

**PROJECT: ROCKLIFFE HALL HOTEL AND GOLF COURSE**

**LOCATION: HURWORTH ON TEES NR DARLINGTON**

**CLIENT: ROCKLIFFE HALL HOTEL LTD**

**CONTRACT PPC2000 (Amended 2003)**

**CONSTRUCTOR SHEPHERD CONSTRUCTION LTD**

**CLIENT REPRESENTATIVE BROWNE SMITH BAKER LLP**

**LEAD DESIGNER BROWNE SMITH BAKER LLP**

**MECHANICAL ELECTRICAL AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS**

**WHITE YOUNG GREEN PLC**

**COST CONSULTANTS BAKER MALLET LLP**

**INTERIOR DESIGNERS JEFF MASON DESIGN**

**PARTNERING ADVISERS BAKER MALLET LLP**

**CONTRACT VALUE CIRCA £50,000.000.00**

**CONTRACT DURATION 3 YEARS**

### **Introduction**

Rockliffe Hall Hotel and Golf Course is undoubtedly the most challenging and also most rewarding Project with which I have had the great privilege to be involved.

From feasibility studies at the outset to the Rectification of Defects and a Capital Allowances Exercise at the accumulation I was directly involved for six years.

The Project involved the sensitive conversion of a Former Victorian Bankers Country residence into a Five Star Hotel with a Spa and an international competition Standard Golf Course.

### **Multi Faceted Project**

Rockliffe Hall as they say had it all! From the initial restoration feasibility estimates it soon was apparent that in order to preserve the crumbling Grade 2 listed Rockliffe Hall a great deal of investment was required. However in commercial terms it was not a viable proposition to invest so great a sum into the Hall alone. The solution was found in the granting of an enabling contract whereby with support from local planning authority and the watchful eye of English Heritage a residential development was allowed within a discrete part of the estate. The income from this development went directly into the important work of restoring Rockliffe Hall.

The Hall itself formerly called Pilmore Hall was extensively remodelled into its present state by the Victorian Banker Alfred Backhouse in 1863. Mr Backhouse was a director of The Backhouse Bank and was married into the Barclays family. Over the years the Backhouse Bank became an acquisition of Barclays bank that we know today. Mr Backhouse was a wealthy Victorian who was interested in having all the status symbols that a Victorian Gentleman could have including a Palm house Turkish Bath Extensive grounds including a Ha Ha Wellingtonia Trees Pleasure Gardens Stable Block Private bridge over the River Tees and a walled garden. Indeed the similarities between Rockcliffe Hall and the Grade 1 Listed Craggside in Northumberland are striking.

Following the Backhouse Family the ownership of Rockcliffe passed to Lord Portsmouth and eventually was bought by the Hospitaller Order of St John of God who converted the Hall and its Stable block into a hospital. Within the hospital Built by St John of God was a 1960's chapel (now demolished to make way for the new hotel accommodation), the chapel contained important stained glass windows in a form known as Dalles de Verre that had been executed by a master craftsman Alfred Fisher of White Chapel London. Lancet panels of a secular nature were carefully rescued before the chapel was demolished and now are a wonderful backdrop to the new swimming pool in the Spa.

The Golf Course is at 7988 Yds the longest in Europe and was designed by world famous Golf Course Designers Hawtree Ltd. The course occupies a loop in the River Tees that whilst providing a magnificent backdrop for the course also poses the real threat of flooding that does occur from time to time. The solution by careful design and engineering was to include a series of lakes within the course and associated wetland that through a system of pumped irrigation means that even if a flood occurs the greens are above water. The system works and Rockcliffe is playable when many of its rivals have to close up due to saturation.

The spectacular Golf Clubhouse has also been specially designed with a grass roof so that the panoramic views of the estate from the hotel and spa are uninterrupted by the presence of the clubhouse that nestles in the landscape and is virtually invisible!

Conservation work to the Hall was extensive especially in the old Palm House now designated the Orangery Restaurant. In order to provide the hotel with a subterranean tunnel by which means services could be distributed throughout the hotel without inconveniencing the clientele. This task under took what became known as " the search for the north west passage" whereby excavations took place within the Orangery to try and establish whether the labyrinth of existing tunnels in the cellars could be linked to extend the full length of the existing hall. In the event only a partial connecting tunnel was found with the result that the cast iron acanthus leafed columns of the orangery had to be miraculously suspended by scaffolding whilst the connecting tunnel was made.

The new accommodation in the Spa is second to none including the Swimming pool. Hydrotherapy Pool. Sauna Tepidarium Callidarium Hamas and a score of treatment rooms. There is also an associated gymnasium including a dance studio and its own bistro.

Rounding off the accommodation is the Banqueting suite with its own bars and external garden with a Victorian ruin as a backdrop.

Extensive work was also undertaken in restoring the grounds of the estate to its former glory involving Landscape Historians and Landscape Architects.

The complex benefits from the advantage of Combined Heat and Power Plant that provides an income by selling surplus electrical energy back to the National Grid

### **Problems Encountered**

Like any project of this complexity it is prudent to expect the unexpected! Several challenges arose including the discovery of recordable archaeology. During the excavation to form the new contours for the Golf Course Roman artefacts were discovered that involved a team of archaeologists who through no fault of their own caused contractual delay and expense.

A requirement to construct approximately 750 flight auger piles in the project was another blip in the Project again this added both time and expense but was mitigated by the Partnering Team.

### **How PPC2000 Shone Through!**

Baker Mallett are well known practitioners and promoters of PPC2000 contracts. Early discussions with the Client established that no other form of contract would be as flexible to allow for a long period of Project Planning followed by an extensive building programme. The Project was in essence driven by the Clients programme to open the Hotel and Golf Course and the contract was made to fit into this requirement.

PPC2000 allowed for the early involvement of the Clients Consultants to carry out the required Feasibility Studies and design studies to prove the viability of the Project at the same time uniting the Consultants into a Partnering Team and keeping the fees flowing.

After initial designs were developed by the Consultants the Constructor was invited to join the Partnering Team. It was the Clients wish that the Consultants would be responsible for the entire design of the Project to ensure that the highest quality was maintained.

Once the Constructor was on board the detailed process of establishing the AMP was set in place. This involved many a late night and a serious amount of value engineering to ensure that efforts to drive down costs did not compromise quality. Risk workshops were also run to great effect by brainstorming every conceivable risk, analysing the risk, costing the risk and agreeing a risk owner.

The Project commenced on site in advance of the AMP being finalised, this was indeed a signal that the Client trusted the Partnering Team. The reason why the Project needed to start before all financial arrangements were finalised was in essence due to the Golf Course. The fact of it is that it takes three years for a Golf Course of this nature to be constructed and mature before it can be played and hence the work needed to start on site to working in harmony with the seasons. The business plan was for the Hotel and Golf Course to open simultaneously as one depended on the other from a commercial point of view.

In all the PPC2000 facility of a Pre Construction Agreement was employed eight times before the work to construct the main development took place. This enabled work to go on apace whilst the Team finalised arrangements for the build of the main Hotel Complex.

Client Appointed Specialists were also engaged to great effect during the currency of the Project allowing the Client absolute control of bespoke fittings furniture and equipment. Direct contacts additionally realised savings for the Client as the Constructors role was limited to provision of attendance only.

The Core Group meetings and more importantly the actions resulting therefrom were of great benefit to the Project. The Core Group especially the Client were proactive in monitoring and encouraging the progress of the Project. Also as in the best of families when members fell out or got agitated the Core Group was the forum to resolve difficulties in an amicable and positive way.

Team building also played its part in making the Project the success that it is today. Importantly the events were extended to the rank and file of people who actually did the work on the Project rather than being confined to the Partnering Team members or the directors of the firms involved. I won't go into further detail here but on many occasions a good time was had by all!

The result was that the Client's dreams were achieved due in no small part that he was 100% involved in all decision making throughout the entire process from inception to Project Completion and beyond.

### **Sweet Success**

Rockliffe Hall has rightly basked in the lime light of many awards both from the operational view of the Hotel industry and also the Construction Industry. The

Constructors Project Manager Neil Matthias beat off all comers and swept the board in the prestigious CIOB Project Manager of the Year Award 2010. In typical style I was invited to attend the award ceremony with my wife. When accepting the award Neil was gracious in proclaiming that winning was a team achievement.

The result of the Team's efforts is now there for all to see and enjoy. Rockliffe is truly the jewel in the crown for the North of England. You can check out its website or check into the hotel. None of this could have happened without the collaborative partnering teamwork of willing and honest Team Members. PPC was fantastic in allowing total flexibility in which the Contract fitted the Project rather than the reverse.

Peter McTiernan MRICS APA

10 September 2011