

MOTTISFONT ABBEY, NEW FOREST
ARCHITECTURAL PROFILES LIMITED



The new welcome centre is part of the Mottisfont Abbey development in the New Forest, and a winner of the RIBA South award. The centre was built in response to a rapid increase in visitors over the last few years and contains a visitor reception, shop, plant sales area and toilets, as well as places to meet people.

The design of the welcome centre is inspired by barns and other farm buildings in the local area; the architects, Burd Haward, wanted to base their building on local rural Hampshire architecture and on Mottisfont's landscape.

What is unusual about this particular building is that its colour matures across the first few months and years of its life, changing from a silver-grey to a warm rustic brown that blends in perfectly with the New Forest surroundings.

Both the roof and walls are produced in Cor-ten faced steel which oxidises with the weather at a rate that will depend on the environment and the surroundings so, in effect, maturing to blend in with its situation.... and the final deep brown colour then lasts forever.

The AP45HR-R roof profile was roll-formed by Architectural Profiles Limited, well known for their creative thinking when faced with a challenging specification, The Cor-ten steel was produced by Lotus Steels.

Cor-ten has a long history starting on the railways in America back in the 1930s where controlled corrosion was a feature of a particularly tough steel capable of withstanding the rigours of the railway coal marshalling yards. Since then , Cor-ten has found its way slowly into building construction where this unique, and very attractive, feature does what only it can do.

An Abbey in the New Forest may be a long way from the early US railways but it nevertheless may never have got its sensitive planning permission without that early creative thinking.



The walls are made from wood and glass, to reflect the wood and water found in the estate. The land itself is reflected in the choice of Cor-Ten steel for the roof and some outer walls. This is a distinctive looking material that has been used to great effect in a number of buildings and sculptures, including Kew Gardens and the Angel of the North.

The building's steel screw pile foundations were designed to have a minimal impact on the landscape, and there are a number of other features which help minimise the welcome centre's effect on the environment. Solar thermal panels have been installed on the roof, and the building is heated by a biomass boiler, fed with logs sourced from the estate.



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