

Cornerstone, Charles Street, Cardiff

Cornerstone is a Grade II listed chapel designed by RG Thomas of Newport and was built in 1855 for the Charles Street Congregationalists Independent Church, with a school room added in 1871.

The chapel is an early example of Gothic revival; its distinctive multi-coloured stone work is known as “Snail-creep” and is reputed to be made up of the ballast of coal ships returning to Cardiff from the Middle East, including Indian Limestone.

From 1978 to 2010 the building was known as the Ebeneser Chapel and was the home of a Welsh speaking Independent Congregation.

In May 2012 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff purchased the chapel and, following a significant donation from the Hodge Foundation, the Cornerstone Project was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant of £1, 267,700 in December 2014.

Volunteer Project manager Christian Brown, OBE, KSG oversaw the full scale renovation and restoration project, designed by Petersen Williams Architects and delivered by Weavers Builders and supported by the Cymric Building Preservation Trust.

Architectural features and windows were repaired and restored, and plaques dedicated to former ministers have been preserved and relocated to form part of the newly created Sensory Garden, designed for use by members of the Blind Gardening Club of Cardiff Institute for the Blind.

Dame Jenny Abramsky said,

“New ideas need old buildings....the Heritage Lottery Fund aims to stimulate local economic growth by unlocking the commercial potential of unusual historic buildings.”

Archbishop George Stack observed that,

“The purchase of the chapel is an attempt to preserve the heritage and adapt the building sensitively for this new phase in its life and history.....its’ completed restoration will mean it can continue to be of service both to the Church and wider community in its’ capacity as a community facility and business centre.”

Cornerstone is now a conference, business and wedding venue with a large hall also available for Church and community functions and a cafe. The heritage of the building is being preserved via an Oral History Project, recording the memories of former chapel users, and school visits to the Cathedral can now be extended to include workshops in the Cornerstone.

Cornerstone has hosted many social, corporate and charity fundraising events since its’ opening by HRH Prince Charles on 16th December 2016 as well as Archdiocesan events and school visits, thereby creating employment and engagement with the wider community, thus fulfilling the aim of Archbishop Stack who said,

“The purchase of the Chapel by the Catholic Archdiocese will ensure the social, cultural, architectural and religious heritage of this historic building and the Catholic story of the area is restored in stone and preserved by the Cornerstone project.”

Alongside the renovation and conservation of this building is the important work of recording its history through an ongoing Oral History Project, capturing the memories of past members of the Ebenezer Church.