



MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL Oxford

Project: Drainage of existing sports pitches
Client: Magdalen College School, Oxford
Contract Supervisors: White Horse Contractors Ltd
Contract Value: £120k



Again, the wet weather during 2012 hampered some projects for White Horse Contractors. The bad weather did, however, result in a positive influx of enquiries for drainage works by sports clubs, schools and landowners.

One of the more logistically challenging projects White Horse Contractors faced was the draining of pitches for Oxford's Magdalen College School.

The independent and historic school's sports field has a rather unique setting; an island encased by the River Cherwell, which given its natural surroundings, is prone to flooding. The only physical access to the sports field is via a series of two metre wide, wooden 'willow-pattern' style bridges with a maximum load of 2.5 tonnes. This posed an interesting problem for White Horse Contractors whose machinery is considerably larger and heavier!



Following on from lengthy discussions, it was agreed that the most cost effective and environmentally sound option would be to use a crane but with dense tree cover, the operational crane had to be limited to a five tonne lifting capacity.



In our workshops, the firm had to strip down our plant and equipment in order for the crane to manoeuvre their machinery to the sports field to begin work. Over the course of 2 days up to 12 loads of equipment and 300 tonnes of gravel were delivered to a tight schedule by Smiths of Bletchington. Each lift had to be controlled in order that river traffic could continue.



Once works finally commenced, White Horse Contractors had to excavate a large sump below river levels, in order for a drainage reservoir to be installed and pumped to the river. Over 5.5km of drains were installed in the ensuing four weeks of contract works, which turned out to be the easy part of the project!

WHC Consultant, James Welsh said: *"White Horse Contractors are well known for tackling difficult projects and this one was no exception. Due to the logistical complexity of getting plant, equipment and materials over the river and onto site, the planning had to be meticulous in order to ensure that it was carried out safely whilst minimising environmental effects. This is something we take very seriously and our approach to dealing with environmental issues has been recently recognised by our ISO 14001 accreditation."*



He added: *"The White Horse team really did do a fantastic job in difficult circumstances and our client was delighted with both what we achieved, but also the sensitive way in which we carried it out."*



Following completion of the work, Estate Bursar for Magdalen College School, Martin Ford said:

"After one of the most major floods for decades, the pitches were under 2ft of water for a week. The pumps were switched on after the river levels had fallen below the banks on Friday and the pitches were suitable for play on the following Monday afternoon. Prior to the drainage works, the pitches would have been out of commission for months."

