

Conservation Project of the Year Entry  
**Intact Software Headquarters Fit Out**



## Practice and Team Background:

Founded in 1993 by Jan and Ingrid van Dijk, van Dijk Architects is an architecture and project management company based in Dundalk, County Louth. We operate offices in Ireland, the UK, Poland, Libya, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Our portfolio of completed projects ranges from commercial to educational, healthcare, civic and conservation work. **We enable our clients to exceed their strategic design goals by providing an exemplary service** in terms of vision, delivery, value and sustainability.

**Our management leads and support personnel on all projects to achieve a high standard of design.** We give our personnel responsibility, authority and specific targets to complete and allow them the time and space to perform in their job. **Everyone is encouraged to give their opinions on design theories** and ideas with ownership of aspects of different projects. Our whole process is based around healthy debate and the finding of successful design solutions. **The Intact Software Headquarters design team was headed by Aidan McDonnell in collaboration with Jan van Dijk. Caroline Whately was the conservation architect on the project.**

Aidan joined our practice initially as an architectural technologist in 1999 and gained practical experience in many of the technical aspects of the built environment. **His particular area of interest is in emerging technologies of materials and detailing in order to achieve greater quality of finish** and sustainability in design.

Since completing a degree in architecture last year he has re-joined the practice as an architectural graduate bringing his previous experience to bear in the area of design. With his experience as a technologist **he is an invaluable asset to the organisation.**

Jan van Dijk, architect and CEO of the company, has over 30 years' experience in designing on a variety of projects including office fit outs. Jan also has an award winning MBA in Project Management.

Caroline Whately has a masters in urban and building conservation and is a Grade III conservation architect and associate director, acted as a consultant on this project. **Caroline is particularly interested in maintaining a strong link to our architectural and cultural heritage.**



van Dijk Architects' Headquarters, Dundalk



The Tholsel, Drogheda



Town Hall, Dundalk

## Project Introduction

We were commissioned to design a new headquarters for pioneering software development firm Intact. Their new premises is located within Blackthorn Business Centre, an existing development designed by van Dijk Architects some years ago. **The building forms part of a protected structure** formally used as military stables associated with Dundalk's Aiken Barracks complex. The brief was to provide a new office headquarters for Intact's global operations, including a number of large office spaces for various departments, a hardware lab, training space, communal space, meeting and boardroom spaces all in a floor area of just under **800m<sup>2</sup>**. The client wanted value for money and **the budget was set at €350,000**.

Visiting the site for the first time the space was bright, open and relatively untouched. **There were a series of exposed timber trusses in the roof** of the protected structure. Nine single glazed metal framed windows lined the west façade dating from a conversion in the 1950's. We wanted to retain as much of the building's history as possible within the new design. The project began on site in January 2015 and was completed in June of this year.

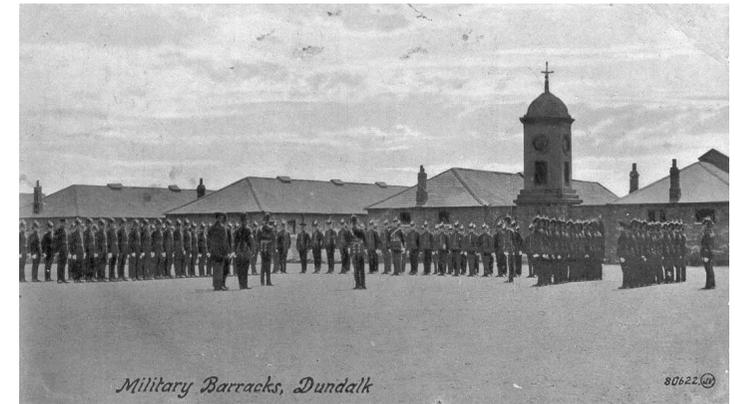
People Involved:

- Client: Intact Software
- Architect: vanDijk Architects
- Contractor: Lorstev Construction
- M+E: Evan Henry Electrical

### Innovation:

In order to respect the building we needed to have an innovative approach in our conservation strategies. **There was a distinct character in the space made up of metal, timber and plain walls.** We sought to maintain this as much as possible through the sympathetic use of materials.

The nine single glazed windows presented us with an opportunity. They were beautiful but impractical in terms of heat gain, heat loss and ventilation. Instead of replacing them we proposed that a second openable glazed screen be placed on the inside of each of the openings. These screens would be plain in form to be easily distinguishable from the historical windows. They are openable so that the windows may still function within the ventilation strategy for the building. **This solution will ensure the viability of the old windows into the future.**



Historical photo of Aiken Barracks



Before: External view January 2015



Juxtaposition of new and old materials

**Ground Floor Plan / Scale: 1:200**

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Reception Space
- 3. Meeting Pod
- 4. Collaboration Space
- 5. Open Plan Work Areas
- 6. Training Room
- 7. Board Room
- 8. Kitchen
- 9. Toilets
- 10. Stores
- 11. Hardware Department
- 12. Xerox Room
- 13. Administration Department
- 14. Office Pod
- 15. Research Department



### Execution:

As you can see from the drawings the space is formed through three evenly spaced volumes with trussed apes. People enter through the central apex which has a metal space framed truss while the left and right volumes are the protected historical stables with timber trusses.

**We developed a concept for the layout with an idea around transparency and encounters. Personnel are given a series of open collaborative spaces where ideas can be discussed and expanded.** These areas are surrounded by private spaces like offices and meeting rooms located in distinguishable timber and glass pods which have a clear presence that further enforces the concept of transparency. These pods work to partition the overall office volume and enhance the series of beautiful timber trusses which repeat throughout the building.

### Challenges:

The balance between intervention and preservation was a challenge. The ambitious aspirations of the client and the size of the space was always going to be trying. We casted our minds back to the former equestrian use and thought about the individual stables that originally partitioned the building. We developed the design of the timber pods to do just the same but in a new contemporary way. This solution quickly resolved the departmental locations and the whole design flowed from there.

### Completion:

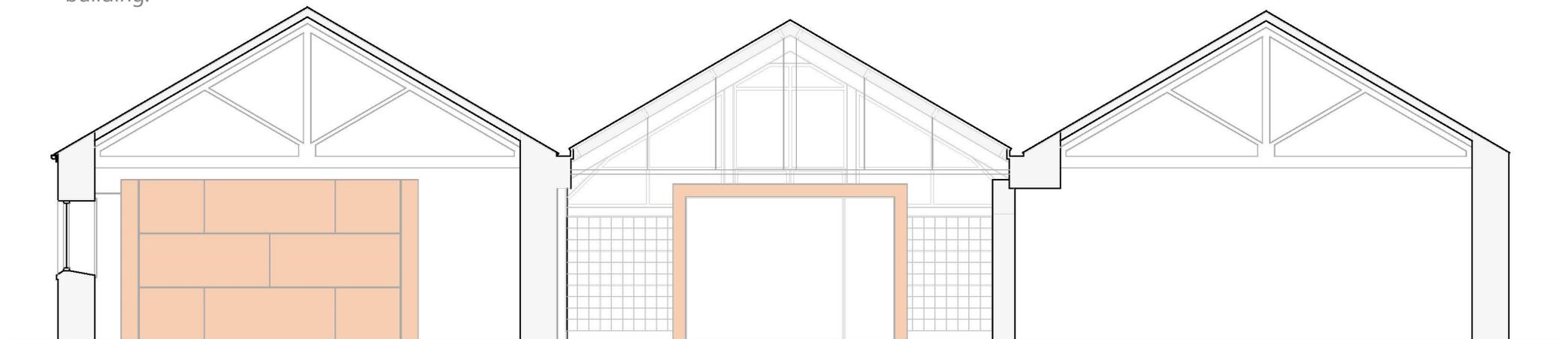
The project was finished within time and budget constraints to a high standard. It was a pleasure to work on and we wish Intact all the best with their new headquarters.



Initial restorative work



Open Collaborative Space



Section AA / Scale: 1:100



Open Plan Work Area



Management Office Pods



Private Meeting Pod



Exposed Mechanical and Electrical Strategy



Board Room



Open Collaborative Space