

CHURCH BUILDING



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A WIDE-RANGING PORTFOLIO

The Whitworth Co-Partnership

ST MARY'S CAVENDISH NEW TEA POINT AND TOILET EXTENSION

Cavendish church probably appears on more chocolate box lids than any other in the country, with the Suffolk pink almshouses in front of the tower over the village green. It is the epitome of the rural Suffolk idyll. Like most rural churches the PCC had aspirations for making the church more community friendly, but lacked the financial resources to bring these to reality. They recognised the potential to serve simple refreshments in the church building its self would be beneficial to the après worship fellowship, a cup of tea being a sure way to connect with the British public and help to create a more friendly and welcoming atmosphere. To install such a facility into the church three feet below ground level was a challenge. We looked all round the church for other places to put it, and produced a statement of justification which showed that for many reasons the ideal spot was on the north wall of the north aisle. Some way had to be devised however to conceal the kitchen from the full view of the church to maintain the visual character of the building and its over all sense of a place for worship. Being reluctant to obscure the north and west

windows which would disrupt the light airy and open feel of the church, we devised a low oak cabinet with a simple but elegant appearance, which opens up to reveal a complete kitchenette unit and cleaning cum flower arranging sink. Perfecting the mechanics of the opening mechanism to enable this to be raised by the older members of the congregation took some time, but it has proved to be a success and is now proudly shown off by the parishioners to incredulous visitors. Water and drainage connections were incorporated as part of the works, preparing the way for the churches next project, the obvious inclusion of a toilet extension.

Various proposals for the provision of these facilities had been considered and abandoned since the 1970's, due to the sensitivity of the site or the costs involved. However an unexpected legacy arrived as the kitchen was being completed which enabled the building of toilet facilities to go ahead. An extension on the north side of the north aisle opposite the south porch worked well on paper and utilised an existing doorway, even though the change in level meant that wheel chair users would have to approach the facility from outside by a pathway. At the planning stage we found ourselves having to justify the



provision of a lavatory in a public building to the local planning authority a task which was not tackled without some astonishment on our part and with some humour in the final delivery. Minimal excavations were carried out to avoid the concern about disturbing remains. Foundations were designed using mini piles, the least invasive foundation method, with a thin reinforced concrete slab. We designed the superstructure to be constructed using traditional materials from the local area, in keeping with the traditional construction of the church, with some modern interpretation of traditional detailing to form an elegant ecologically sound extension which is sympathetic to the original structure but unmistakably contemporary gothic in style. The walls were constructed using flint with limestone quoining. Internally the walls were plastered using a lime plaster left unpainted to give a light, glowing cream colour.

Having a patient client who loved their building and was prepared to work with the architect in the problem solving proved to be a major advantage in this project. Pre consultation with the DAC and the planning authority also paid dividends, giving a smooth pathway through the approval stages of the project. The final completion required teamwork, involving a contractor who was keen to build with pride in the job and to take pride in the completion of the smallest of details.

Mark Cleveland RIBA project architect
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UPPINGHAM SCHOOL, CHAPEL RE-ORDERING

Carried out by Whitworth Co-Partnership in partnership with Ferry & Mennim.

Uppingham school has a worthy reputation for the quality of its choral scholars and its music department. The Chapel, the focus for morning worship and choral performances, was originally designed by George Edmund Street, work commencing on site in 1863 and the shell being completed by 1865. Financial restraints dogged the fitting out and it was not until 1889 some six years after his death that the chapel was finally completed much as Street had originally envisaged it with stained and painted glass in the windows, a reredos behind the altar in richly carved alabaster inlaid with Italian mosaic and a series of statues representing the four evangelists at the entrance to the chancel. A pulpit in marble and alabaster sat astride a marble low screen which divides the chancel from the choir, and the flooring throughout was in Minton tiles. Much of this was due to the energy and determination of the headmaster Dr Edward Thwing, whose imposing statue dominates the eastern portal. The current organ has filled the organ chamber (formerly a side chapel) since the turn of the century when it replaced a smaller instrument located in the chancel. Dark oak paneling was placed round the walls in the 1920's but little else changed until Seeley and Paget added the centenary chapel on the north side of Streets carefully proportioned nave in 1962. Sealy and Paget also designed the pews and the choir stalls, light fittings and the flooring in the vestibule, were the new altar table was located on a raised elliptical plinth. Their scheme covered up most of the alabaster work and all of the Street designed mosaics and arcading adorning the east end, and displaced the font, attributed to Street's son, to the parish church.

The initial brief from the headmaster Dr Stephen Winkley was driven by the desire to seat the whole school in the chapel at one time, and to improve the sense of involvement in assemblies by dealing with the acoustic and visibility issues created by ever increasing amounts of ad hoc seating. The organ with its largest pipe work speaking directly into the side chapel at head height was also in serious need of refurbishment and the decision had been made to replace this with a more suitable instrument capable of filling the whole chapel with sound. In considering how to approach the brief, we thought that the basic principles should be:

1. Move the location of the Liturgical focus to the middle of the south wall from the crossing to reduce the distance

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between any pupil and the centre of things to enable a better sense of inclusion and gathering.

2. Recover Street's proportions, honouring and uncovering his work where it existed and made sense to do so.
3. Create a "wow factor" to anybody coming in to the building for worship or quiet reflection.
4. Remove unnecessary clutter, including obvious sources of light.
5. Recreate a sense of mystery.
6. Enable an ability at least for future flexibility to avoid future liturgical changes requiring extensive building work.

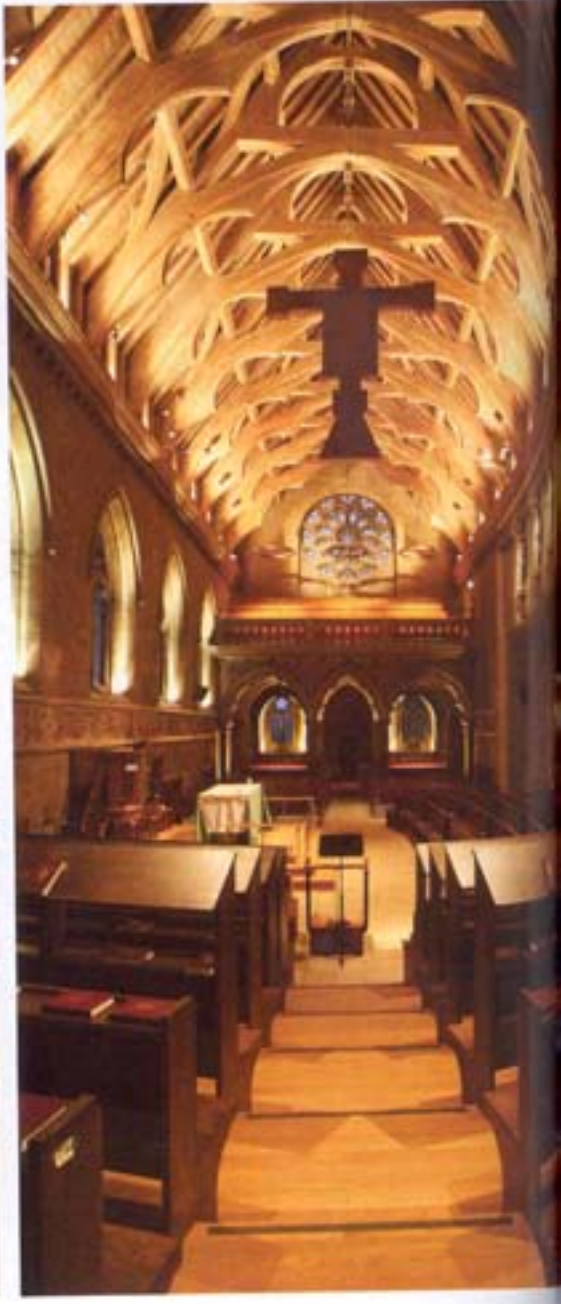
The organ chamber determined the location of the choir and tiered flooring was proposed to replace the 1960's raked floor at the east end to maintain the visual connection and acoustic

Prior to the works starting some research in the school archives and investigations were carried out in the chapel itself to assess what remained of the reredos and mosaic on the

east wall. These together with Street's arcading, sedilia and piscine were discovered in relatively good condition. Therefore the desire for this to be visible whilst the building is in use became a determining factor in the rake of the flooring to the east end whilst the requirement to maximise seating meant that benches had to be located against the east wall. Only relatively minor repairs and careful cleaning of the mosaic and surrounding stone work were required, with the exception of two pilasters between the mosaics, which had been cut off in the 1960's, which were replaced.

The new raked floor was constructed using a timber framed structure over the original floor level, allowing it to be easily removable in the future if required.

In the 1960's works the entire floor of the nave was replaced with a concrete slab base, incorporating underfloor heating which was no longer used and wrapped in asbestos, and covered with a terrazzo tile finish. The central section of this was damaged and worn and the client agreed to replace this with local Ancaster weatherbed polished limestone.



As part of the simplification, the oak paneling was removed, together with the light pendants and other light fittings. The stone walls were gently cleaned to remove fixing marks and the new lighting scheme was designed to gently illuminate the roof structure and discretely provide sufficient illumination at the floor level for reading hymn books, balancing the practical needs of the school congregation whilst enhancing the wow factor on entering the building. This was carried out using largely hidden light sources, utilising modern developments in lighting technology and lamp type to provide the quality and quantity of illumination whilst not detracting from the fabric and character of the building. Some of the more important parts including the four evangelists, the altar and the mosaic were highlighted using carefully focused spotlights. The lighting is controlled using a pre-programmed series of combinations designed to respond to different styles of worship with discretely located controls that cause minimal disturbance to the existing fabric.

A new altar platform was constructed mid way along the south wall, forming a raised dais as the central focus of worship in the chapel. The altar and pulpit were relocated on this platform to maximise their visibility. Removable altar rails were fitted round the perimeter of the platform. The original benches were re-stained to blend with the pulpit, and supplemented with new benches to match the originals, whilst new choir stalls were designed with choir stall lighting. The tiering in the west gallery was altered to improve visibility and new safety rails added.

The result of the re-ordering works has been to create a space that can house the school, and engage most of the congregation in an inclusive way during worship. Also some of the historic character of the building has been restored to the chapel particularly by revealing and repairing the reredos and mosaic on the east wall. The new lighting scheme gently and sensitively illuminates the building to create a much greater sense of mystery, and highlights some of the key features of the building bringing it alive in a fresh way. Phase two of the project to replace the organ is now underway.

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