the arches were glazed and the lower floor enclosed.

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