

HOBHOUSE COURT: Realising Ambitious Brick Façades

Positioned in an architecturally sensitive area surrounding Trafalgar Square, Hobhouse Court has a distinctly contemporary façade which needed brickwork to reflect the richness, grain and materiality of the surrounding vernacular. A partial new-build, partial refurbishment project, Hobhouse Court is a vibrant and accessible environment designed to enhance the area and preserve the historical surroundings. The end design was a massive undertaking to ensure the creation, designed by Arquitectonica and Brisac Gonzalez, was realised.

Michelmersh's Charnwood factory was chosen to supply bricks for the project as its speciality is producing handmade bricks in bespoke blends with matching special shapes, all made by expert craftsmen. As the project developed and evolved it concluded with 20 bays, all with varying angles on plain and face folds requiring 1400 different mould types to form the wide array of bespoke special bricks, all of which were to be intricately made from plan. Brick distributor E H Smith felt that Charnwood was the only manufacturer capable of achieving excellent results due to its production team's knowledge, understanding, experience, dedication and flexibility.



Brisac Gonzalez was responsible for the design and choice of materials and stated: "For our Hobhouse project, Charnwood was able to provide us with both the desired colouration and the fine, yet imperfect, handmade texture across two distinct complementary blends. Most importantly, Charnwood had the technical aptitude and the willingness to deliver the multitude of bespoke shaped and standard facing bricks, all to a consistent quality, which has allowed for the ambitious design of the brick façades at Hobhouse to be successfully realised."

Alastair Gray, E H Smith, explains: "It soon became clear to me that only Charnwood would be able to handle a project of this complexity. With so many different specials and with some in varying quantities, Charnwood's handmade bricks offered great flexibility in production and could deliver everything on time. Nothing was too much trouble for the Charnwood team."

Never before had Charnwood taken on a project that required such a large number of special shaped bricks, however it set about the task of supplying the brickwork with the same professionalism used to supply all its projects regardless of size and complexity.

Steve Bowns, Production Manager at Charnwood, commented: "At no point did we doubt our ability, we used the skills of our business from pattern makers to mould makers, handmakers to firing experts. The planning of production right through to packing and delivery was essential to our success."

Each special brick was stamped with its own code to identify its location then packed in reverse for the relevant bay to make handling on site as easy as possible to eliminate errors. Communication with all parties, from the factory through to the supplier and brickwork contractor, played a critical part. Swift Brickwork Contractors, with nearly 30 years' experience in the provision of brickwork and architectural masonry, were well placed to deliver the finish that this carefully manufactured product deserved. The Hobhouse Court project is a true reflection of the best in collaborative working, with all parties engaging to deliver an outstanding, complex and creative building.



Steve continued: "I am very proud of the Charnwood team and what they have achieved bringing the architect's dream to reality. I feel that we pushed all the boundaries with the complexity of this project and the end result has surpassed all expectations."

As Britain's Brick Specialists, Michelmersh Brick Holdings PLC unites the best in clay traditions. Expertise and attention to detail displayed in the design, construction and materials of Hobhouse Court will represent an iconic building that will enhance our built environment for generations to come.