

**Client:** Rugby School  
**Location:** School House, Rugby School, Rugby  
**Brief:** Renovate original staircase

Since the school moved to its present site in the 1750's, the current School House is one of the oldest buildings located within the confines of Rugby School. It stands facing the school's renowned 'Close', the place where in 1823 a local schoolboy, William Webb Ellis, first picked up the ball and ran with it to create the game of Rugby Football.

The current School House was designed by the architect Henry Hakewill between 1809 and 1815, when the building originally consisted of a single large room with a curved exterior wall. It was extended throughout the 19th century when further studies and another large dormitory (now the Assistant Housemaster's accommodation) were added. Entrance into School House is via the courtyard and through an imposing Doric portico.

Early in 2010, N.E.J. Stevenson was approached by Rugby School with the view to repairing and renovating the staircase adjacent to the Headmaster's office. Normally we would not undertake projects of this type, but during our discussions it became apparent the school had a very specific requirement. Our extensive knowledge of the interiors of period buildings and our long and successful track record, coupled with the emphasis we place upon customer care, were the prerequisites demanded by the school for this particular project.

Upon closer inspection, it was clear to see that the staircase had sagged significantly over many years and was now considered to be a potential safety hazard. The amount of deflection in the structure was such that it was decided to extend the project and level the floor, which in places was up to 80mm from horizontal.

Following formal submissions in February, we were appointed to the project in early June so that preparations could be made ahead of the school's summer closure.

On lifting the floorboards, it was clear to see that the supporting structure was in a very poor condition, so new joists were fitted alongside the originals before the floor was repaired and re-laid. Once complete, our attention turned to the staircase.

The original plan for the refurbishment of the staircase was to construct a full size mock-up of the walls and floor within our workshops, and to 'refit' the staircase within this new framework, making appropriate adjustments where necessary. This would have enabled us to perfect all the dimensions across the entire structure, before reinstalling the refurbished staircase in its original home with the minimum of fuss.

Unfortunately, the rudimentary quality of existing timbers and metal supports, together with the multifarious nature of pieces used to 'repair' the stair, rendered this approach unfeasible because it would have transformed the project from one of restoration, to a thorough re-build.

Instead, additional steelwork was manufactured and installed to secure the structure in place. All the visible stair parts were repaired, with many requiring extensive restoration or rebuilding.

To complete the final phase of the project, original design features were restored including the removal of an inappropriate octagonal box section, which once supported a lamp and encapsulated the bottom tread and handrail volute. The handrail and balusters were then re-jointed to improve rigidity, prior to colouring and polishing, which successfully concluded the project and returned the staircase to use for many more years to come.



#### Specification

Material: English Oak with a Mahogany handrail  
Finish: Cleaned and revived with repairs in shellac

#### Contact information

If you feel we could help you with the design and production of your bespoke furniture requirements please contact me, Neil Stevenson, Managing Director, NEJ Stevenson on 02476 544662 or email me at [neil@nejstevenson.co.uk](mailto:neil@nejstevenson.co.uk)