



# Star quality

**David Buurma** describes how a Shakespeare-inspired memorial helped drive forward plans for a school landscape

Several years ago when Mor Design created the first landscape sketch for Pencalenick School, we produced a plan that we thought was exciting and useful for the school. It ticked the boxes for inspiration, health and safety and functionality. But it was only after the funding source, The David Penhaligon Trust, requested some form of memorial as part of the school garden did the project really gain momentum.

David Penhaligon, a very popular Cornish MP, was tragically killed in a car accident in 1986. On her wreath at his funeral, his widow Annette, quoted a few lines from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

*"When he shall die*

*Take him and cut him out in little stars*

*And he will make the face of heaven so fine*

*That all the world shall be in love with night"*

These lines had a tremendous influence on the subsequent design process. At Pencalenick School, a school for children with a wide range of

complex learning and communication difficulties, we used them as our starting point for the brief. As expected, the children who participated in the workshop eagerly embraced a very literal translation of cutting up a big star into little stars.

Our design solution became a big star to sit in and on; a conversation bowl with star points as a catwalk; a shelter with a sense of enclosure; a frame to enhance the views into the garden; curved star points with punctured little stars with interactive opportunities drawn by the children and the lines integrated with the artwork in celebration of Penhaligon's legacy.

White smooth concrete with a 'Wet Pour' recycled bouncy rubber play surface was used to create the star. The space then took on a magic in the daylight as well as the dark, when the integrated lighting system switches on when the real stars can't shine through the clouds.

The complete budget for this space was used for the star only. The stakeholders agreed with us that virtually the complete original brief was satisfied by this exciting spatial object. The unpredictability of the design process did indeed present us as designers with an unforeseen constellation of stars! ■

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