



Rhodes House, Oxford UK

An iconic historic building embraces 21st Century security technology





For almost 100 years Rhodes House has been a familiar building in Oxford's historic landscape. Steeped in history, its walls have played host to Nelson Mandela, Albert Einstein and former US President Bill Clinton.

Today the historic, grade II* listed building continues to display its iconic arts and crafts charm, whilst an impressive restoration and renovation project has brought the building straight into the 21st Century.

Designed by Sir Herbert Baker and opened in 1929, the arts and crafts gem in central Oxford has a storied past, and while its offerings today expand well past its initial intention, every effort has been made to preserve and conserve the iconic handcrafted interiors of the house.

Rhodes House was commissioned by the Rhodes Trust to serve as the home of the Rhodes Scholarship. Today it is the city's newest and most technologically advanced conference and convening centre, while also maintaining its original purpose, as a centre for study and dialogue for the Rhodes Scholar community.

In 2019 a major restoration and modernisation project designed by multi award-winning practice, Stanton Williams Architects began, with the intention of bringing the building into the 21st Century, while developing a series of under-utilised basement spaces to create a 300 capacity convening centre, to host academic and commercial events.

As part of the scheme, a security and access workstream began, with a brief to bolster the building's security to cater to the cross-functionality, and inevitable influx of community members the renovation project would enable.

Your security, your way with Command Centre

Gallagher's award-winning site management platform, Command Centre was the first system to offer alarm, access, and perimeter security in one single product and its installation has allowed Rhodes House to seamlessly navigate the increased capacity and movement permissions required on site.

The full replacement of the electrical infrastructure provided the perfect opportunity to simultaneously tackle the building's security and access installation, which up until that point, had been very basic.

Rhodes House Estates Administration and Safety Manager, Martin Boyt says installing a solution while the building 'was literally pulled apart' represented the perfect opportunity to bring the security systems to a modern standard.

"Prior to 2020 there was no access control. The building was basically as it was 100 years ago. This project meant Rhodes House went from the early 20th Century straight to the 21st Century," says Martin.

One of the major challenges was fitting access control solutions to the old timber doors. The task at hand required a delicate balance of embracing the new, while respecting the building's history.

Gallagher Security, Business Development Manager UK, Mark Vickers says of the project, "this was certainly a unique project, with many different contractors on site. It was a great display of the power of partnerships to get the job done".

Seamless integrations to bolster security and increase operational efficiency

With 111 doors, 130 employees, more than 200 Scholars and upwards of 300 guests at any one time, Martin says the solution has made the security of the building a lot easier to manage.

“Gallagher access control has proven extremely valuable for the running of events as we have been able to create customised access rights and groups for short duration events and adjust access settings quickly and easily.

“The usability of the system is great. To be able to differentiate access between main users and members of the public for events allows us to enable movement, but in a very controlled manner, only permitting users access to specific areas relevant to their event and for very specific times. It’s also a very easy to use and intuitive system. Trained users can comfortably work their way around it and adapt things either temporarily or permanently,” adds Martin.

Securing the future

While setting foot inside the building today feels effortless, a cohesive collaboration that celebrates the new while paying homage to the old exists, the improvements to security and access have discretely enabled circulation, while bolstering security.

Gallagher’s Command Centre, integration with CCTV solutions, and the installation of T12 readers has provided Rhodes House with a future-proof platform which will serve for many years.

“The building is now very secure with access control working seamlessly alongside increased CCTV. Staff and scholars can feel assured that their safety and security has been well looked after,” says Martin.



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Martin Boyt



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