



St David's Cathedral

Pembrokeshire

The restoration and reconstruction of the cloisters has been an ambition of the dean and chapter of St David's since the 1920s, when the project formed part of an appeal for the repair of the cathedral. The project progressed as far as schemes prepared by the then cathedral architect, W D Caroe, based on the evidence discovered in the archaeological excavations of the cloister walks. Lack of funds prevented any further progress at that time, though work was able to proceed on the restoration of St Mary's Hall, in the 1960s when Alban Caroe completed schemes for renewing the roof and windows in an uncompromising modern style which resisted the temptations of restoration.

The original cloisters of late 14 century date, were built in an adjunct to the chapel of the college of the vicars choral, linking St Mary's hall with the cathedral itself, by way of a doorway in the west side of the north transept. These were demolished sometime after 1549, with the dissolution and thanks to the vision of the present dean, Wyn Evans, and the funding made available by an appeal launched in the year 2000, the restoration of the cloisters has now reached fruition.

Peter Bird of Caroe and partners, the present Cathedral architect, prepared this scheme to provide educational facilities, meeting rooms and vestries over the east and west walk; in the south walk new ➤

PROJECT TEAM

Building owner:
Dean & Chapter of
St Davids

Architect:
Caroe & Partners
Architects

Main Contractor:
Carreg Construction
Ltd

Structural Engineers:
Mann Williams

Joinery:
McCurdy & Co Ltd



lavatories squeezed between great buttresses which support the north aisle and north side of the cathedral. The cloisters walks are all built on the exposed foundations of the original buildings, and are constructed in such a way as to avoid interference or conflict with the standing historic fabric. The west wall of the west cloister has been reconstructed to its original height in stone.

The original cloisters had stone, ribbed vaults, the lines of which can be seen in the remaining stonework. The new green oak frame was set out so that the arched braces exactly followed the lines of the original oak ribs, with the remainder of the frame being sized and set out above, to occupy the original first floor zone, and with each post set on the outer line of the missing stone columns. This produces the rhythm and proportion of the original cloister, using traditional materials, whilst avoiding conjectural reconstruction in stone. The use of a green oak frame enabled a slim but well insulated structure to be constructed to maximise the width available to fit useful accommodation over the narrow cloister walks.

No medieval stonework above or below ground could be disturbed but a very small number of resin-anchored dowels were used to flitch plated beams into the medieval stonework. Soft joints between the new oak walls and the stonework were formed, to allow movement and to take up the settled lines of the stonework.

The new oak frame was designed with traditional oak pegged mortice and tenon joints but unlike traditional frames the upper face is orientated to the interior elevation of the structure rather than it forming the external face. This gave an even plane for insulation and joinery and dpcs and enabled the external face to be articulated, to give visual texture and depth. Mortices were carried through cill beams to facilitate drainage.

The oak frame was completely prefabricated off site and joints were designed to allow timbers to be offered up and fitted within the very tight tolerances of existing stone features such as arcades and corbels. ■

Wood used:
European Oak

Dimensions:
The chapel furniture stands on a new platform approx 4 metres wide by 2.6 metres deep

Carreg Construction was delighted to be chosen as the principal contractor for the Cloisters project, St. David's Cathedral.



Specialists in the renovation, conservation and maintenance of listed, historic and ecclesiastical buildings.

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Caroe & Partners
Architects



Architects for the repair and conversion works of
St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire

www.caroe.co.uk

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