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## Three Surrey Churches

### Three extensions to listed churches

by Caroe & Partners

William Douglas Caroe (1857-1938) founded his own practice in 1885 – 125 years ago next year – having spent the previous five years in John L. Pearson's architectural practice working on a group of important churches including St. Augustine's Kilburn, St. Stephen's Bournemouth and Truro Cathedral.

W D Caroe's own work was much concerned with the careful repair of ancient churches and the design of new ones. He was architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners from 1895 until his death, and one of the two honorary consulting architects to the Incorporated Church Building Society, and had one of the largest and busiest architectural practices in the country in Edwardian times, employing 20 assistants. He is best known for his new church designs such as St. David's in Exeter, St. Hugh's at Charterhouse-on-Mendip ('his most romantic

accomplishment'), and his unexecuted design for St. Helen's Merseyside, also designing the fittings for these and many other churches.

His careful restorations of ancient churches make him a pioneer of building conservation. At St. Thomas a Becket, Fairfield (Kent) the decay of the fabric forced the almost total rebuilding of the church, yet he was able to reuse virtually the whole of the original materials, retaining with them both the atmosphere of the ancient building and the patina of age. He used to say that the highest praise on completion of a job was when a parishioner would complain, 'How on earth have you managed to spend all that money when there is so little to show for it?'

In 1907 W D Caroe leased Vann near Godalming in Surrey as a retreat from his busy London practice. Using his skills as a conservation architect and Arts & Crafts

designer he combined and extended an existing Elizabethan house, 17th century addition and barn to create a country home that remains in the family to this day (he purchased the house outright and surrounding farmland in 1930). Together with his wife he created a landscaped garden around the house for which Gertrude Jekyll, a neighbour of the Caroes, provided advice.

By living in the area, WD Caroe became closely involved in the care and conservation of a number of small Surrey churches, such as St. Peter in Hambledon where he undertook a vestry extension in 1912.

Ever since the formation of Caroe & Partners, the careful conservation and repair of ecclesiastical buildings has formed a large proportion of our work. This includes the Cathedrals of Winchester, Exeter, Ripon and St. David's, at all of which we are the cathedral architects.

Caroe & Partners recently completed projects to extend three listed churches in Surrey. The projects were similar in their scope which was to create larger and more convenient facilities to meet the needs of the present congregations. These facilities include a hall, meeting room, kitchen, office and lavatories.

With these three Surrey churches we have striven to create designs which continue the traditions of craftsmanship and attention to detail which have always been a hallmark of the firm's work. An understanding of local tradition, building techniques and the role of the artisan have all found their way into these extensions. An appreciation of the past and of the traditional local skills which have slowly evolved over the centuries have been built upon and celebrated while the more prosaic requirements demanded by the current building regulations have been incorporated in an unobtrusive and discrete manner.

#### Godalming: St. Peter & St. Paul (1)

Caroe & Partners have had a long involvement at the Grade 1 listed church of St. Peter & St. Paul in Godalming. Previous work included re-leading the spire, cleaning and repairing the fabric, restoring the church's boundary wall and introducing discrete floodlighting. The most recent project was the partial rebuilding of the 1970's church rooms on the north side of the Church. A larger scheme, including new church rooms and the replacement of the early 1970's octagonal hall, melding together the basic forms of the Gothic architecture of the church with the simple vernacular of the Surrey style, had to be deferred due to budgetary constraints.

#### K.J.BUCHANAN & CO LTD. Building Contractors

*"We were pleased to be the Main Contractors for the extensions to The Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, Godalming & St. Peter's Church, Hascombe"*

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The new church rooms were completed in 2007 and now provide much needed meeting room, office, toilet and kitchen facilities. These areas revolve around and open into a spacious and light atrium. The materiality and Gothic idiom of the church was picked up on to create a simple and complementary annex which holds its own while not competing with the church.

The construction is a modern cavity wall system. However, various features and details have been incorporated consisting of crafted elements: carved stone ashlar was used for the new oriel window dressings and other architectural punctuations, pegged oak trusses support the glazed atrium roof, a wrought iron gate fronts the new porch. Suitable craftsmen, K J Buchanan & Co and Massey Masonry, were engaged and worked together. The local Bargate stone, which is no longer available, was matched as closely as possible using Sussex Sandstone as well as some second-hand Bargate that was donated by neighbours and supporters.



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#### Hascombe: St. Peter (2)

Caroe & Partners were commissioned to design a new vestry hall, kitchen and lavatory as well as disabled access to a charming grade I listed Surrey church designed by Woodyer in 1864, now situated in the Surrey Hill Area of Outstanding Beauty. The church consists of a nave and apse in simplified late 13th century style, with the later Lady Chapel to the south and a small lean-to sacristy alongside the chancel to the north. Nikolaus Pevsner found St. Peter's church 'worth a very special look to see how good and free from period associations a Victorian church could be when the architect took pains over it.'

The work involved careful alterations to the existing 1930s vestry extension to provide a connection to the double height space of the new vestry hall itself. The design used vernacular materials and techniques to create a contemporary building which is sympathetic to its setting within a rural churchyard.

The softwood frame has oak cladding above a stone plinth and a roof that is covered in handmade tiles matching those on the church. The wheelchair ramp leading up to the entrance is tucked away behind a low wall made from Bargate stone, reusing the material obtained from the demolition of the north wall of the vestry. The Bargate stone wall has raking buttresses to complement those of the church.

Access to the new extension is through the former vestry door so that the interior of the main body of the church and decorative scheme remains untouched. ■



**Hambledon: St. Peter (3)**

The Parish Church of St. Peter's is a grade II listed structure built in 1840-46 to replace a possibly Norman church. Together with the adjoining grade II listed 17th and 18th century buildings of Court Farm it forms a picturesque ensemble at the end of a narrow lane at the edge of the village of Hambledon. St. Peter's church is constructed of local materials, coursed Bargate stone with ashlar dressings and Welsh slate roofs. The vestry to the west is a 1911-14 addition by W D Caroe; the shingled bellcote was added by his son Alban Caroe in 1951.

Caroe & Partners were commissioned to design a new extension utilising the narrow gap between the chancel, north aisle and a retaining wall that separates the church from the neighbouring orchard.

By removing some unsightly outbuildings and the 1920s chancel aisle they succeeded in creating a new hall, small meeting room, accessible toilet and kitchen area that provide the congregation with the facilities urgently needed for Sunday School, PCC meetings and after service gatherings.

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The hall has a composite steel/softwood frame bearing on a concrete raft with ground beams and piled foundations that make the new building structurally independent of the existing retaining wall. The east elevation of the new extension is formed by a glazed oak structure on a low Bargate plinth. Again, as the stone is no longer commercially available, salvaged stone from the demolished chancel aisle walls was used. The north elevation is tile-hung above the existing retaining wall to ensure that the new-built blends in well with the neighbouring buildings of Court Farm. Thanks to A J Tracy & Sons Ltd, who undertook the work on site, with their careful attention to every building detail the new extension has become an attractive addition to this listed Surrey church. ■

*These three projects described above illustrate the ongoing design tradition of a practice which is in its 125th year and how Caroe & Partners approach each design project in a way that sets the new work squarely within the context of the existing building.*



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