

The Journal of the Ecclesiastical Architects' and Surveyors' Association



# EASA JOURNAL

SPRING 2018

## **REPORT:**

2018 Spring Meeting in Rochester

## **FEATURES:**

All Saints, Nunney

Donhead School Chapel, Wimbledon

Holy Trinity, Twydall

## **TECHNICAL:**

Archival Research





This project was short-listed amongst last year's Presidents' Award entries

#### Project Summary

Phillips Tracey Architects have updated and extended Donhead Preparatory School to incorporate 4 new classrooms, a 150 seat auditorium, a double height art room and a new chapel. The Chapel is the centrepiece of the new work. With capacity for 50 people, it enables the school to celebrate the Mass and hold prayer services and the daily examen for individual classes at the end of the school day. In the words of Headmaster G C McGrath: "After 83 years Donhead finally has its own Chapel and, as a Jesuit school, is now complete." The Chapel is also made available to the local community, and has transformed the identity of the school.

The main C19 south façade is enriched by the new extension and hints at the school's Catholic identity, with the gabled façade of the new Chapel continuing the informal gabled elevation of the existing school. Inside the Chapel, a roof lantern sits above the altar and the timber roof cassettes, exposed to express the building's construction. A stained glass window forms a focal point to the room. Externally, the lantern continues the rhythm of chimneys seen on the original building.

A limited palette of materials has been used, to reflect the simplicity of the design concept and to blend with the existing buildings. Staff and pupils were actively involved in the design process, giving them a sense of 'ownership': workshops were undertaken with the children to help develop the design of the stained glass window, for example. Bespoke seating was also designed.

Brendan Tracey's particular interest in sustainable architecture has resulted in buildings that should serve many generations to come. The Chapel exceeds the

elemental thermal requirements of current Building Regulations, and the fabric of the existing building has been upgraded where possible.

The Architects were responsible for the project management of this complex project. Their enhanced role allowed the school to remain open while works were on-going. The Contract works were delivered under budget and in time for the start of the new school year in September 2016.



#### Design Notes - External

- The form of the building evolved from the desire to continue the rambling gables along the south elevation.
- Placing the Chapel on this prominent elevation became obvious as it provides a modern identity to the school and focuses the built form as well as the pedagogy on its Catholic ethos.
- Details such as the glazed lantern above the Chapel mimic the form of the chimneys on the historic part of the building as well as providing a beacon of light above the altar, emphasising its spiritual purpose. This is expressed too by the stained glass window divided by the Cross. These features are particularly effective in low light at dusk or dawn.

#### Design Notes - Internal

- The Chapel size and choir layout arises from the school numbers.
- The layout is focused on the Altar and stained glass window.
- The glazed lantern is position directly above to draw the eye upwards and to cast light over the Altar. In the evening a down light in the lantern highlights the Altar.
- The Altar is constructed using the same white Ash timber as used elsewhere within the new building to unify the whole. The holy relic is inset within the solid timber top.
- The Blessed Sacrament resides in a tabernacle to one side of the Altar, built into the wall with a Portland stone surround (again, as used elsewhere in the building). The recess around the tabernacle is illuminated to indicate the presence of Christ.
- The floor is made with polished concrete. This material was chosen as a humble material which is transformed into something precious.
- The sloping roof and its timber construction draw the eye towards the heavens and provide a clear focus to the Altar and Tabernacle.
- Walls are treated simply to avoid unnecessary distraction within this calm space.
- The stained glass window incorporates abstract references to Pentecost and the Virgin Mary.

#### Project Details

Architect	Phillips Tracey Architects
Structural Engineer	Morgan Tucker
M&E Engineer	Environmental Design Associates
Acoustic Consultant	Sandy Brown Associates
Quantity Surveyor	Castle Hayes Pursey
Main Contractor	Blackwater Building Services
CDM	Goddard Consulting