



International Building Press PR and Communications Awards 2016
Best Business Communications campaign

STONE STORIES

Goodfellow Communications

People

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Budget

Delivered as an element of a £12,000 annual retainer

Objective/brief from client

Martin Ashley Architects is a small building conservation practice. Conservation architecture can be overlooked, and the practice wanted to increase its visibility among professional peers and the public, encourage an appreciation of heritage buildings, and develop an understanding of its approach. Martin Ashley Architects also wanted to raise their profile against that of similar (and larger) practices.

We were asked to demonstrate Martin Ashley Architects' relevance and expertise to professional and public audiences, and to explain their approach whereby new design and technology can exist harmoniously alongside conservation skills and traditional crafts.

Strategy

We identified two projects at St George's Chapel, Windsor that could be used to address the brief:

- Imaginative sculpture: the replacement of decayed Medieval (and Victorian replica) grotesque sculptures on the exterior of St George's Chapel with contemporary carvings
- The Canons' Cloister: the comprehensive refurbishment and repair of a range of 14th century monastic buildings – a hidden corner of the Windsor Castle complex and an outstanding example of conservation expertise

Each is technically complex, and at first sight quite 'dry'. Nevertheless, we saw potential in each one to bring conservation architecture to life and inspire enthusiasm among different groups.

In order to do this, we needed to have a thorough understanding of them ourselves before developing a strategy – let alone writing or talking about them. We studied plans and drawings, and spent time on site with the architects and the other project partners. We took particular care to secure the support of the client (the Dean and Canons of Windsor) given the building's status as one of Europe's most important buildings and its location within Windsor Castle.

Our strategy was as follows:

- Demonstrate that conservation architecture can embrace contemporary design and approaches
- Use projects that demonstrate Martin Ashley Architects' progressive approach and technical expertise
- Position the practice alongside conservation peers and, more importantly, more mainstream leading architecture practices
- Provide journalists with everything they need to communicate technical projects in arresting and interesting ways
- Deliver high quality feature coverage in architectural, academic/technical and mainstream media outlets
- Allow the setting, and Martin Ashley Architects' imaginative and expert responses to it, speak for themselves

Method displayed

We focused activity in a six month period in late 2014/early 2015, having researched potential media targets, and publications' themes and production schedules.

For mainstream media, we negotiated a feature with The Guardian. We provided Maev Kennedy (heritage correspondent) with a behind the scenes tour of St George's Chapel to coincide with an exhibition of some of the sculptures, allowing her to appreciate them up close on the ground before they were installed on the building. We arranged for a photoshoot of sculptures in situ by a Guardian photographer.

For the architecture press, we focused on The Architects Journal, and offered a feature focusing on the technical aspects of the Canons' Cloister. We collated all photography, drawings and prepared text to respond to an issue theme of roofing and drainage, demonstrating that a conservation project was just as technically demanding and architecturally innovative as more contemporary schemes.

For heritage/academic audiences we offered a feature article to the Society of the Protection of Ancient Buildings Magazine and Museums + Heritage Advisor. We authored a lengthy academic article on behalf of Martin Ashley Architects for the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings journal, and provided new photography of the grotesque sculptures. We also offered a feature article to Museums + Heritage Advisor explaining how contemporary stone carving was an appropriate aspect of the stewardship and presentation of a Grade I listed building and scheduled ancient monument.

For technical audiences we prepared a long feature article for the RICS Journal – the magazine of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Again we authored an article on behalf of Martin Ashley Architects that explored the technical aspects of the sculptures project in depth.

Finally we used a number of awards programmes to seek wider recognition for Martin Ashley Architects' work. We prepared all awards submission material and co-ordinated awards jury visits.



Relation to objectives and cost-effectiveness

All pitches were successful, and resulted in a broad range of quality feature coverage and awards success. The campaign fulfilled the brief objectives, exposing Martin Ashley Architects through positive and engaging content to a series of professional, public, expert and technical audiences.

- A half page feature in **The Guardian's** main section included an interview with Martin Ashley alongside an extensive photographic gallery which was repeated online. The article explained the sculpture programme in its historic context, and its cultural importance alongside technical and artistic concepts to a huge mainstream public audience.
- **The Architects' Journal** carried a seven page feature article on the Canons' Cloister, bringing the scheme to a wide professional architectural, design and developer audience. The feature was a rare showcase for conservation architecture in the magazine, and positioned Martin Ashley Architects alongside several leading contemporary practices.
- **The Society of Ancient Buildings Magazine** offered a thoughtful discussion of the tension between traditional conservation and more innovative approaches, and sparked a lively debate about the merits of Martin Ashley Architects' approach among the Society's membership. **Museum + Heritage Advisor** brought the practice and its work to an important curatorial audience for the first time.
- The **RICS Journal** article demonstrated Martin Ashley Architects' exceptional technical expertise, and ability to work with confidence and innovation on one of most significant historic buildings in Europe.
- Our awards campaign saw Martin Ashley Architects recognized by a series of important industry awards programmes including the **RICS, Civic Trust** and **Blueprint Awards**. The latter was particularly important to the practice as it positioned them alongside some of the most interesting contemporary design and architecture firms from around the world.

Martin Ashley states: "Goodfellow Communications have been outstanding in significantly increasing our visibility. They have a real instinct and talent for drawing out the essence of what we do, and I cannot speak too highly of them."

