

PAVING THE APPLE TREE HEREFORD CATHEDRAL

ROYAL FOREST
PENNANT
NATURAL STONE PRODUCTS

CLIENT
Hereford Cathedral

CONTRACTOR
CJ Bayliss

PROJECT ARCHITECT
Robert Kilgour

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
Robert Myers Associates



Part of a £5m major refurbishment project to restore Cathedral Close in Hereford, Forest Pennant, designed and supplied a six-metre diameter mosaic Apple Tree, created from 100 individual pieces, comprising of around 50m² of natural stone paving and sets.

AN INDIGENOUS STONE 'APPLE TREE'

It was imperative that the natural stone chosen to create the Apple Tree would allow for accurate representation and would not compromise the integrity or symbolism of the design. With a bountiful supply of indigenous stone, it was agreed that a combination of British natural stones would be used. This meant that the colour and tone of the stone would be complementary to the existing built environment and would also boost the environmental qualities of the project, by reducing travel miles.

Nick Horton, managing director of Forest Pennant said: "I have worked in the industry for over 30 years; gaining an extensive knowledge of the UK's natural stone reserves and so I was able to compile a shortlist of suitable stone and slate products for the project team.

Looking at strength, durability and colour, we agreed on five varieties of stone, Royal Forest Pennant sandstone, Herefordshire Red stone, Red Wilderness, Crosland Hill Yorkstone and Kirkstone slate."

The blue, grey pennant sandstone was used to create the outer ring and tree, whilst mini setts were used to replicate hedgerows. The fields of Hereford are represented by Herefordshire Red Stone, with the pale, buff coloured, Crosland Hill Yorkstone representative of the sky. The red apples have been produced using Herefordshire Red and Red Wilderness whilst the green apples and leaves have been created from Kirkstone Sea Green and Light Sea Green slate, with a flamed finish.

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THE APPLE TREE – DESIGN & SYMBOLISM

Sandy Elliott, an ex-art teacher and Canon of Hereford Cathedral produced the original sketch of the Apple Tree, inspired by the Carol, 'Jesus Christ the Apple Tree'. Landscape architect, Robert Myers of Robert Myers Associates created the concept drawings from which, Forest Pennant's projects manager, Chris Griffin, produced the working scheme and templates for the masons.

THE SOLUTION: A 100-PIECE JIGSAW

Working from the original sketches and Autocad and taking into consideration a number of critical criteria, Forest Pennant produced a workable scheme. Natural stone is known to be a hard wearing surface, able to withstand extreme weather conditions, high volumes of footfall and vehicular traffic, however, due to the complexities of the design, Chris had to ensure that the composite pieces would not fail under vehicular loading.

The solution was to design the Apple Tree using irregular composite panels, creating a giant jigsaw of natural stone. This allowed for the thinner straights, 20mm thick, to be recessed into larger base stones, giving an overall depth of 75mm, thus creating a strong surfacing solution for the Cathedral Close.

A 'MASONRY' ACHIEVEMENT

The Forest Pennant masonry team then spent a total of 500 man-hours processing and finishing the composite pieces, using modern hand tools for speed and efficiency and more traditional methods and techniques for the detailing. Precision and accuracy were integral to the success of the project, not just the shape of the apples but also ensuring that each 'jigsaw piece' fitted into its base. The Carol that inspired the initial design can be seen in the outer ring, carved into the pennant sandstone by the masons'.

"The redevelopment of Hereford Cathedral Close has been a huge but necessary project", says The Very Reverend Michael Tavinor, Dean of Hereford. "Ending it with such a significant artistic statement as The Apple Tree has given us a unique focus for our celebrations and has become a symbol of our whole historic city, county and Diocese. We are grateful for everyone who has been involved in every aspect of creating it," he continued.

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The Very Reverend Michael Tavinor | Dean of Hereford

