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CHURCH building





St. Margaret's Church Angmering

A controversial extension and re-ordering of a Tuelon Church has just been completed by Canterbury-based architects Lee Evans Partnership.



St. Margaret's before by Ray Whitehouse

Located in the pretty Sussex village of Angmering, St. Margaret's is one of the largest evangelical churches in the Chichester Diocese with a thriving congregation drawn from a growing local population. Its dictum is 'to know Jesus Christ better and make him better known' and it is this sentiment that has

driven forward a difficult and sometimes contentious project to deliver a church designed for the Church Family's vision of their mission in the 21st century.

The Church is Grade II* listed with parts dating back to medieval times and was substantially developed during the fifteenth century. In the 1850s, Samuel Sanders Tuelon, the famous Victorian architect, carried out a major re-ordering and further extension of the Church. It is an impressive architectural heritage but one which the rector, the Revd Canon Mark Standen, and his churchwardens feared could impede St. Margaret's future liturgy and mission.

As a forward-looking Church reaching out into the community, a major problem was the lack of welcome afforded by a small south porch used as the main entrance which was



neither visible from the village or to passers by. Once inside the Church this was compounded by the absence of a coherent 'welcome' area. Under-used sections of the Church, poor sightlines and uncomfortable and inflexible pews restricted both religious and community activities. In addition there was a lack of ancillary facilities for both the congregation and the busy parish office.

Lee Evans Partnership's prime architectural objective was to create a building which would act as an inviting beacon and welcome the local community. Their somewhat radical solution was to demolish an incongruous 20th century office extension and move the new entrance to the eastern façade of the Church into one of two new gabled extensions. Uncomplicated, direct and completely contemporary the new extensions are in fact inspired by Tuelon's original design which projected a three-gabled rear elevation towards the village.

Modern and bold in form the new flint and stone extensions demonstrate the exemplary craftsmanship of stonemasons Hoopers of Middlesex. The common narrative of materials used creates a visual link between the old and the new and serves to contrast and highlight the best qualities of each. There was a conscious intention – the masons undertook a meticulous study of the existing flintwork to establish a context for the new work – to have a slightly different style of laid flint to make the new work stand apart yet harmonise with the existing fabric. The sleek lines of the stones of the new extensions – each individually cut to produce a straight

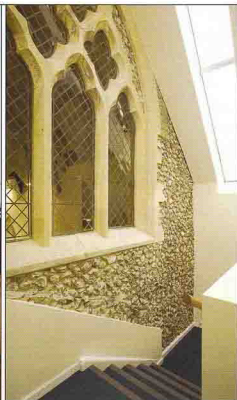
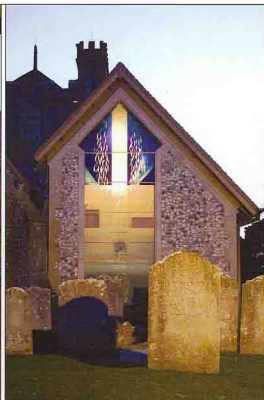
and clean appearance – again contrast with the more roughly hewn stones used in the original structure. In addition the elegant new stone window arches are skillfully formed and act as an effective foil to the heavier arches of the existing windows.

The architect's decision to capitalise on a rare opportunity to install a modern piece of spiritual glasswork into a listed medieval and Victorian church is central to the success of the scheme – indeed this was seen as pivotal in securing the Faculty for the works. Chichester artist Mel Howse has produced two distinctively different but complementary panels of etched and enamelled art-glass glazing which create a powerful sense of presence and welcome to the approaching visitor.

Functionally the new glasswork removes visual barriers and creates partial see-through to the space beyond so that villagers can see life in the Church seven days a week, dispelling any image of an empty unused building, like so many other of Britain's parish churches.

New glass doors, accommodated in the entrance's glasswork façade, have a horizontal sandblasted detail (providing manifestation for the visually impaired) and lead through to a welcome area. A secondary entrance has been formed through the wall of the Gratwick Chapel, and the chapel's original fine stained glass window still functions as glazed art, borrowing light through the intentionally simpler lower part of the façade design.

Inside the Church an extensive internal re-ordering has created a spacious **022**



PROJECT TEAM

Architects:

Lee Egan
Partnership LLP

Quantity Surveyor:
C M Parker Browne

Structural

Consultant:
Dixon, Hurst, Kemp

Services Engineer:
Ian White Associates

Building Regulation
Consultants:
Burler & Young Ltd

Archaeology:
Archaeology South
East

Main Contractor:
Farrise
Construction Ltd

Art Glass Artist:
Mel Howse

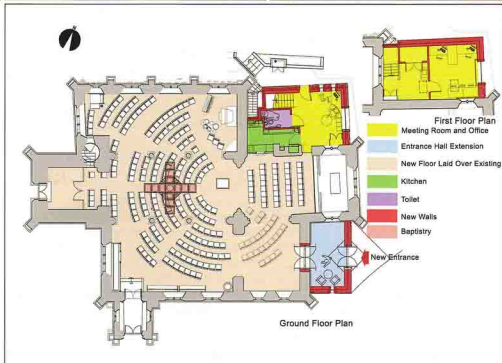
Stonemasons:
Hoopers
Stonemasons

Ecclesiastical

Furniture:
Simon Jewell
Designs

Glazing Installation:
H H Aluminium &
Building Products Ltd

Photography:
Robert Greshoff



uncluttered interior which facilitates a flexible approach to both liturgical and secular uses. The historic Tuelon lectern and font have been repositioned and the pulpit removed and replaced with a mobile lectern. The choir stalls have also been removed and an area for the music group and organ console created at the side of the north east aisle. The majority of the pews have been removed (two sample pews and the churchwardens' pew have been retained for posterity) and replaced by chairs which can be easily reconfigured. A new baptistry and

raised oak floor with under floor heating have also been installed. The ancillary facilities, housed in the new extension, lead off from the chancel with an independent external access through an existing door on the north side of the Church. The extension accommodates a kitchen, WC and office/meeting room and upstairs a spacious parish office with ample storage.

In an age characterised by mass production and standardisation the craftsmanship of the new ecclesiastical furniture and cabinetry is superb.



Bespoke cabinet-makers, Simon Jewell Designs (SJD), whose past commissions include work at Lambeth Palace, fashioned the handsome communion table, mobile lectern and mobile font from oak inlaid with English sycamore detailing. (The font's hand-beaten copper bowl was commissioned from silversmith, Justin Richardson). SJD was also commissioned to make the new baptistry cover, a key feature of the new oak flooring, as well as new vestry and music cupboards.

It has been a four year long journey for the Church Family. Finally on Sunday, March 29th the congregation was able to use the new facilities for the first time. Feedback has been extremely enthusiastic particularly in relation to the significantly better acoustics, the new lighting and ecclesiastical furniture. The Revd Canon Mark Standen is delighted with the Church's new appearance and feels he can now properly engage with the congregation during services because of the greatly improved sightlines. He praised the Church Family's commitment to the project and said: 'The work was entirely paid for by the congregation of about 400 regular worshippers. We felt that this project was inspired by faith and we wanted it to be built by faith. Above all we wanted to present the improved Church building as a gift to the village.'

The service of rededication by the Bishop of Lewes will take place on Sunday 17th May 2009. ■

Mel Howse worked closely with the Church Family to develop the design for the glasswork which emphasises the word of Christ and the Bible in its symbolism:

The Entrance Façade

The entrance façade glasswork represents a welcome from St. Margaret's to all who visit. A colour palette of yellows and golds – in some areas the golds are overlaid with red to create intensity – are used to create a warm and caring reception inviting the visitor into the place of worship. By entering through the doors set into the glass façade, the 'crossing,' visitors pass through into Holy space.

Inspired by St. Margaret's architectural form, its internal decoration and the existing fabric of the screen, the design represents an ethereal image of The Holy Spirit in the air all around. It is a dynamic design thrusting heavenward. The beautiful naturalistic stone carving found on the column capitals dating from the Tuelon re-ordering of 1852-53 depicts angels with wings extended and winding foliage beneath. This informs the flowing, repeated images and gathering motifs. These motifs are used to explore the space whether as individual forms or congregating into a mass and the sweeping motion of the layered motifs echoes the original

architecture and tracery. The individual and collective motifs are layered and draped in swathes across the façade, ascending and descending to produce movement. The overall design is intended to soften the contemporary new architecture and the texture of the sandblasting on glass, reminiscent of the soft texture of the stone, creates another visual link.

The Office Façade

The predominantly blue glasswork design for the new office façade is more structured and its imagery explores the practical theme of 'the Church in the community'. A visual link is created to the field of blue in the remaining exterior east windows and the keen observer will also detect a reference to the lancet of these windows in the design.

Traditionally blue represents heaven and a field of blue is used at the apex. The background has movement as it is not just a solid blue but shaded in parts by blue and purple. Within the blue, at either side of a central flowing band, are gathering forms of white and shades of white which represent God's love descending to be part of the work of the Church. These motifs provide a visual supportive link from the blue background to the central column which represents a river or a waterfall and symbolises the 'river of life'.

