Haslar Hospital Memorial Garden

This ‘Live’ project was organised as a core-curriculum BA2 undergraduate project over a period of 5 working days at the beginning of March 2012. Over 40 undergraduate students were involved, with 5 academic and Project Office staff members acting as mentors throughout the week. The Clients for this project were Isobel Gatherer from Solent Office Solutions and Carol Wincott of Shore Leave Haslar.

The aim of this project was to design a new tea room/ function room that sat on the site of the old glasshouse, against the existing stonewall in the Memorial Garden of the Haslar Hospital.

The brief for this project was as follows:

- Accommodate up to 50 people at a time
- Fit in with the surroundings and the beauty of the garden
- Have sufficient toilet facilities
- Have modern kitchen features
- Be mindful of the primary aim of the project and therefore whilst being accessible to the public, allow enough privacy for the veterans who are working within the secure space

The students worked in collaborative design teams and were formed from BA2 undergraduate architecture and interior design students. Each design team came up with a design proposal for the site, which incorporated a new structure and a sensitive interior that met the needs of the brief. Each scheme was presented to the Client at the end of the week.

The Royal Haslar Hospital has been at the centre of the Gosport community since 1754. It was the first of 3 Royal Naval hospitals to be built in the country and provided care for sailors of the fleet and it was the last of these to remain in service. In 1966 it became a Tri Service hospital and since the 1950s civilian patients had access to the excellent medical care that was provided. In 2001 the provision of health care was transferred from the Defence Secondary Care Agency to the NHS Trust and despite years of rigorous campaigns from the local community for the hospital to remain open, Haslar closed in 2009. The Memorial Garden at Haslar has a MoD covenant and adjacent to the garden is the Paddock which is the resting place of approximately 8,000 sailors who died in the hospital following conflicts at Waterloo, Trafalgar and Corunna.

In 2009 a private enterprise company obtained the Haslar site and since then the local community have had very limited access to this wonderful site of outstanding beauty, which is steeped with local history.

In July 2011, Our Enterprise who now own the Haslar site, granted Shore Leave Haslar the use of the Memorial Garden with the aim of utilising the site through the restoration of the 2 acre walled garden to its former glory.

Primarily the aim of the Shore Leave Haslar project is to offer a safe haven for Tri Service veterans who have fought for their country in a variety of military conflicts, to undergo horticultural therapy. This will help them to rehabilitate and re-engage with the local community whilst helping to restore not just the nursery part of the garden (with its poly-tunnels and greenhouses) but also the larger grass and tree garden, back to its former glory.
In the future, when the restoration work is complete, Shore Leave Haslar will open up the garden to the community and host events such as; open-air theatre shows, art exhibitions, concerts, afternoon tea, educational tours and many more cultural activities to engage the community. People will also be able to simply sit and reflect in the beautiful and peaceful surrounds. Shore Leave Haslar will promote collaborations with local schools, care homes and the elderly, children and adults with special needs, local charities, clubs and volunteers in order to re-establish the gardens as a centre of community and culture within the local area.

Client Testimonials

I cannot thank you enough for bringing the students to the Memorial Garden at Haslar. I had no idea just how seriously they would take the brief I gave them and how hard they worked to produce such inspiring work in such a short time scale. Trying to make a decision on the top three proved almost impossible, the standard was so high; in all honesty I felt all of them deserved recognition as without exception all had put so much effort into the project.

They had listened to the brief, they produced models and all presented with a strong sense of commitment to a project which, despite only being in the garden for a couple of hours they managed to understand the nature of the site and showed a very mature understanding of both the history of the garden and more importantly the needs of those it is trying to help, this was clearly reflected in all the presentations.

It was a privilege to be involved with a young group of people who were so engaging and I am grateful to all for their time but most of all their inspirational designs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank every one of them personally and I wish them the very best of luck for the future.

Carol Wincott Shore Leave Haslar

“It was fabulous to see how far the students had come with the project in just a few days. When they arrived on the Monday in the garden they were very much individuals on a field trip, by the end of the week they had transformed into teams working closely together and producing some astounding pieces of work.

I was amazed to see that they had all taken on the essence of the garden and had clearly understood the passion that those of us who are involved in the project feel for the space. Within their ideas they encompassed the history of the garden and the vision that we have for the future of it.

Although there were 3 prizes allocated, all of the groups should feel proud of the work that they produced, as each one came up with unique and individual ideas. Ideally it would be fantastic to be able to choose the best bits from all of the ideas and use them in the garden and we will certainly be sharing these with the veterans and the volunteers and will no doubt be using some of the least expensive ideas in the near future. Especially the ones that the veterans, with all of their skills, can produce themselves.

I would like to say a great big thank you to all of you who were involved in the project last week and hopefully we will see you again sometime soon and once the cafe is built (whenever that may be) we will be inviting you all along to the grand opening!”