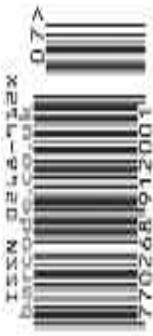


CHURCH building & HERITAGE REVIEW



PROJECT PROFILE

ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH



ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH HASTINGS



St Clement's Church sits at the heart of the old town of Hastings, amongst a charming network of ancient, narrow streets, set back from the brash amusement arcades and fairground attractions that attract thousands of visitors to the seafront.

The original church on this site was founded in 1080 AD although the building was destroyed by the French in 1377 during the conflicts of the Hundred Years war. Integral to the community, St Clement's was rebuilt just three years later, although the space available within the confines of the town

was limited and the perpendicular Gothic architecture was adapted to allow maximum space within the building for the congregation. The church tower was built over the body of the church and there is no chancel arch to separate the priest and the choir from the congregation.

In 1943 a bomb dropped on the Swan public house next door to St Clements destroying the mediaeval windows of the church, with the exception of a small angel that was rescued from the rubble and incorporated into a new window when the glass was replaced. The beautiful east window behind the altar was designed in 1947 by Philip Cole, former principal of Hastings School of Art to replace the one destroyed by the blast. An unusual, contemporary design it depicts the Holy Spirit guiding the people of Hastings as they go about their daily lives and shows real people from the town including the Rev. Jack Mayfield, rector at the time; Philip Cole's own wife and various other figures including a fisherman, a soldier, a sailor, a carpenter and a nurse. Their faces

are clearly recognisable and the window is regularly visited by the descendants of those captured in the stained glass.

Recently a bequest was left to the parish by Barbara Jordan, a former chairman of the Old Hastings Preservation Society, who left a £1million legacy to be spent on improving St Clements and sister church, All Saints. It was resolved that the money should be used to turn the church into a central hub for all community activities within the area.

Parish priest, Fr Robert Featherstone said when the work was commissioned: "This legacy is a huge opportunity for the church to do something to actually welcome people in.

"St Clement's will remain a sacred space, first and last, but we hope this will open our church up even more to the wider community, for clubs, meetings and exhibitions."

'For centuries there were two places where the Old Town community met. One was the Swan Inn next door, the other was St Clement's. I want to make sure that our church is the chosen meeting place.'

Architects John D. Clarke of Eastbourne were tasked with designing an internal meeting room that would provide flexibility

for a variety of purposes from a permanent and accessible base for the parish office to craft fairs, exhibitions and festivals.

Designed using modern materials and frameless glazing to give transparency the space above the meeting rooms has also been utilised, maximising the capacity of the church. The upper level is accessed by a glass clad staircase which has minimal impact on the light flowing around the back of the church.

The new installation also includes a bell-ringing platform which is high enough to ease the strain of ringing the bells, accessed by a spiral staircase and encircled by a glass balustrade.

Leading glass specialists Ion Glass, who are fast gaining a reputation for complex ecclesiastical installations, were commissioned to provide the bespoke balustrading. The balustrade runs smoothly around the new mezzanine area, precisely engineered to fit flawlessly around the ancient stone arches and meeting the angles of the staircase to give a finish that is both functional and visually perfect. >

“Glass often provides the optimum solution as it doesn't obscure the beauty of the architecture and still allows light to flow around the space.”

Peter Hazeldean, Ion Glass



PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT TEAM

Client:
St Clement's Church

Architect:
John D. Clarke

Glass Specialists:
Ion Glass



Peter Hazeldean of Ion Glass said, “Working in churches poses very individual challenges, each one is so different. What does remain constant though is the need to work sensitively with minimal impact on the original stonework. Glass often provides the optimum solution as it doesn’t obscure the beauty of the architecture and still allows light to flow around the space, which is especially important if the stained glass windows are an important aspect of the building.”

At St Clements the glass had to be hoisted onto the platform using a genie lift, which was small enough to use inside the church without damaging the fabric of the building but nevertheless big enough to take the load of the glass. The balustrade itself had to be fully functional with respect to meeting all the requirements of Health and Safety, Building Control and current British standards for public areas and has been installed using a channel set glazing system. The glass balustrading on the staircase is bolted into position with load bearing decorative stainless steel bolt fixings, adding a stylish contemporary finish.

The whole installation is topped with a beautiful bespoke European Oak handrail that fits seamlessly all around the upper level and down the staircase.

“The result looks deceptively simple,” continued Peter, “but the panels around each stone arch had to be accurately templated and the glass cut with a computer controlled water jet for accuracy. Ensuring that the arch panels could be subjected to the toughening process and that they would subsequently sit in the exact position across the span of balustrade was a challenge for our technicians. We’re delighted with the result.”

The refurbishments to the church also included the addition of underfloor heating, a new sound system and replacement of the old organ with a modern digital version that produces a similar sound but takes up much less space and was a more economical option than refurbishing the original organ.

Yvonne Hardman, church warden for the parish, is full of enthusiasm for the improvements to the church. “It’s a very contemporary addition,” she said, “but it’s brought the church firmly into modern usage. We hold regular church breakfasts, the Spring fayre was a huge success and we’re looking forward to using the meeting rooms as an art gallery and staging other events. We hope to host a knitting club and we’re even considering a model train exhibition. We are wholly inclusive, welcoming everyone to our events, whatever their faith. Like many churches, our core congregation had dwindled so it’s really important for us that St Clements remains an integral part of the community. We’re thrilled that the new meeting room, along with the other improvements made, really facilitates inviting the community into the church.”

As an accolade to the legacy, vision and hard work at St Clement’s, the project was recently awarded the Ecclesiastical Award from the Sussex Heritage Trust. ■

St Clement's Church
High Street
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 3ES

THE CHURCH OF ST NICOLAS GREAT BOOKHAM



The Church of St Nicolas at Great Bookham is mentioned in the Domesday Book, where it was noted that 'the Abbot of Chertsey held Bocheham.' Since that time it has undergone significant changes with many substantial additions made to the building, increasing its size and design as the community around it flourished and developed. The most recent improvements are the result of an evaluation of all aspects of church life, recognising that despite enjoying such a long tradition and heritage St Nicolas should continue to move with the times and meet the needs of twenty-first century parishioners.

The present nave dates back to the eleventh century when it was a simple place of worship for a handful of Christians in the surrounding hamlets – but as the villages grew, so did the church. Adding the south aisle between the years of 1140 and 1150 and some thirty or forty years later a north aisle almost doubled the size of the building. It is probable that the west tower was an addition of the end of the



twelfth century and some decades later, in 1341, the Abbot John de Rutherwyk, of Chertsey added the chancel to the church, noting his involvement in the project with an inscription on its east wall.

Further substantial changes were made to the building in the 1400s when some of the walls were removed to extend and improve the church and build the south chapel.

Windows lighting the north aisle appear to date back to the late fifteenth century, whilst the east window lighting the south chapel is comparatively modern, dating from 1859 and commemorating Lord Raglan the Commander-in-Chief during the Crimean War.

Without doubt this is a church that has embraced change and the mixture of styles, windows, timbers, stones and monuments from many different centuries sit comfortably in juxtaposition throughout the building.

Today St Nicolas is 'an archetypical village church' very much at the heart of the community with a constant congregation of

around 120 parishioners that regularly swells to more than double this number with 'standing room only' at Easter and Christmas.

In 2008 the parochial church council started work on a new way forward for St Nicolas, which was encapsulated in a vision statement that addressed faith, community and the building itself.

Once more, the Church of St Nicolas at Great Bookham was evaluated to make sure it wholly met the needs of the congregation and community, although the modern plans were very much designed to improve rather than change the existing structure of the building.

David Wall, chairman of the vision team, headed up a working group that considered improvements to the lighting in the church, looked at the introduction of a projector and screen so that members of the congregation in the side aisles could see and better participate with the service and, most substantially, explore the best use of the west tower base.

Hidden behind a Victorian wooden screen that was topped by some slightly drab and aged curtains the west tower base had become somewhat of an unused area of the church. 'And yet,' said David, 'this was previously the main entrance to the church, opening straight up the nave to the altar. It had however fallen largely into disuse, opened up only for wheelchair access and special events, losing the impact of what was undoubtedly the most impressive view of the church interior.'

Furthermore heating the church was at best 'difficult' and at worst 'expensive' as any heat generated to warm the congregation was lost directly up the west tower, coupled with the strong draft that came via the door itself. 'We had become a hardy lot in Great Bookham,' said David. 'The church was always cold.'

The dilemma about how to open up the tower and best meet the needs of the congregation without damage or visual impact to the original structure of the church was resolved by commissioning a bespoke glass screen.

Brewer Jewel Architects of Dorking were invited to design an appropriate screen that would fit perfectly into the arch and meet the current needs of the church without obscuring any of the ancient architecture or stained glass windows.

They in turn engaged ecclesiastical glass specialists Ion Glass to ensure the installation met the demanding engineering requirements.

Keeping the visual impact of the screen to the absolute minimum involved a technically difficult construction using vertical glass fins to stabilise the multi-panel construction of the



“ Keeping the visual impact of the screen to the absolute minimum involved a technically difficult construction using vertical glass fins to stabilise the multi-panel construction of the arch. ”



arch. And the decision was taken to fix the panels of glass to the ancient stonework by using a series of glass clamps in preference to a continuous channel, which minimised the >

PROJECT



The Church of
St Nicolas
Lower Road
Great Bookham
Surrey
KT23 4AT

impact on the ancient fabric of the walls and was less intrusive visually.

The glass door set into the screen had to be wider than average to allow for easy wheelchair access and also for a coffin to be carried in without hindrance.

In addition, a pair of glass doors were designed to sit inside the existing wooden entrance door to keep out the draughts and avoid any further heat loss.

Peter Hazeldean of Ion Glass told *Church Building & Heritage Review*, 'Once we'd resolved the construction of the screen, the final challenge came in making sure the glass itself was perfect. In order for the screen to meet the heat retention specification it was essential that it fitted very closely around the original stonework with no more than a 6mm gap. The stone itself was hand hewn several centuries ago and the surface and corbelling was both intricate and variable. Whilst visually the two sides of the arch were symmetrical in reality they were quite different.

Ensuring a perfect fit involved a laser survey of the arch, combined with accurate use of a templating cone to precisely record every nuance of the stonework. The resulting technical

drawings provided sufficient detail for the glass to be manufactured to the exact shape of every corbel. 'I admit it was nail-biting,' said Peter. 'These were very big, very expensive pieces of glass and the tiniest mistake would have meant they had to be replaced. But the finished result was a perfect fit.'

The extra large glass door posed a separate technical challenge as the additional width required impacted significantly on the weight. The door is an impressive 3000mm high and 1100mm wide – considerably bigger than average. Peter continued 'We had to fix it into an over-sized floor spring cut into the original stone floor. Bespoke fixings were manufactured to take the weight of the door and give it lateral stability whilst at the same time offering minimal visual impact.'

Despite the stylish and contemporary functionality of the new glass screen, the original wooden screen had been commissioned to celebrate Queen Victoria's reign and its proposed removal provoked outrage from the Victorian Society. David Walls continued, 'Whilst English Heritage were happy with the glass proposal and the scheme had been approved by the Diocese Advisory Committee and statutory planning authorities the Victorian Society were adamant that the old oak screen should be preserved.'

Eventually a compromise was reached by moving the oak screen by a few inches, to allow the glass screen to achieve the optimum position in the arch. 'Luckily, we weren't required to preserve the curtains and they were simply removed,' said David.

To make sure the glass screen truly represents and reflects the spirit and atmosphere of the church, Ion Glass recommended the addition of a small cross detail on the screens. The emblem is embroidered on the altar cloth and was replicated in an applied manifestation in two rows across both the inner and outer screens.

The finished result is truly stunning, meeting all criteria to retain heat loss and in addition minimising the acoustic intrusion of the bells during the service. Since fitting the glass the west tower is now in regular use, being the main access door to the church so parishioners enjoy the full glory of the aisle and the altar as they enter the building. And members of the congregation have expressed their delight in the added warmth of the Sunday services.

All the other works on the vision have also been completed with improvements to the sound and lighting that make the church a more vibrant heart of the community. ■