



SUSPENDED GALLERY ADDS SPACE TO VICTORIAN CHAPEL

Hurstpierpoint College, near Brighton in Sussex moved to its Mansion House in location in 1872, with the main chapel built at this time. Intended to resemble the collegiate system at Oxford & Cambridge, Nathaniel Woodward designed the college to have adjoining Inner and Outer quads, with the chapel and dining hall distinctly separate. A newer area was added to the chapel in the 1920s.



The chapel is an impressive and integral part of the school with beautiful stained glass windows, including a recent addition by Mel Howse who created an impressive and symbolic window in enamelled and kiln-formed glass in 2010.

Recently the growing popularity of Hurst College has seen the number of pupils attending the senior school rise over the last five years from 480 to 720 and space in the chapel during the weekly Eucharist service had become increasingly limited. The service is a long-standing tradition and represents a coming together of the whole school. As Chaplain Jeremy Sykes pointed out "we could have held two separate services to solve our space problem, however this would have meant sacrificing the meaningfulness of all pupils and staff meeting together."

The concept of a mezzanine floor to add to the space in the chapel was broached and local architects John D. Clark Architects submitted designs for a suspended gallery above the main entrance to the chapel. As with any ecclesiastical project, particularly a project within such a grand and awe-inspiring setting as Hurst's chapel, a key priority was to ensure that the additional space created would not detract from the tradition and beauty of the building and existing surroundings.

Designs were developed that included maximum use of glass, for a robust but visually unobtrusive result. Architectural glass specialists Ion Glass were commissioned to produce bespoke glass balustrades for the project, combined with an impressive glass screen to open up the space and provide a vista of the chapel from the school's main dining hall.

Ion Glass are renowned for their work with heritage buildings. MD Peter Hazeldean states, 'You need to be especially sensitive when working in centuries old buildings. It's important that any work carried out doesn't impact on the original fabric of the building. And there's a delicate balance between improving the building to meet contemporary needs whilst at the same time ensuring that any modern additions or renovations enhance the ancient architecture without obscuring the original features.'

The use of glass ensures also allows light to flow through the buildings, especially important if stained glass windows are a feature of the original design. The suspended gallery at Hurst College was designed with accurately positioned channel-set glass balustrades to cause minimal visual intrusion and enable those sitting within the gallery to view the chapel unhindered.

Glass screens installed behind the gallery, create a vista from the end of the dining hall enabling visitors to see right through into the chapel and enjoy the magnificent stained glass windows. The Chaplain states that this is a very significant as this "connects the chapel to the daily life of the school". The overall effect created is that of a gallery that is almost floating above the narthex floor.

Further bespoke balustrading was installed to the steps leading in to the gallery, making a stylish and contemporary focal statement leading up to the new feature.

Each section of the glass required precise templating prior to ensure a perfect result. Ion have developed an accurate measurement system that combines laser technology with a templating cone to ensure that the glass will match out of true walls and even follow every nuance of carved corbels. As Peter Hazeldean added, "We install a lot of glass into arches and around pillars to minimise heat loss and create an acoustic barrier – if the glass doesn't fit accurately around the stonework it somewhat defeats the purpose!"

The project at Hurst College was constrained by the requirements of the school calendar - the entire project had to be completed within the summer holiday period in readiness for the start of the new school year. Fortunately the chapel was completed before the pupils returned.

Chaplain Jeremy Sykes continues to say that he is "very pleased with the new gallery", describing it as "beautiful architecture that does not detract from the rest of the chapel". This sentiment is echoed by the college's headmaster Tim Manly who states that "although modern in construction and style, the new gallery fits beautifully within the building. It is an outstanding addition to our chapel."

The new gallery has proved an innovative way to increase the space of the chapel with minimal impact on the atmosphere and beauty of the building. +



The advertisement for Ion Glass features the company logo "ion" in a large, lowercase font, with the tagline "GLASS FOR LIFE" underneath. Below the logo are three small, square photographs showing different glass installations: a curved glass balustrade, a window with a decorative leaded glass pattern, and a view through a glass screen into a chapel interior. At the bottom of the advertisement, the text reads: "Ion Glass specialise in bespoke architectural and structural glass installations for ecclesiastical and heritage buildings." followed by the website "www.ionglass.co.uk" and the phone number "0845 658 9988".