



Priceless art saved by D-Drill

Problem

Priceless pieces of tiled art at the old Royal Victoria Infirmary hospital in Newcastle needed to be safely removed as a ward was being demolished.

Several collections of Royal Doulton panels displaying a number of scenes from famous nursery rhymes had been on display for over 100 years.

The tiles, which are worth thousands of pounds, were mounted across the RVI hospital's children ward during the reign of King Edward VII (1901-1910) and had remained there until the children's ward closed in 2009.

Demolition work had started and the tiles had to be removed without damage.

Solution

D-Drill was asked to remove the tiles with extreme precision so that some could be remounted on the walls of the new state-of-the-art RVI Hospital in Queen Victoria Road in the city.

The process was started by gluing a board and holding a frame on the face of the tiles, and then cutting down behind the panels so that there was nothing left but the original tile cement. That meant they could then be moved safely.

D-Drill experts cut a chase around the perimeter through the plaster and render in which the panels were supported using a 110-volt diamond hand held saw.

Diamond Drilling operatives Steven Emberson and Malcolm Phillips – both 'home-grown' drillers brought through the apprenticeship scheme run by the UK Drilling & Sawing Association – worked on the project.

They would have normally used a wire saw drive machine powered by 3phs electric/hydraulic but because it was a live, working hospital, they couldn't make use of that type of power, so 110-volt electricity had to be used only.

The diamond wire was fed into the chase and on to a wire saw drive machine which was powered by a 110-volt electric Shibuya 2521 drive motor fitted with a bespoke rubber drive pulley wheel, then onto the guide pulley wheel system.

The equipment was built and put together in D-Drill's own workshop and gave precise control over the diamond wire as it cut down behind the panels without cutting the tiles.

It was crucial that every step of the job was carried out to pin-point accuracy due to the value of the 68 panels. That is where D-Drill's expertise made them the stand-out choice for the job.





CHASE FULL DEPTH OF PLASTER

DIAMOND WIRE

SWIVEL TROLLEY WHEEL PULLEYS

DRILL FRAME TO TRAVEL MOTOR AND TENSION WIRE

FIXINGS

BESPOKE RUBBER DRIVE PULLEY WHEEL

110v ELECTRIC DRIVE MOTOR AND TRACK FIXED TO WALL



The queen was in the parlour,
Eating bread and honey ;



Result

Each panel was safely removed and have now been handed over to the delighted client. Three have already been remounted and many others have gone into storage.

“We’re delighted with the outcome because they are beautiful tiles and they were a part of the RVI’s history. This was a very challenging job as 110-volt electricity could only be used and precision and care were the key factors” said John Emberson, of D-Drill.

Robert Turner, a director of Eura Conservation, who commissioned D-Drill to assist with the conservation work, said: “The key with any project like this is to make sure any damage is minimal.

“This project was difficult and we couldn’t have relied on the traditional method of removing the panels tile by tile, because there would have been too many breakages.

“Instead, we drafted in John Emberson from D-Drill – with his 30 years’ experience along with D-Drill’s specialist equipment to enable us to remove the whole display as one fixed piece once we had consolidated the front surfaces. Between us, we ensured there was only very minor damage.

“Several of the pieces have now been placed in the new hospital and others will follow at a later date.”

