



## **PETER CAROLIN, BORN 1936**

*The fifth generation of a Scots South American family, Peter Carolin's naval National Service included the Suez debacle of 1956. As an architect, he worked for John Voelcker of Team 10 and with Colin St John Wilson on the British Library. He edited both the Architect's Journal, Magazine of the Year, 1985, and arq, which was awarded the learned journal equivalent, 2002. He was Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture at Cambridge, 1989-2000, and chaired the Cambridge Futures project.*

## **Peter Carolin**

Architect, editor, academic

Born 1936

Autobiographical life story

Available online at [www.livesretold.co.uk](http://www.livesretold.co.uk)

## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. The Irish and the Scots
3. A Rio Childhood
4. Prep School in Surrey
5. Radley and Holidays
6. The Navy and Suez 1956
7. Corpus and Cambridge
8. John Voelcker
9. The Bartlett
10. Sandy Wilson's Cambridge Practice
11. London and the British Library
12. Cambridge Design
13. The AJ
14. Cambridge yet again
15. Retirement
16. Sailing
17. Birgit and our children
18. Looking back

# 1. Introduction

My father, a pipe smoker, was an unlitary man. And yet he loved books. He had an extraordinarily fine collection of antiquarian editions on Brazil. But I never saw him reading them and the only writing of his own that survives are his meticulous account books and a dry-as-dust book on how to set up a company in Brazil. We never tried to persuade him to write a memoir of his life – we knew that he wouldn't have done so, for his Irishness was of a rather puritan kind and, despite an interesting life, he was not a man to talk about it or to see it in a wider perspective.\*

My maternal grandfather, Vovo, a cigar smoker, was different. He loved his collection of Portuguese colonial silver, his pictures and his old furniture. He read a lot, too and, towards the end of his life, he was persuaded to write a series of memoirs about the family and his own life. Bashed out on his old typewriter and photocopied many times, they are immensely interesting and say much about him and the world he lived in. Perhaps we should have persuaded my mother to set her memories down. But we didn't – instead we asked her to annotate the family photograph albums so carefully assembled by my father. They remain the best record of their lives (and ours), a typically twentieth century summary.

No one has asked me to put this together – and no one may ever find it. But I've got so much from reading my grandfather's accounts – and so greatly regret that my father never put pen to paper – that I've determined to 'bash out something' and stick it with my family papers in case, long after I am gone, anyone is interested in what one, rather privileged, life of this period was like.

\* \* \*

*Over the years, whenever colleagues had suggested that I should write up my experiences, I'd rejected the idea. But, as explained above, I did feel that I should write something for the family archive. The earlier sections were drafted in odd moments in 2009 and 2011. Then, early in 2020, Alex Reid, looking for material for his Lives Retold website, asked if I had written anything on my father's life. I hadn't – but I sent him an unfinished version of my grandfather's\*\*and enclosed an incomplete draft of my own which, although both too personal and far too long for his website, I thought might intrigue him.*

*Two days later, Alex replied attaching an edited and illustrated version of my memoir and strongly encouraging me to complete it. I had better, more personal pictures of my own – so, with time on my hands, I got going. But what had started off as a piece for the family was now heading for the public arena. This posed all sorts of questions. The possible readership was totally different and might include architects as well as persons who had been involved in the events described. This change is reflected in the rather different styles of the early and late sections.*

*The length of the early section (6) on the Navy and Suez needs explanation. Mine was the last year when most 18-year-olds were called up for National Service – so my account describes the system just before its decline and closure. In addition, little has been written about National Service in the Navy and even less about the naval role in the Suez operation.*

*Apart from a section (17) on Birgit, family life post-marriage does not feature in this account. At no point have I tried to reflect on the nature of architectural practice, journalism, education and research – or Cambridge. I could have done so but this is about a life – and it's quite long enough already. Much has been omitted, such as the occasion when a building was demolished because of something I had written (an event I am not proud of) and anything related to the Cambridge Department of Architecture after I retired. But I*

*hope that there is enough in each section to give a flavour of the period. I could have written more about the brief AA, Bartlett and Cambridge Design periods but, for reasons stated and unstated, they were unhappy – so I've stuck to the bare bones.*

*Publicity is something I've never courted – so it was unsurprising that, after handing the completed memoir over to Alex, I had serious misgivings. Should I have agreed to placing this account in the public arena? Had I remembered events accurately? Had I weighted my descriptions fairly? What had I omitted? Every so often, I would make minor amendments and add the odd paragraph or section. Now, over a year later, I've completed this process. As for the exposure, what is done is done. The main additions are as follows:*

*3: Rio household and memories; 4: Blackberry picnic, raspberry raid; 5: Radley publicity, my father's premature 'retirement'; 10: AR's review of Babraham labs, Sandy Wilson's Cambridge studio space, Archigram group, colleagues, Liverpool Civic and Social Centre and other jobs, leaving; 11: Burnet Tait structure, Arthur Baker's short-lived partnership, Scicon and the British Library brief, Babraham Cor-Ten weathering, Michael Brawne and Sandy, British Library Bloomsbury scheme and the PSA, St Pancras scheme toilet provision, Philip Larkin, British Library attribution, Sandy Wilson; 12: Clare College library study; 13: AJ News and Martin Pawley, Cambridge interview, Patrick Hannay's letter, BBC Omnibus programme, Prince of Wales; 14: Royal Gold Medal juries, the Chancellor's visit, reflection on applying for Cambridge; 18: Looking back at the AJ and Cambridge.*

*December 2020/ November 2021*

*Some minor corrections and additions*

*August 2023*

*\*In 2023, following the discovery of 55 of my father's diaries, I compiled a memoir of my father's life which can be found on the Lives Retold website at <https://livesretold.co.uk/joe-carolin>*

*\*\*The unfinished version of my grandfather's life has since been edited and appears at <https://livesretold.co.uk/james-burns>*

---



## 2. The Irish and the Scots

The family tree is astonishingly well recorded. Thanks to the research of two amateur genealogists in the family, it goes back a long way. That's on my paternal grandmother's side – the Norfolk (later, much later, Anglo-Irish) Wrenches and the Elwins before them. There was an exotic touch in the family: one of the many Peter Elwins married Anne Rolfe, the daughter of the American Indian Pocahontas' son. And, by some astonishing coincidence, one of the Elwins was an undergraduate at my college, Corpus Christi, Cambridge, during the construction of William Wilkins' New Court in the 1820s. They were also the squires at Thurning – to this day, a Corpus living where the church contains pews and other elements from the Jacobean chapel demolished for Wilkins' new chapel (now much altered).



*Grandfather Carolin – the Irish Rector*

*Vovo Burns – retired Manager in Home Guard*

My paternal grandfather's family, the Carolins, were C18 Dublin builders and, later, as they became gentrified, 'architects'. My grandfather was born in a house in Talbot Street, part of an estate built by his grandfather the remains of which I later inherited from my aunt (but to no avail because most had been sold and the solicitors had lost the remaining head lease). Grandfather's mother was a Sinclair, and his favourite cousin was George Robertson Sinclair, the GRS of the eleventh of Elgar's Enigma Variations. Actually, it wasn't so much GRS who was remembered by the composer as the yapping bark of his bulldog, Dan, of whom Elgar was very fond. Robertson Sinclair, organist of Hereford cathedral, arranger of Elgar's music and occasional composer himself, died in 1917 and Grandfather, a clergyman, came over from Ireland to bury him. The Sinclairs and my grandfather were scholars of Trinity College Dublin. Members, not of the Ascendancy, but of the Protestant middle class – there was little future for their younger generations after the British withdrew from Ireland in 1920.

My mother's family were Scots. The Bells and the Burns were lowlanders, the former were from Ayr, while the latter were herds and steading tenants from Galloway (where their last house, The Stroan, still stands in Glen Trool). James Bell was an engineer who, in the 1850s, travelled to Rio de Janeiro and thence to Montevideo where he met and married Clarita Pinto whose parents were from Lisbon and had emigrated to the Banda Oriental (now Uruguay but in those days a disputed territory between the Argentine and Brazil) in the 1840s.

James disappeared in the terrible Paraguayan war, allegedly making torpedoes for the mad dictator, Lopez. One of his two daughters, Herminia Bell, my great grandmother, knew me as an infant. She was a Pampas-riding, Boston-visiting schoolteacher when she met and married Alexander Burns, a bank manager. Their first child, James (Jim), my grandfather (Vovo – the

Portuguese word for grandfather), was born in their flat above the bank in Rosario in 1887. He married my grandmother, Jane (Jeannie) Maclean, a miller and inn owner's daughter from Tarves, Aberdeenshire, whom he met when she was visiting her sister in São Paulo, Brazil.

My mother, their first child, was born in Recife in August 1914, the day after Vovo had supervised the coaling of the squadron that was to be annihilated at the Battle of Coronel – the Royal Navy's first defeat since before Trafalgar (apart from the frigate actions of the war of 1812). Years later, he could recall all the details and names of the ships, their captains and the admiral, the gallant Christopher Craddock.

---

### 3. A Rio childhood

My father, Sinclair (known as Joe) Carolin, a Dubliner, was the youngest of seven children. His older siblings went to Trinity College Dublin but he and his twin, Elwin, left Durham School quite early and trained as articled clerks in London. After qualifying as a chartered accountant, he went to Brazil as chief accountant to the London-owned Rio de Janeiro Flour Mills and Granaries. Vovo was at that time general manager of Wilson's, the shipping agents, in Rio. My parents met in 1933 and married in 1935. I was born in Rio, in the Strangers' Hospital, in 1936 – and was thus the fifth generation to be born in South America. I hold dual British and Brazilian nationality. Little wonder that the historian Niall Ferguson described the British communities in the Argentine, Uruguay and Brazil as part of 'the informal British Empire'. Made up largely of Scots and Irish – and, in Patagonia, Welsh – they were known by the locals as Os Ingleses, the English.



*My parents – Joe and Jean – engaged and married, Rio de Janeiro, 1935, and in later life, 1981*

In 1937, my parents returned on home leave. Grandfather baptised me into the Church of Ireland at the small church on the Dublin outskirts to which he had retired after leaving his large Irishtown parish. In London, my father's unmarried sister, Eileen, also my godmother, made much of me and in Guildford, where Vovo's parents lived, Herminia, my Spanish-speaking great grandmother, followed suit. I was not quite the first grand-child on either side but, for various reasons to do with the family fall-outs in the previous generation, I used to feel that I did indeed hold that position.



*With our German nanny who was fired when my uncle became a P.O.W. after his Blenheim was shot down*

My sister, Diana, was born in 1938 – in Rio's rather more efficient German Hospital. We had moved from my parents' first home, a flat in Ipanema, to a house near the Lagoa (or Lagoon) behind Ipanema (where the rowing events took place in the 2015 Olympics). Our nanny was a German Jewish refugee to whom we were devoted. All went well until shortly after 10 May 1940, the day on which the Germans invaded the Low Countries and the Blenheim bomber piloted by my Uncle Robert was shot down over Holland. On hearing the news of her brother's capture, my mother dismissed our 'German' nanny. To us today, it seems a totally unreasonable act – but my mother was, on occasion, given to the extreme. (Robert

was to spend five years as a prisoner of war – including a long period at Stalag Luft 3 where he was a ‘penguin’ in the escape described in the *The Wooden Horse* and the ensuing film, ‘The Great Escape’.)

By this time or shortly after, we had moved to a house on the beach at Ipanema, long since demolished for a large block of flats. We went to a nursery school with several other ‘English’ children in a house close-by and, from there, in early 1944, I progressed to the British School in Copacabana. There, every day was begun by singing our times-tables to the tune of ‘Do you ken John Peel’. Diana and I were bi-lingual and had home tuition in Portuguese grammar and writing in the house to which we moved about 1943, 277 Rua Prudente de Moraes (telephone number 27-9442, a number I still remember in Portuguese), the first street behind the Ipanema beach front.



*The house in Ipanema, 1940, and the last home in Rio, Larangeiras, 1950. We lived in the first floor flat*

Brazil was effectively a near-Fascist dictatorship in 1939, leaning heavily towards the Axis powers. The British were looked down upon as they lost battle after battle. Vovo, by then retired and aged 53, made the perilous sea journey back to Britain to join the Home Guard. Discovered and ‘rescued’ from this, he was appointed to Lord Willingdon’s mission which visited South America in an effort to prepare for post-war commercial links between that continent and Britain – the Americans were making hay at the British expense as the war progressed. Around 1943, my young Aunt Margaret also returned and worked at Bletchley Park. My father had wanted to return but was persuaded to remain in Brazil to ‘look after British interests’ (i.e. keep a British-owned firm running) and become treasurer (later chairman) of the British Community Council, raising quite large sums of money for Spitfires for the Royal Air Force. One of the latter was mischievously named Filho da Puta – or Son of a Bitch.

Around 1943, the Germans sank a number of Brazilian ships. This, no doubt combined with the fact that the Allies were now winning the war, brought Brazil into the war on ‘our’ side. Whereas before, some people had spat at us in the street because they thought us English, now they did so because, with our fair hair, they thought us German. Throughout the hostilities, I was very much aware of what was going on – but it was an experience lived at second-hand in a land where the only evidence of war was visiting warships, a half-hearted blackout, cars converted to charcoal-gas power and, on the BBC, Churchill and the King’s speeches, preceded by the National Anthem (to which we stood at attention). My own life



was untroubled and happy. My friends were mainly British but my most frequent playmate was Paulo Mario, a Brazilian boy.

By 1945, mother's South American family was based entirely in Brazil. With the death of my great-grandmother's sister, the Argentine link was broken. Our grandparents lived in Rio and a great aunt and cousins in São Paulo – but not for many years longer. The grandparents were to retire to England in 1948, our parents followed in 1953 and the last São Paulo cousin died there in the 1980s.

Not members of the family, but close to Diana and me, were two other people, Luiza and Eugenio. The former was our parents' live-in cook cum maid, the latter my father's company driver. Slavery was not abolished in Brazil until 1888 but Luiza, who must have been the granddaughter of freed slaves, had experienced the kind of brutality meted out to her ancestors. The palm of the thumb (the thenar eminence) on one hand was marked by a group of very closely spaced parallel scars. She told my mother that these were from cuts made by her first employer as a punishment for not cutting the greens – for *couve a Mineira*, a Brazilian dish – finely enough. Luiza did everything around the home – she shopped in the market, did the cooking, cleaned the house, did some of the washing – and was fond of Diana and me. Eugenio lived with his family in a remote suburb, travelling in and out to the centre on an overcrowded train. My father would usually bring the car home after work and Eugenio would take it over back at the office in the morning. When not needed by the office, car and driver were available for my mother. We regarded Eugenio as a friend and, long after they left Brazil, my parents did what they could to support him and Luiza.

Over the years, my *saudades* (longings) for the Rio of my childhood have grown. The early morning mist in Guanabara Bay, the cool of the Tijuca forest – even the torrential rainstorms. The smells of the markets and the bakeries, of the *mato* and damp sand dunes. The sounds of the streets: the trams, the street vendors and the little workshops that seemed to be everywhere – shoemakers, metal workers, joiners – and people talking in what is surely one of the most beautiful of languages (Brazilian Portuguese), clearly, languidly, and almost musically delivered. The numerous courtesies – such as *de nada*, *boas festas* and *boa viagem* – the two latter expressed endlessly at Christmas or when travelling by air. The music and the grace with which so many with African blood move in the street. And the food and drink – *feijoada*, *empada*, *pão de queijo*, *guarana* ... All experienced and enjoyed in the most dramatic of settings – the ocean and the bay, the astonishing mountains, part black rock, part lush vegetation with, in the distance, the blue outlines of the inland ranges.

Of course, I didn't realise it at the time but, architecturally, Rio was an exciting place to be living in during the early 40s. Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's Ministry of Education and Health was under construction and there were a host of other Carioca Modernist buildings that I remember from that time. On Sundays, we sometimes went to a park laid out by Roberto Burle Marx and overlooked by some flats designed by Costa. From an early age, modernist architecture was something I was familiar with.

---



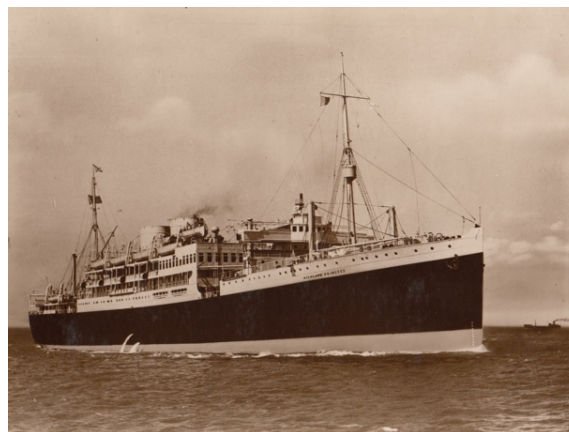
## 4. Prep School in Surrey

It had always been assumed that, should the war not end by the time I was 9, I would be sent to board at either St George's in Buenos Aires or St Paul's in São Paulo. But it did end – and my mother, sister and I were eventually allocated berths in a Danish ship, the *Jutlandia*, sailing for Britain early in 1946. We arrived in Southampton Water on a snowy February day and, after passage ashore in a paddle-wheel steam tender, we took a Southern Railway steam train to Waterloo. I remember being amazed by the tiny fields and small-scale of everything. Later, as we drove through London in an ancient taxi, it was the bomb damage, the fog and the sheer griminess that struck me. We stayed at the rather war-weary Palace Hotel in Lancaster Gate and began a series of 'meet the family and friends' visits to places like Haslemere, Orpington and Gerrards Cross.

In May 1946, aged nine and a half, I went to St Edmund's School at Hindhead, Surrey. My Anglo-Argentine cousin, Donald Burns, was in his last term there. It was an unusual school, run on mildly military lines by Ivo Bulley and his wife Rosa. (The school had been kicked out of the Boy Scout movement for marching *in step* past Baden-Powell at a jamboree.) Set in large grounds with a nine-hole golf course it was a happy place where we were well fed and cared for by a staff of real characters. I think I was one of the very few boys whose parents lived abroad and thus had a rather wider view of the world than my contemporaries (apart from those whose fathers had been in the recently decommissioned British Indian Army). Curiously, Ivo Bulley didn't exactly approve of my broader outlook, and I longed to be like the other boys with their firmly-grounded home backgrounds, in places like Faversham and Guildford, to which they returned at the end of each term. My own holidays were invariably spent with relations or, if my mother was in England, in dreary hotels. Roughly every other year, I left school just before exams to make the sea journey to Rio for the summer holidays on condition that I returned to school on the first day of the winter term.



*St Edmund's School, 1946*



*MV Highland Princess. Tilbury to Rio in 17 days*

These sea-journeys were in cargo liners like the Royal Mail's *Highland Princess* and the Blue Star Line's beautiful new *Uruguay Star*. The 'Highland boats' (as they were called) were built pre-war and chugged their way from Tilbury, down the Thames Estuary and the Channel to Vigo in northern Spain, Lisbon, Las Palmas (to oil) and Rio – where I disembarked before the ship proceeded to the River Plate to take on a cargo of meat for the return trip. The food, to a schoolboy accustomed to food rationing in Britain, was amazing: Aylesbury Duck, Norfolk Turkey, Wiltshire Ham and, after Lisbon, Fried Fresh Lisbon

Sardines and Honeydew Melon (not together, of course). I had the run of the ship and was welcome on the bridge at any time.

On the return journey I would stay on deck until we passed Cabo Frio and, with it, the last sight of Brazil. At school, I'd learnt Robert Browning's poem 'Home-thoughts, from the sea' and it always sprang to mind at this point – except that here it was 'Slowly, slowly Cabo Frio to the South-West died away ...'. But I got no further and went below as the coast receded and it became chilly on deck. The passage from Rio to Tilbury took 17 days. I was invariably very sea-sick in the Bay of Biscay, keeping to my bunk on a diet of cream-crackers and water.

The last time Diana and I returned to Brazil, in 1951, we flew out on a BOAC Argonaut (a DC-4 built in Canada and fitted with Rolls Royce Merlin engines). It took rather longer than expected because an exhaust fell off one of the engines while we were over the western Saharan desert. Unnerved by the incident and the poor safety record of flights on this route, our parents returned us to London on separate flights. Diana went first with our mother. Later, I was seen off at the airport by my father, his driver, Eugenio, and our cook, Luiza.

But, back to St Edmunds. We boys were formed into four divisions – Wellington, Scott (Robert Falcon), Nelson and Clive. Every morning, after Chapel and before we marched into breakfast, we lined up in the gym to listen to Mr Bulley expand on the key headline from the 7 o'clock news. I remember the bombing of the King David hotel in Jerusalem and, over the years, a growing awareness that the colour of the map of the world might change from predominantly pink to something more multi-coloured.

To a certain extent, the school's economy was underpinned by the division system. Everything, from the weeding of the golf course greens to the collection of fruit for jam-making earned our division points. The piles of weeds were assessed, the laundry baskets in which we collected blackberries on the annual Blackberry Picnic were weighed (and subsequently washed). There were a lot of blackberries – it was the only kind of jam we ever had and, at the end of the school year, the final remnants were used up in the not-quite-cooked jam roly-poly pudding which the senior boys enjoyed over their three days end-of-term camp.

The camp was sited on a games pitch at the edge of the grounds, close to the Portsmouth Road and well away and out of sight of the school building. We slept in rather grotty old army bell tents which might well have seen service with (Major) Bulley and (General) Allenby in Palestine in 1918. There were about 15 or 20 of us and we soon discovered that, after being sent into our tents at about 8.30 pm (still daylight) the staff left us. So, on the last night, at about 9 pm, without a word being said, we crept out of our tents, scrambled down the bank and headed across the valley towards the raspberry canes, still full of fruit. There we were, in our flannel pyjamas, advancing singly and in pairs as in a Great War advance. Only it wasn't across cratered fields but one of the golf course fairways. Reaching the valley bottom, we crossed a cart track and enfiladed up into the raspberry canes where, squatting down, we started gorging ourselves. Soon, a low buzz of contented conversation grew – and suddenly ceased. There, above us in a small clearing in the bank of rhododendrons, stood Mr Bulley with his thumbs tucked into the red braces protruding between the waistcoat and jacket of his brown Harris tweed suit. Not a word was said on either side. We de-enfiladed and retreated as we had come, back to our tents. The following day was the last day of term. Again, nothing was said – indeed, nothing was ever said.

---

## 5. Radley and Holidays

In January 1950, aged 13, I went to Radley College, near Abingdon in Berkshire (but today in Oxfordshire). I had been intended for Shrewsbury, but my mother had second-thoughts and, after consulting with Ivo Bulley, visited Radley where she was charmed by Tony and Peggy Gardiner (the prospective social tutor and wife). Getting into Gardiner's social (the Radley term for a 'house') was truly fortunate. Thanks to Tony and Peggy, it was remarkably civilized and, for much of this period, high achieving as well.

Today, Radley – together with Winchester, Harrow and Eton, still an all-boys boarding school – is, in every imaginable way, an incredibly well-resourced school. Indeed, the comparison with the state schools that my children and grandchildren have attended is grotesque. In my day, it was quite austere but comparable to other schools I visited at the time – places like Stowe, Wellington and St Edward's, Oxford. Since then, Radley has become both far better endowed and much better known. In 1980, thirty years after I entered, it was the subject of a BBC documentary series, 'Public School'. And in 2013, another BBC documentary, 'A Very English Education', followed up on the lives of a number of boys who had featured in the earlier series – a revealing and depressing exposé of (some of) the products of the 'public' boarding school system. The exposure continues – this year, 2021, the school has featured in Richard Beard's angry denunciation of the boarding school system, *Sad Little Men: Private Schools and the Ruin of England*. Beard is an Old Radleian.



*Radley in its setting, 1953*



*We wore gowns*



*Gardiner's Social 1952*

Perhaps because I was growing fast – but more likely because I had an idle streak – I did little work for my first two years, coasting through and infuriating my teachers by somehow getting good enough exam results. But, after the ultimate insult (to a Carolin) of being told by one Latin teacher that I would never get into any university 'not even Trinity College Dublin', I pulled out the stops and started to work. For 'A' level I did History and English. The curriculum for the former was endlessly repeated – we 'did' the Tudors and Stuarts for three years. Although diligent, I was uninspired – a fatal flaw in a historian. But Paul Crowson, who taught us, was an excellent form master who introduced us to the pleasure of reading weeklies like *The Listener*, to the poetry of Robert Frost, Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> and much else. During one holiday, when we were living in London, he took me and his head of social to see Eliot's 'The Family Reunion' (with a cocoa afterwards). For English, we were taught by Peter Way, later to inspire a future Poet Laureate to start writing.

If St Edmund's had been set in unusual grounds, Radley was then set in beautiful ones (which have since become somewhat gentrified with a golf course and so on). The unfinished Capability Brown-designed park embraced the early eighteenth century 'Mansion' and the school that had grown round it, a lake and a superb stretch of playing fields and tree clumps – bordered by wheat fields and a wood. To one side, a brook, known as Kishon, ran through the

crops while a mile or so way, over the railway line, lay the water meadows and a particularly beautiful stretch of the Thames, with partially wooded banks above which was Nuneham Courtenay, built on the site of Goldsmith's abandoned village. My preferred places were among the books and records in the Mansion's library, running over the fields and sculling, rowing and sailing on the river – all rather solitary pleasures. With parents living abroad, Radley became the one constant place in my life.

For almost all our boarding school years (eight, in my case) Diana and I lived out of trunks, occasionally spending our holidays with our mother, if she was in England, in hotels at Hindhead and Liss or with our grandparents in Beacon Hill (near Hindhead). We also stayed with a rectory family in a Fenland parish by the River Ouse. The Rector and his wife had three children, slightly younger than us, and there were usually two or three other 'holiday children' staying. The Rectory was a large, very cold, late-Georgian pile with an overgrown garden, lots of outhouses (which contained the Rector's collection of 1930s Jowett cars, only one of which worked at any time), and an orchard around which the Rector's gauge 1 clockwork model railway track wended its way.

Life in the Rectory was spartan. The Rector taught at a local prep school and his wife worked incredibly hard keeping everything going. Apart from his cars and the splendid railway – which I alone was allowed to operate – the Rector's passion was composing Latin verse, for University poetry prizes. His sermons were recycled on Saturday evenings for the thinly attended Sunday services. We were allowed to buy sweets only at the Protestant shop as the Roman Catholic one was out of bounds. The riverside pub was also forbidden territory – being, for some reason, 'an evil place'. As for the Rector, his contact with the parishioners was highly selective and limited to drinking their 'port wine-style' sherry – i.e. what was then known as 'British sherry' – upon which, on his return, he would pour scorn. However, the Rector's wife was a 'dear', the local farmer was a kind man and the model railway and freedom to do what we wanted were all that I could wish for.



*Saunders Roe Princess at East Cowes.*



*Scow sailing dinghy*

The best summer holiday we ever had was in 1952, where Diana and I spent the first month at the Rectory and then travelled south to the Isle of Wight. (I should perhaps explain that, from an early age, we did all these train journeys to and across London on our own – and regarded this as unremarkable.) After crossing from Liverpool Street to Waterloo, we caught the train for Portsmouth Harbour where we boarded the ferry for Ryde. There, we got on a steam train that wended its way through the almost miniature countryside, by way of Newport, in the centre of the island, to Cowes. We stayed in a boarding house on the front, a few minutes' walk from the Royal Yacht Squadron, first with our Aunt Margaret (my mother's sister) and her small sons and then with two families we had grown up with in



Brazil, the Tootals and the Lights. I was lent a little scow which Diana and I used to sail up the Medina, past the hulks of the great pre-war J-class yachts. We would watch the elegant British and American transatlantic liners coming up the Solent to and from Southampton as well as the last great flying boat to be built, the Saunders Roe Princess, taking off and landing on test flights – indeed, we even went over one on the slip at Saunders Roe in East Cowes, where they were built. We swam in Gurnard Bay, ate greengages in the orchard to our hearts content and generally had a most enjoyable time.

By the following summer, my parents had returned to England for good. During 1952 and 53 the very successful company my father managed and expanded had been the subject of a take-over battle which involved him flying back to London on several occasions. My parents had always planned to retire in Britain, but the take-over brought things forward by several years. Eventually, after much hunting and heart-searching they bought a Georgian house overlooking the second oldest cricket green in England, the Vine, in Sevenoaks.

My father was only 48 in 1953 and some feared that he would never get another job comparable to the one he had left in Brazil. They were right. The first one he took, managing a small family flour milling company in Bow, was far below his capabilities. Indeed, he never again did what he was really good at – managing and expanding a large company. Instead, he eventually found work as a Director of Baker Perkins, an engineering company he admired (and which had known him in Brazil), and some other firms. Independently, he also invested in and helped small innovating companies including one, Micron, pioneering a new type of aerial crop-spraying, which flourishes to this day, and served as treasurer for the London Association of Boy's Clubs, the first of many charities he was to help. Despite the disappointment at having his career cut short, I never detected any bitterness on his part – although he was very critical of the London management that had allowed the take-over.

Unclubbable even then, I was an unremarkable, unremarked student at Radley. Outside my social, I may only be remembered for a couple of sporting distinctions. Running at Radley had become interesting with the arrival, in 1954, of Ken Brookman, an Oxford athletics blue and, later, a comprehensive school headmaster. An advocate of Franz Stampfl's 'interval training' – repeated 60-second quarter-miles with ever-shorter recovery periods in between – he took me in hand and persuaded me to train in the Easter holidays at the Paddington Recreation Ground track which Roger Bannister and his friends frequented. From there, in April 1954, I went to the London Athletics Club's national schools meeting in the White City stadium (site of the 1948 Olympics). I failed to win my heat but, unofficially, lopped 5 seconds off the long-standing Radley record for the Mile.

A month after, late one afternoon, Ken whisked me out to Oxford's Iffley Road track where he said 'something interesting might happen' at the University-AAA match. It had been windy but the flag on the nearby church tower hung limply as the Mile started. Standing near the finish, Ken and I watched the first four-minute mile. Seeing Bannister reach the tape at the absolute limit of his endurance was unforgettable. The following year it was the attraction of rowing in the school VIII that ensnared me. Coached by Bill Llewellyn Jones (who had coached the Oxford VIII shortly before), we were not his fastest Radley boat but did well enough at Henley to lose, in the fastest time of the day, by a narrow margin to a fine and much heavier St Paul's crew. We had led them all the way to the Mile post. Rowing in that schoolboy VIII in a beautiful timber 'shell' on such an attractive reach of the Thames was a never-to-be-forgotten delight.

---



## 6. The Navy and Suez 1956

National Service came next. All males over the age of 18 had to undertake this but it was not easy to do so in the Navy – only 2.5% of all national servicemen were taken by the Service. In order to show one's commitment (and reveal one's suitability) one had to do a fortnight's preliminary training which I completed in the training carrier *HMS Ocean*, in Portland harbour, during my last Christmas holiday from school. It was bitterly cold and about thirty of us slung our hammocks, spent off-duty time and ate all our meals in a small 'wing mess' just below the flight deck. Over half smoked and used their plates as ash trays after meals. The plates were then washed in a single pail of water with just two 'pusser's' (Navy issue) rag cloths to dry them. This, combined with the cold, the smoking fumes and the constant smell from the furnace fuel oil (FFO) pipe running through the mess should have put us off the Navy.

Two terms later, in early September 1955, I reported to Victoria Barracks in Southsea. My intake contained some who had just left school and a slightly older bunch of recent university graduates. But the bulk had not had the benefit of education above the school leaving age and were away from home for the first time. We spent time 'under instruction' and 'square-bashing' navy-style under the first of the many GIs (Chief Petty Officer Gunnery Instructors) who were to feature in our lives over the next few months. Ours was the business-like but kindly CPO Rudman and, being the tallest, I was, inevitably, picked out for the thankless task of squad leader.



*First fortnight conscripts in Portsmouth.      National Service Upper Yardmen at Ceres      Midshipman RNVR*

Passing an Admiralty Interview Board for officer training, I was sent with other CW (Commission Warrant) candidates to a stone frigate, *HMS Ceres*, just outside Wetherby in Yorkshire. It is now, as HM Prison Wetherby, a young offenders' institution with a regime that is, no doubt, much less rigid than ours was. As NSUY's (National Service Upper Yardmen) we were very conspicuous with our white flashes and cap bands, driven hard and made to 'double' everywhere. We were there for four months (or was it three?) during which we were reviewed weekly. Every week, some were returned to the lower deck while the rest of us staggered on, ever more exhausted, our boots ever more highly polished and our trouser creases ever sharper. At the end of our passing-out parade the trousers usually collapsed along the over-ironed front seams – to be replaced by our new officers' uniforms from the Gieves and Austin Reed tailors who had measured and made them 'on spec'.

We were a mixed bunch. Some had been to university but most of us were straight from public and grammar schools (the comprehensives had not come into their own by then). We came from every part of the country and our family backgrounds varied widely. We were taught every aspect of the Supply and Secretariat branch of which, being either colour-blind

or short-sighted, we were members, together with much else a naval officer was supposed to know. The instruction, mainly by Chief Petty Officers, was, like so much naval instruction of the period, good. In addition, each week, we had to give three-minute talks (three minutes to prepare a given subject, like ‘braces’ or ‘the Arab Legion’, and three minutes to deliver), do more drill, undertake invariably amusing, often slightly absurd and always exhausting initiative tests and take part in sport. There were hockey matches almost every weekend against teams of miners in remote but beautiful Yorkshire valleys. These games were pretty violent – the miners clearly disliked us with our ‘southern’ accents and their feelings ran so strong that the post-game tea was always taken in separate rooms!

At the end of the course, those of us under 21 were commissioned as Midshipmen RNVR (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) and allowed to say where we should like to be appointed. I opted for the West Indies and South American station – but the Navy never sends you where you want to go and I went instead to the Navy’s electrical school, *HMS Collingwood*, a huge stone frigate at Fareham.

### ***Denmark – and architecture***

After a couple of months, I was seconded to *HMS Ben Lomond* for six weeks. This ship was a former LST (Landing Ship Tank) which had been converted into an ABC (Atomic, Biological and Chemical) Warfare trials ship for the UK’s atomic bomb trials in the Pacific in the early 1950s. Her hold was filled with animal cages and, above them there was a single deck superstructure with laboratories, offices and additional cabins for scientists. She was not exactly beautiful but not downright ugly either. Every year she was taken out of reserve to act as a depot ship for two squadrons of Dark and Gay class Fast Patrol Boats (FPBs) exercising in the Baltic for about a month with the Royal Danish and Royal Norwegian Navies. I joined her in Chatham dockyard to act as Assistant Supply Officer – a general dogsbody doing everything from supervising the daily rum ration, helping with the victualling accounts, acting as a prisoner’s friend and, at sea, serving as a second watch-keeping officer. I was also given command of the ship’s navy-blue RN Land Rover.



*HMS Ben Lomond*



*Dark class Fast Patrol Boats*

We spent ten days getting the ship stored and ready for sea. 46 tons of spare parts for the FPBs – Packard and Napier Deltic engines among them – were stowed in the hold. Our passage across the North Sea to Cuxhaven was incredibly rough. The First Lieutenant, Stewart Moon, a kindly old salt who (in harbour) relished his Plymouth gin, and I took the middle watch. I had the task of navigating (by Decca Navigator) and telling the Captain – asleep in his cabin – when we were in the vicinity of other vessels.

It was cold and wet and the ship was rolling so much that I couldn’t keep the ‘kye’ (an amazing naval concoction of cocoa, condensed milk and bags of sugar) down. It was agony.

(It has always taken me about a week to get accustomed to the motion of a new ship in a rough sea or heavy swell.) The next morning, as I staggered into the wardroom for a breakfast of cream-crackers and water (again), the rather short Squadron Electrical Officer, Lieutenant-Commander ‘Jock’ Strain, looked up at me and said, in a broad Scots accent, ‘It’s all right laddie, Nelson was sea-sick too.’ Years later, I discovered that Jock had been in *HMS Amethyst* during its celebrated escape down the Yangtze River in 1949.

The passage to the Baltic was through the Kiel Canal. WW2 had ended ten years before but approaching Cuxhaven, our course lay along a channel through an uncleared mine field. The canal itself was not very interesting – the flat country to each side was largely concealed by the high banks. It was a relief to reach Kiel and the Baltic and head towards our first port, Copenhagen.



*Aarhus University, CF Møller, 1931.*



*Aarhus Town Hall, Arne Jacobsen and Erik Møller, 1941*



The informal journal I kept of my time in *Ben Lomond* is on my shelves – so I won’t describe it any further. It was an enjoyable experience. I would set off on my own ahead of our two FPB squadrons and arrange to provision them daily at little ports scattered around Denmark. In parallel with this, during time off, I encountered wonderful historic and contemporary architecture, particularly in Aarhus where Møller and Fiske’s University, Jacobsen’s Town Hall and the Folk Museum bowled me over. Industrial design and architecture had begun to interest me in my last year at Radley and, here in Denmark, one could not fail to be struck by the design, quality and craftsmanship of the buildings, the beautiful planting in the cities and the smell of teak oil in the furniture shops. Meanwhile, at sea, there was the occasional experience of being aboard an FPB in a night-time exercise among the Soviet spy-trawlers in the Baltic. The sensation of travelling at 40 knots in a darkened vessel over a calm sea at night was unforgettable.

### ***HMS Albion***

After a further two months at *Collingwood*, I was appointed to a light fleet aircraft carrier, *HMS Albion*. To my delight, Guy Francis, who I had met at *Ceres*, was also joining her. We met at Waterloo and travelled down to Portsmouth on 14th September 1956. Seen from the quayside, *Albion* looked immense. Generally, I loved ships of that period but instinctively felt that I would never feel any affection for this flat-topped monster. How wrong I was.

A light fleet carrier of the Centaur class, *Albion* was laid down at Swan Hunter’s Tyneside yard in 1944 but not completed until 1954. We joined her after a short refit. So she was quite a new ship and, unlike the other British carriers, suffered few catapult or other breakdowns during the Suez operation. Her displacement tonnage was 24,000 and her length 225 metres. Powered by steam turbines, her maximum speed was 28 knots. Her complement, including the air squadrons, was 1600 men. At Suez, she carried 24 jet fighters



(16 Sea Hawks and 8 Sea Venoms), 4 airborne early warning (AEW) propeller-driven aircraft (AD 5 Skyraiders) and 2 helicopters (Whirlwinds). Later, after Suez, she carried Gannets and complete squadrons of anti-submarine helicopters. She was armed with 14 Bofors anti-aircraft guns of various types, sextuple, twin and single.



*HMS Albion at sea before Suez, 1956*



*Entering Grand Harbour, Malta, 1957*

Having been almost the only midshipmen in our two previous ‘ships’, Guy and I had messed in the Wardroom mess with all the other officers. Now, in a Gunroom mess, we were two among many midshipmen – most of them Dartmouth-trained RN regulars who tended to look with mild disdain at the six or so RNVR Midshipmen. There were also three RN Sub-Lieutenants, the senior of whom, Nigel Grier-Rees, the Sub of the Gunroom, had won the Queen’s Sword in the Dartmouth training cruiser and acted as Prince Philip’s page in the Coronation five years earlier.

We sailed for Gibraltar and the Mediterranean on the 15th. Our aircraft flew in from their shore bases as we made our way down the Channel. The thump as they landed on the steel flight deck, the sound of the jet engines whining down and then, as the arrester wires were released, whining up again as they moved to their parking spots and the all-pervading smell of paraffin were to become very familiar. So, too, was the throaty splutter of the Skyraiders and the clatter of the ‘choppers’ (as the helicopters were known). Watching all the activity on the flight deck as the next, and the next, and the next aircraft followed in the circuit to land at close intervals was like watching an elaborate and very colourful ballet. The skill of the flight-deck crews was amazing.

Guy and I got stuck into the various jobs to which, as ‘officers under training’, we were allocated every month or so. We were also taught to code and decode signals although this skill was never put to use. None of the work was exactly stretching so, curious to learn how this small ‘city’ of 1600 souls worked together, I volunteered myself for other tasks. I did night-time engine room rounds – an incredibly exhausting four hours – with one of the engineer Sub-Lieutenants, worked in the beef screen and in the mechanised bakery (both surprisingly interesting experiences), observed the deck spotting (aircraft parking) system in operation in ‘flyco’ and much else. None of the other National Servicemen sought out these diversions but, in my case, it was the start of a pattern adopted in every new occupation I’ve ever undertaken, trying to discover how the many parts of an organisation combine.

Three of us RNVR Midshipmen took it in turns to produce the ship’s daily paper – my first venture into editing. We had to go to the wireless office at about 1800, wade through the teleprinter print-outs and start drafting, typing and duplicating the *Albion News*. Sadly, I never kept a copy.

[ Much of what follows has been culled from the canvas-covered Midshipman's Journal that I was now required to keep.]

### ***Working up in the Med***

All through the summer of 1957, convoys of desert sand-coloured army vehicles were to be seen on the roads heading towards Chatham and Portsmouth and, presumably, Plymouth. Fairly obviously, this was something to do with Egypt and the disputes over the operation of the Suez Canal. On joining *Albion*, it seemed to us that we were part of this plan. And so it proved. After a brief stay in Gibraltar, we sailed into the Med and started to 'work up' our squadrons. It was a process that continued day and night.

The Gunroom, where we had our meals and 'recreated', was located at the stern, immediately below the landing area on the flight deck and just above quarterdeck. The thump of aircraft landing above us was clearly audible. One evening, during flying, we were having dinner at the long mess table when the ship started vibrating violently and heeling to port in a very tight turn. Simultaneously, the battered old aluminium coffee pot that always stood on the hot plate by the servery hatch started to jump and slide across the plate. Without a word, the regular Midshipmen dashed for the door and along the companion ways to the point where the motor cutter was hanging out on its davits ready for use as a lifeboat. Following them, we climbed up to the highest point in the ship, the pilotage position, for a view of the action.

The ship, meanwhile, was still turning and slowing down. We could see our searchlights playing on a lifebuoy in the water and, close to it, someone in an inflated yellow mae-west. By the time the ship had completed a full circle and stopped, the cutter, coxswained by the senior Midshipman, was in the water and heading towards the swimmer. Over to port, *Decoy*, which was supposed to be our 'crash boat' was still trying to get its sea boat into the water. *Albion's* performance that evening was impressive – it had taken a mere 12 minutes to pick the pilot up. His Seahawk's engine had burst into flame just as it was catapulted off the ship. It had gone straight into the sea ahead of the ship – which then went over it while the pilot was still in the cockpit. Somehow, he managed to escape after the ship had passed over him. He flew off again the following day, declaring that if he didn't do so straight away, he never would again. (Sadly, a few years later, this pilot had a similar accident on another carrier. He did not survive.)

At various points during our 'working up', *Albion* visited Malta to top-up stores and replace two lost aircraft. Entering Grand Harbour was an unforgettable experience. In those days, it was still dominated by the Navy and in the run-up to Suez, there were far more warships there than usual, including a French cruiser and two submarines. On our first visit, as we manned ship to enter harbour, we were all in our tropical white uniforms, an amazing throw-back to the late C 19. Salutes were piped to Fort St Angelo, to Lascaris and to senior ships. Not being a flagship, we didn't have a Royal Marine band but we had a small volunteer band or, as one joker once called it on the tannoy, the Septet. Their signature tune, played as we entered harbour, was 'When the saints come marching in' – always played to everyone's amusement including, I am quite sure, that of the Captain.

Spending long hours aboard tugs and lighters and in ship's boats, storing ship, we got to know Grand Harbour, its creeks and wharves well. Around us there was an endless flow of dghaisas (gondola-like craft which provided a ferry service to ships moored in the harbour), pinnaces, motor cutters and the fast motorboats which each warship carried for its officers. Each of the latter was painted in a unique livery (*Albion's* displayed a green flash on a white hull) and ships were judged on the smart handling of their boats as the latter raced in to



Custom House steps to set ashore and take onboard passengers. Throughout the day there were the sounds of bosuns' pipes, ship tannoys, tugs hooters, marine buglers and, occasionally, marine bands.

Back at sea again, we continued to work up – often in company with other ships. There was endless flying, regular anti-aircraft gun practice against very low-flying Cyprus-based RAF Hawker Hunter jets, frequent action station alarms and so on. I acted as a safety trainer on one of the Bofors guns just below the flight deck edge. Mine was a pretty useless task as the gunners were so focussed on the Hunters that nothing on earth, and certainly not my puny little whistle, would have distracted them. We also completed the first of our many RASs (replenishment at sea). Steaming alongside an RFA (Royal Fleet Auxiliary) store ship or tanker, ammunition, stores, oil and aviation fuel would be transferred by jackline stay and hose. The very distinctive smell of FFO (furnace fuel oil) has remained with me to this day. During this period, the weather was calm but later, during the Suez operation, we had to RAS in rough weather. Helping to haul the hoses was a task in which everybody in the vicinity, ratings *and* officers, took part.



*Replenishment at sea (RAS)*



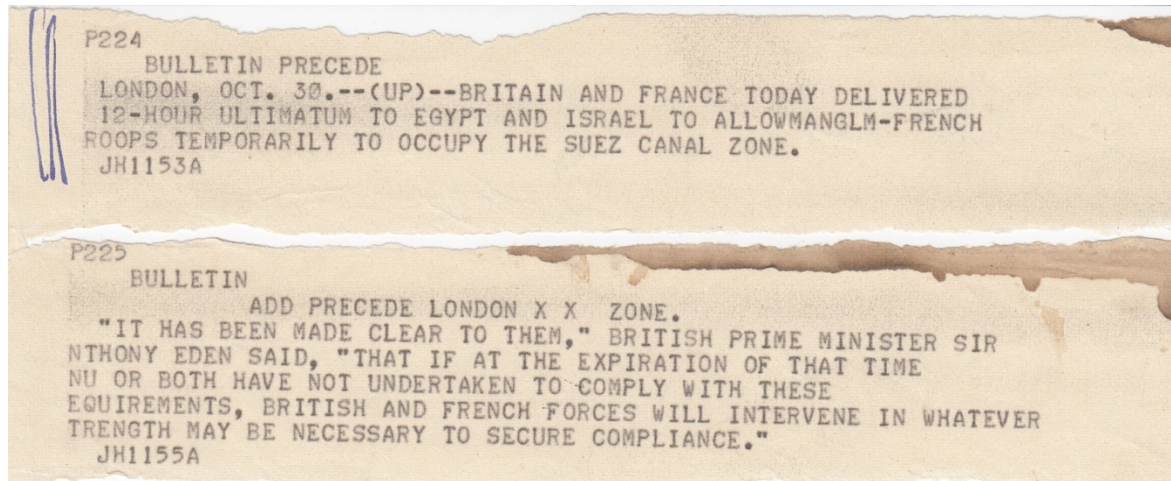
*Fuel transfer in heavy weather south of Cyprus*

We returned to Malta one last time before Operation Musketeer – the code name for the Suez operation. Grand Harbour was packed and so, too, was Sliema Creek, where the destroyers and minesweepers were moored. There were three carriers – *Eagle*, *Bulwark* and *Albion* – several cruisers and lots of landing ships. It felt as if the entire Navy was there. Ashore, one was constantly meeting navy, marine and army national servicemen one had known at school or met during one's training – it was almost claustrophobic. How on earth the Egyptians never guessed what was going on has always baffled me.

### ***Suez – Operation Musketeer***

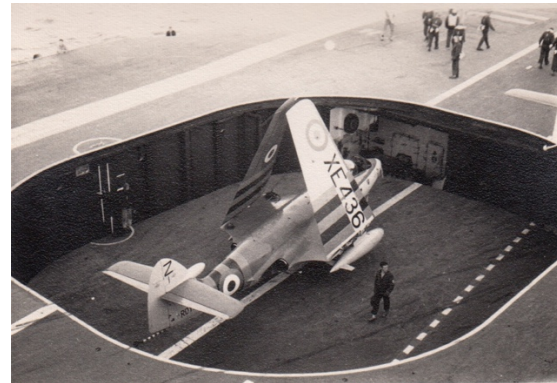
The 'invasion' fleet sailed on the morning of 29th October. Towards sunset, I went up to the pilotage position and was astonished at the sheer scale of the fleet – ship after ship, steaming eastwards into the night. The following day, the Captain briefed us and lifebelts and anti-flash gear were issued. In addition, officers were issued with No 8s (the blue shirts and dark blue trousers worn by ratings as their working gear and by officers as action working dress) and morphine packs. The pilots and observers were given desert khakis and briefed on escape and evasion and the location of submarines to pick them up off the coast. Bizarrely, because we had nothing to spend our cash on, we were all paid.

That evening, it was my turn to do the *Albion News*. Watching the UP (United Press) teleprinter in the bridge wireless office, I read the news of the Anglo-French 12-hour ultimatum to the Egyptians. A few hours later, we went to dawn action stations, to be stood down to defence stations. We went to action stations twice before lunch – once because we failed to identify one of our own aircraft and once because Banshee fighters from the US Sixth Fleet were playing games with us.



*Teleprinter copy of UP news bulletin on Anglo-French ultimatum to the Egyptians*

The offensive began on 1st November with the RAF bombing Egyptian airfields overnight. With dawn action stations, eight of *Albion's* Seahawks took off to strafe these airfields, destroying Mig fighters and Ilyushin bombers on the ground. Throughout the day we flew more strikes, combat air patrols (CAPs) and barrier patrols. At 1950 the action stations hooter sounded. According to my journal: *Two Egyptian ex-Soviet E boats had attacked the Royal New Zealand Navy cruiser Royalist ... The E-boats then broke through our screen and were illuminated by starshells and searchlights. They were shown on our radar 800 yards away from Albion and ... but for a signal from FOAC ('It is better to capture than destroy'), our CRBFDs [Close Range Blind Fire Directors] would have gone into action ... However, they did not and we soon lost them as our force increased speed. I do remember the attack on Royalist being reported but I don't recall our screen being penetrated. But this account was read and signed off by the Navigating Officer, so it must be correct.*



*Armed Seahawk taxiing to catapult, and the (half lowered) lift down which I nearly fell during a night RAS*

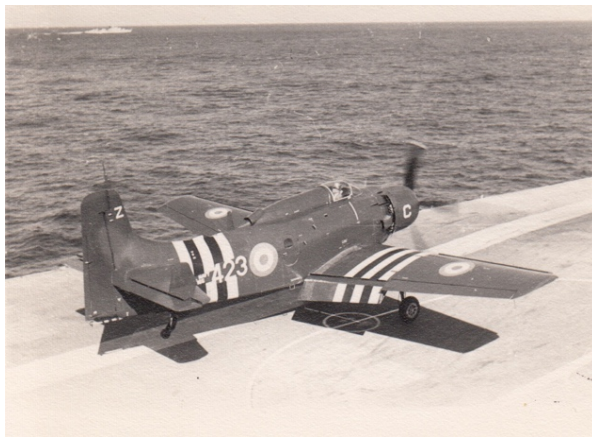
The airfield strikes continued the following day. Two of our Seahawks were damaged by flak and buzzards. Replacements were flown on later. The 3rd November found us in a replenishment area south of Cyprus, well to the north of the action area. We took on 800 cases of 20mm ammunition for the fighters and 1500 tons of FFO. During the transfers,



*Royalist* provided anti-aircraft cover and a frigate anti-submarine cover. That afternoon, there was a welcome ‘make and mend’ with relaxed dress regulations. My journal records that, ‘at one stage, the flight deck looked like Brighton Beach on a Bank Holiday Monday’.

Early on the 4<sup>th</sup>, the US Sixth Fleet interfered by moving into areas where we were clearly intending to launch and recover. Later that day, our aircraft switched their targets from airfields to gun emplacements. Three Egyptian E-boats were discovered by a CAP, heading for us. They were attacked by two of our Venoms. One was sunk, one set on fire and the third was stopped.

The landings finally took place on the 5<sup>th</sup>. With carrier air support, British paratroops from Cyprus landed at El Gamil airfield near Alexandria and French paratroops at Port Fuad. The amphibious landings followed a day later, early on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Two of our Seahawks were shot down. One pilot was rescued from the desert, the other picked out of the sea. At 0200 on the 7<sup>th</sup> a cease fire, forced by the Americans, was agreed. *Albion* had been providing constant CAP cover for the carrier force between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> with ten planes being launched and recovered each hour. In addition, our Skyraiders were ferrying water and medical supplies to the paratroops at El Gamil. They also carried beer (a gift from the ship’s company) which had to be flown in at low altitude for fear of the cans exploding in the unpressurised aircraft. Meanwhile, our helicopters brought in eight wounded soldiers (British and French), later transferred to *Ocean*.



*Skraider taking off with beer for the paratroops*



*Frolics on the flight deck*

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, *Eagle*, which had suffered a serious hangar fire, returned to Malta. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, in heavy weather in the RAS zone, we eventually managed to refuel prior to returning to our operational area, north of Alexandria. Nothing much happened in the ensuing days until we had another RAS on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Stores were coming over by jackstay from *Retainer*. It was dark with minimal lighting on the flight deck. One of the hangar lifts was being used to take the fork-lift trucks down to hangar level. Normally used for aircraft, these are very large lifts with absolutely no guarding. Amid all this activity, I took a step backwards and was grabbed, just in time, by a Petty Officer. I distinctly remember thinking, ‘Well, that would have meant no Cambridge for me’. Sadly, in the darkness, I never identified my saviour.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we had a day off. While races, amusement booths and a fancy-dress competition were taking place on the flight deck, a chopper arrived with Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Stockwell, Air Marshall Barnett and Admiral Sir Manley Power (Flag Officer Aircraft Carriers). It was an astonishing scene. Rock and roll (of a kind) was being played on a bagpipe and the Quarterdeck Division, with their uniforms on back-to-front, were marching backwards with a banner declaring ‘Marching backwards to Christmas’. (We were

hoping we would be back in Portsmouth by then.) The General entered into the spirit of things, the Air Marshal was visibly amused, and the Admiral was totally disbelieving. The latter, a seaman officer, clearly lacked the sense of humour of our Captain, a pilot. There was an uproarious concert party that evening, amidst the aircraft in the hangar.

Among my memories of being at sea in the Eastern Mediterranean is going up on the flight deck first thing in the morning as our escorting screen came up one by one for a transfer of fresh bread and any mail. The sun's reflection off the sea would be blinding. Towering over each destroyer as it steamed alongside us, we had a perfect view of all their topside activity. For several days, as they drew up on our beam, the officers on the compass platform of one destroyer exchanged their caps for red tarbooshes purchased, no doubt, in Port Said. *Albion's* contribution to the jollity was very loud rock-and-roll music played through our flight deck loudspeakers which had been turned outboard. Occasionally, a cook would dash out of a destroyer's galley and do a jig with a pan in his hand.

My journal records the rest of our time 'at Suez' in great detail – so I will not recount it here. In brief, we returned to Malta on 29th November, re-stored and sailed again on 11<sup>th</sup> December to cover the withdrawal. In the ensuing days, we spent some time anchored off Limassol but unable, alas, to go ashore. On 19th, we sailed to cover the withdrawal from Port Said. This was completed three days later. The last platoon to board the last Tank Landing Ship was led by Second Lieutenant Peter Hinchliffe, West Yorkshire Regiment. The first person he met as he strode up the LST's ramp was the door officer, Midshipman Richard Hale RNVR. And I was in the escorting carrier. All three of us had been at school together eighteen months before.

We returned to Grand Harbour at about 0730 on Christmas morning. *Manxman* entered harbour with her cable officer dressed as Father Christmas, *Jamaica* had a Christmas tree (of sorts) on her foremast and blared out a Christmas message as she passed us. We secured at 0930. Shortly after, there was a very well-attended carol service in the hangar with an all-male voice congregation. Christmas lunch was massive and very good. Guy, Bob Bradshaw (another RNVR Midshipman) and I decided to swim it off in St Paul's Bay. Big mistake – the Med in winter can be very cold.

Suez had been a shameful affair and, writing up the *Albion News*, I had become horribly aware that it had diverted the world's attention from the Soviet invasion of Hungary. So, when hostilities ceased, I went to the Pay Office and remitted my pay for that period to the Lord Mayor of London's Fund for Hungarian Refugees. Two years later, at Cambridge, I lived in a room next to one of those refugees, Peter Nagy, the nephew of Imre Nagy, the executed leader of the revolution. We didn't get on, I forget why, but I do remember momentarily regretting my remittance. Very sadly, not long after graduating, Peter was killed in New York, looking the wrong way when crossing a street.

### ***Promotion***

Before returning to Portsmouth, we were sent to Messina. It was there that I made the last entries in my Midshipman's Journal, signed off on 22nd January. Shortly after, in Gibraltar, I was promoted to the rank of Acting Sub-Lieutenant. Normally, this promotion occurred at 21 but there was the possibility of accelerated promotion, of which I was awarded the maximum amount. Evidently, I'd made enough of a nuisance of myself to get noticed. Promotion transformed my life and I found myself as the second Assistant Secretary in the Captain's Office – an enjoyable role with interesting work and emergencies to be dealt with

when the Secretary (Lieutenant-Commander David Becker, who had been my Term Officer at *Ceres*) and the Assistant were busy.



*Messina – PC in harbour ...*



*and trying to climb Mount Etna with a dog*

On one occasion, I found a host of errors in the orders (relating to the air elements) for a major exercise, Operation Medflex Epic. We were at sea but the Captain was so intrigued (and amused that a National Serviceman had made this discovery) that he had me ‘choppered’ in to Malta in order to present the errors to the Chief of Staff, Commodore Dreyer. Met by car at Halfar, the Naval air station, I was whisked off to the Chief of Staff’s offices at Lascaris, overlooking Grand Harbour. The Commodore, a large man in a well-seasoned uniform, received my paper, heard me out and told his rather nervous looking flag lieutenant to go and sort things. Then, clearly puzzled, having noticed my RNVR single stripe, he started quizzing me. Like so many senior naval officers, he appeared to have a natural curiosity about National Servicemen. A distinctly wistful look would appear in their eyes when one told them one was heading for university. Years later, I discovered that Dreyer had been Gunnery Officer in the *Ajax* at the Battle of the River Plate in 1939. His father had devised the fire-control system used at the battle of Jutland.

But, back to Gibraltar. One afternoon, moored alongside the Mole, we were rammed by a Portuguese frigate which failed to go astern as it came in to moor astern of us. Not a tremor was felt in *Albion* but the captain’s cabin was wrecked. We returned to Portsmouth with a large grey-painted tarpaulin covering half our stern, rather like a giant nappy. The locals thought it was war damage.



*Review of the Fleet, off the Moray Firth, 1957*



*Albion and the Royal Yacht Britannia*



The next few months were spent partly in the Mediterranean, where we returned to Malta and visited Marseilles, and partly in the Atlantic and North Sea. A visit to Norfolk, Virginia was scuppered by the Treasury after yet another sterling crisis. Having failed to go west, we went east and spent a few days in Oslo where Guy and I rowed 6 and 7 in a scratch Home Fleet VIII against a Christiana Roklub crew. We also spent time in Invergordon and took part in what must have been the last major Royal Review of the Fleet at sea. (By chance, while at school, I had also taken part in the 1953 Coronation Review at Spithead, onboard the cruiser *Sheffield*.)

Towards the end of my time in *Albion*, we were selected as the Navy's 'show ship' for the annual Shopwindow Exercise for Ministers, MPs, Peers, naval attachés, representatives from the other services and defence correspondents. I was the only National Service guide. I left the ship not long after, having had the customary farewell drink in his cabin with the Captain, Richard Smeeton. Later an Admiral, Smeeton had been a Fleet Air Arm pilot in the early years of WW2. He was a large man with a light touch and a quiet sense of humour. A few years later, he resigned from the Navy on a matter of principle and, 'Making way for older men', became Director General of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors.

### ***Joining the Reserve***

The termination of my Full Time National Service was not the end of my connection with the Navy. I joined the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) and spent part of two long vacations on annual training, once at Brawdy, a naval air station in west Wales, and once in *HMS Belfast* (now moored by Tower Bridge). At Brawdy, I finally got a chance to fly in a jet fighter, a Sea Venom – an extraordinary experience, diving steeply and firing rockets at a target in St Bride's Bay. In *Belfast*, I had to stand in for the Captain's Secretary (a full two ranks senior to me, away on compassionate leave). Fortunately, there were no really taxing situations and Captain Wilkinson was a kind man willing to put up with the inexperience of a second-year Architecture student. The ship was doing gunnery trials in the Channel and, on two occasions, while I was second officer of the watch, our big guns were fired. I am thus one of the decreasing number of people who have experienced the deafening noise, belch of flame and reek of cordite of a WW2 cruiser broadside. After promotion to Lieutenant, I found I could no longer fulfil my training obligations – and resigned.

For me, the Navy was, after the constrictions, conventions and hierarchies of the boarding school system, a liberating experience. Of course, the Navy had its own constrictions, conventions and hierarchies but they seemed more reasonable (and certainly less ludicrous). In any case, even if National Service was obligatory, I was doing it in the service of my own choosing and making my own way. I enjoyed being at sea, was fascinated by the ships and their operational complexities and generally liked the officers and men. The less interesting moments were more than compensated for and, at times, history was being made around us. It was the first time that I found myself working with – and often responsible for – people who came from a much less advantaged background and were sometimes both older and far more skilled than I was. And, through family welfare work, I started to understand how difficult life can be for some people. Above all, I discovered that being 'one's own man' and occasionally 'going against the flow' was often a risk well worth taking.

But for my time in Denmark, I would never have turned to Architecture. The Navy changed my life.

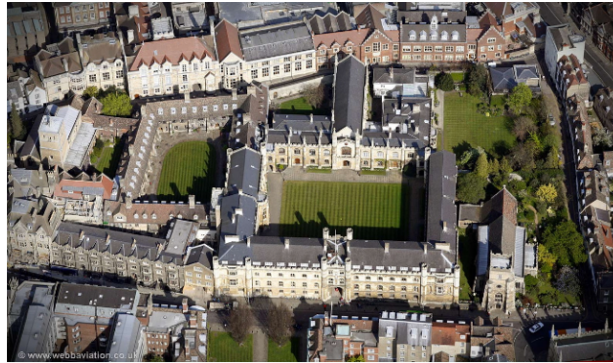
---

## 7. Corpus and Cambridge

Sometime in 1952, I decided to try for Cambridge rather than Trinity College Dublin. Tony Gardiner directed me towards Corpus Christi College and, early in 1953, I was interviewed by the Senior Tutor, Michael McCrum. At the end of our discussion, he asked what I might do *if* I was accepted by the College and *if* I graduated. I had no idea and muttered something about ship broking. Unconvinced, Michael pointed to the coffee table between us and to a brochure depicting a fair-haired, bronzed young man in tropical military shirt and shorts sitting astride a large Triumph motorcycle. ‘Have you’, he asked, ‘ever thought of the British South Africa Police?’



*Old Court c. 1360.*



*The Old House site.*



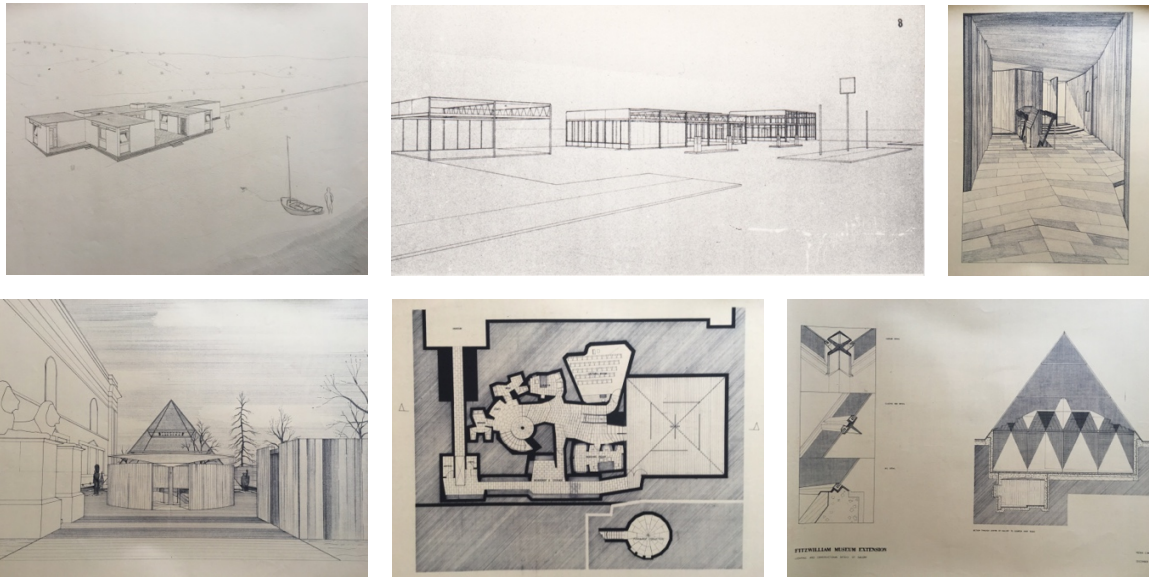
*Entrance c.1824*

Two years later, I passed the College Entrance Examination ‘though not by a large margin’ and was accepted to read History. However, following my time in Denmark I became more and more interested in architecture and, having learnt (from a newspaper cutting sent by my father about Leslie Martin’s election as first Professor of Architecture) that there was an Architecture course at Cambridge, I wrote to Michael McCrum and asked if I might change. The College had no objection and the Architecture School had no say – so, when I came up in October 1957, I started Architecture straight away.

Architecture was mystifying at first but, over the first Easter vacation, I finally got the hang of it, completely redesigning the all-important major project of the year – and ended up with a First. I was fortunate to have Sandy Wilson (Colin St John Wilson) as both my First Year Master and Director of Studies. The Professor and Head, Sir Leslie Martin – of whom we saw little – had taken over the previous year and many of the ‘old’ staff were still in place. In my second year, Colin Rowe arrived but was never really happy there, contrasting Cambridge unfavourably with Cornell. Bruce Martin followed a year later. My two best projects owed much to Colin and Bruce. Smiling and without a word, Colin made three simple marks (with his trade-mark stubby pencil) on my emerging scheme for an extension to the Fitzwilliam Museum. He then took me down to the library, turned to a page in the Asplund memorial edition, asked ‘Ever seen this?’ – smiled and walked off. Bruce, fresh from subverting the official Hertfordshire schools system, infected us with the joys of inventive forms of modular coordination and construction.

Compared to today, teaching was minimal – indeed, one Third Year studio master never turned up – ever. There were very few ‘crits’ – over three years, James Stirling came twice, the engineer Frank Newby once and Leslie gave a single tour de force. Complete sets of drawings, fully labelled, had to be submitted on time and we did a full set of working drawings each year. Unthinkable today. In my second long vacation I worked for David Roberts (on the East Road housing project) – a pleasant introduction to architectural practice.

In my last Easter vacation, Leslie and Sandy asked me to work in Leslie's studio out at the Mill in Shelford. I was unable to accept the invitation. Alex Reid, then in his first year, went instead – and produced his wonderful and widely published drawing of the north elevation of Harvey Court.

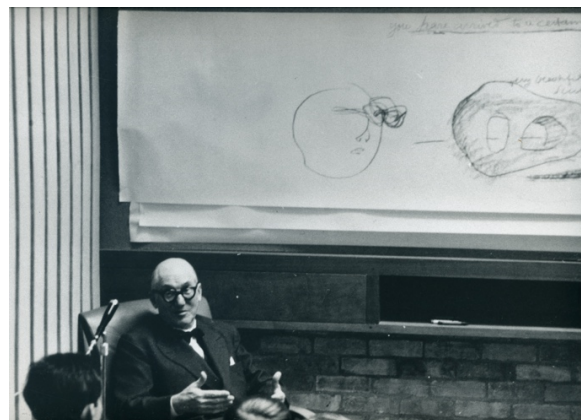


*Final first year (top left) and two third year projects – a modular garage and a Fitzwilliam Museum extension*

In June 1959, Le Corbusier and Henry Moore received honorary degrees. As they processed from the Senate House to the lunch in Trinity, Architecture students in Caius showered petals on Corbu (leading the procession of honorands) and shouted 'A bas l'académie'. Later, Leslie and Sadie Martin brought them to Scroope Terrace where the entire Department and members of Leslie's practice had gathered in Sandy's newly completed, Modulor-dimensioned extension. As he entered, Corbu was heard to say 'Les intentions sont claires'. Years later, Sandy would recount these words as a great compliment from the Master. In contrast, Patrick Hodgkinson, who was also present, remembered them as a scathing criticism. After an introduction by Leslie, Corbu said something and ended up by sketching his idea of 'un Henri Maure'. In reply, Moore, sketched Corbu without looking at the paper – a good response. In the evening, many of us were invited out to a party at Leslie and Sadie's home, the Mill. Corbu didn't stay long, retiring early to bed.



*Extension 'opened' by Le Corbusier, June 1959.*



*Corbu and the two sketches*

A year later, in my last term, I designed probably the best construction of my life. That year's Corpus May Ball took place in the College Hall, the ceiling decoration of which was in

a bad way. One of the engineering undergraduates rigged a steel wire rope from gable to gable, just below the internal 'ridge'. Over this, we draped widths of muslin ('borrowed' from Eaden Lilley's shop) which hung in catenary curves from the ridge rope and down to the top of the wainscot on each side of the Hall. There was about a foot gap between each muslin width. Above the wainscot, we installed floodlights projecting up towards the tatty black, white and red ceiling. The effect was magical. The hall was like a very large, very bright, elegantly shaped tent with flashes of colour visible through the awning gaps. Sadly, no photo was taken of it.

In my first long vacation, with two others, I spent a month drawing my way round North Italy. In my second, I travelled with a Mellon scholar from Yale, Jonathan Barnett, to the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. He later became editor of both *Perspecta* and the *Architectural Record*, author of many books, a planning consultant and Professor of City and Regional Planning at Penn. Over the last 60 years we've always exchanged letters, now emails, in late December.

Corpus was the smallest college so one quickly got to know people. I was a member of a small group with all of whom, with one exception, the architectural historian John Cornforth, who died too early, I remain in touch. An architectural historian, John became a particular friend and, in London, we shared a flat during his years understudying Christopher Hussey at *Country Life*. He was our best man and, later, our youngest daughter's godfather. Michael McCrum (later Headmaster of Eton, Master of Corpus and Vice-Chancellor) was the impressive Senior Tutor and Richard Adrian was the approachable Dean. I rowed in a successful College VIII my first term but then gave up rowing for Architecture.

It was during my third year that I met Birgit. A fellow Edinburgh graduate, Moyra Sandeman, a childhood friend in Rio whose grandparents had introduced my parents to each other, wrote to tell me that Birgit was coming to Hughes Hall to study for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Naturally, I felt that something had to be done. The encounter was to prove the most positive thing that came out of my period at Cambridge.

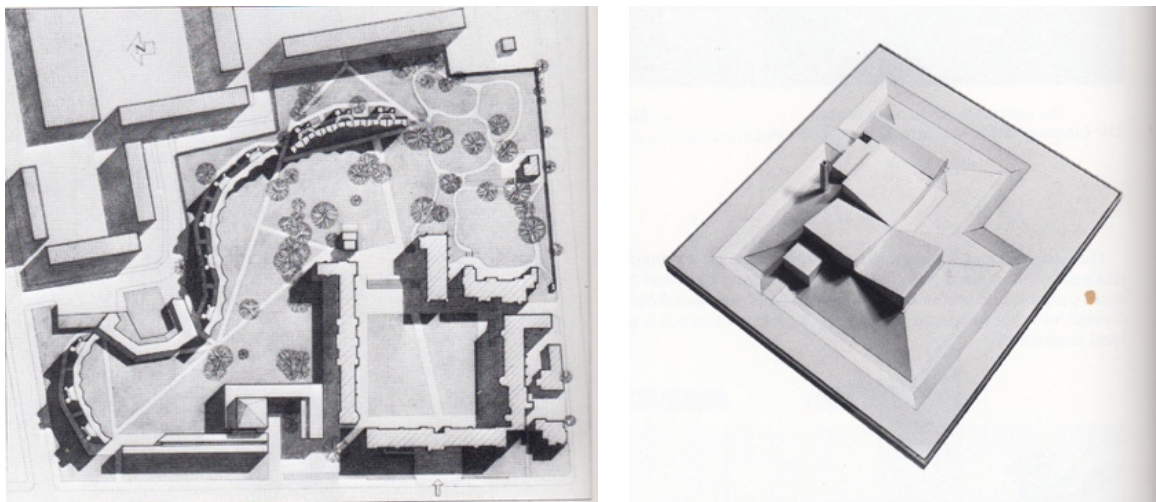
---



## 8. John Voelcker

By the end of three years at Cambridge I was dying to get away from the Fen and get some ‘mud on my boots’. I desperately wanted to build. In those days, there was no such thing as the ‘Year Out’ so this was an unusual move. But first I had to find a practice to take me on.

Jim Stirling (‘Mr Stirling’ to me) had been the critic for my final first year project and again in my second year – at the end of which he asked me to assist him and James Gowan on the drawings for the Churchill College competition. Having already arranged a job with David Roberts, I declined. We met again in my third year when I invited him to talk to ARCSOC (the architecture student society at Cambridge, of which I was secretary) on his recent visit to the US. Thus it was that, without enough thought, I ended up working for Stirling and Gowan in Jim’s old ground floor bedsit looking out towards Regent’s Park. There was one other assistant, David Walsby. The partnership had recently been appointed to design the University of Leicester Engineering Laboratories – a masterpiece which, on completion, attracted international attention. Unfortunately, I found the work (modelmaking a school assembly hall, colouring alternative site plans for the Selwyn College project and doing the first layout for the loos in the Leicester building and so on) simply wasn’t challenging enough. I had to find something else.



*Stirling and Gowan’s Selwyn College site plan (which I coloured) and my school assembly hall model*

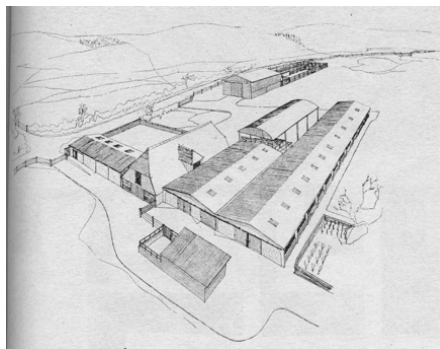
Earlier that year, I had also invited John Voelcker to talk to ARCSOC. He had just been named an *Architects’ Journal* Man of the Year for his achievement in winning a planning appeal against the local authority’s refusal – on aesthetic grounds – to grant planning consent for Humphrey Lyttleton’s house at Arkley. Although he delivered what must have been the most boring ARCSOC lecture ever – on agricultural buildings – I was attracted to John. He practised in a Kent village about 40 minutes’ drive from Sevenoaks, where my parents lived. He and his wife, Ann, interviewed me one Saturday while their youngest, Lucy, gambolled in nappies on the floor between us. John agreed to take me on at £5 a week (later increased when Ann realised how much I was spending on petrol).

Jim Stirling was shocked when I handed in my notice. ‘You can’t go and work for that madman burying himself in the depths of the countryside.’ Which was exactly why I wanted to work for John. But Jim didn’t hold it against me and was always friendly when we met in later life and sent a note when I was elected at Cambridge.

John's studio occupied a single room in their C17 house on the High Street in Staplehurst. Ann (also an architect) was a full-time mother to Adam, Thomas and Lucy but did some of the typing in the evenings. The other assistant, Edward Lane, had recently finished his fifth year at the Bartlett. Almost all our work was agricultural – ranging from farm workers' cottage extensions to new dairy units. I was given a lot of responsibility and it was marvellous seeing one's work being built. We did all our own surveying, wrote all our specifications, drew all the details and stuck to simple construction. Driving through the countryside as the seasons changed, seeing the hop lines being rigged and gradually weather and exploring hop and fruit-pickers encampments with John was just miles away from 'architecture' as I had known (and expected) it.



*John Voelcker*



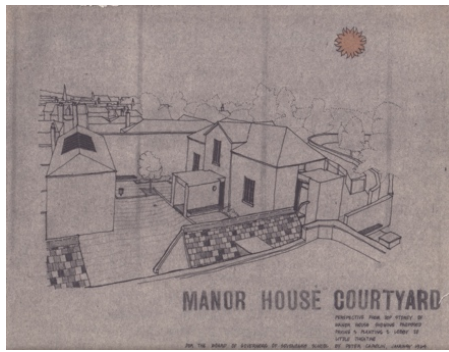
*Blackwall Farm – bull pen in foreground My first building – the pen*



It was a particularly interesting moment to be involved with farm buildings. Under the Government's Farm Improvement Scheme, farmers were being grant-aided to construct more efficient farms. In place of old barns with internal obstructions, new long-span covered yards which could be mucked out by one man on a tractor were being constructed. Dairy parlours were being fitted with milking equipment, cold stores were being built for fruit storage and even hop picking – traditionally done by East Enders on their annual holiday – was being mechanised. John always retained the old barns, re-using them as feed stores. I have never since felt so much a part of a local economy – a hugely satisfying feeling. In 2012, I wrote at length about this period in, 'John Voelcker Team 10 founder member: a view from the practice', published in *arq (Architectural Research Quarterly)* vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 363-376.

John was an active member of the avant-garde Team 10 group – members of which, ranging from Jacob Bakema to Stefan Wewerka and, of course, the Smithsons, would visit John and Ann. I think they regarded John, the only rural architect among them, with great respect – and I know Aldo van Eyck did. (The exception was, clearly, Alison Smithson, who was later to write John out of the Team 10 history.) In hindsight, I realise that John was extraordinarily perceptive about the transformation that Kent would undergo over the next 50 years. As we drove to survey a cottage or farm site, he would talk about regional planning issues which I'd never before heard discussed.

During this period I was commissioned by Sevenoaks School to convert the early C19 Manor House stable block into a small hall for lectures, films and music recitals. Internally, we raked the floor, built a raised stage and installed some re-covered old cinema seating. Externally, we added an entrance lobby and projection booth – both of which were faced in Kentish ragstone, to match the stables. Later, we reconfigured the courtyard. I also designed a height-adjustable lectern which was presented to the School by a City livery company. The builder, Stanley Berwick, must have been in his sixties. A kindly man, he taught me much about courtesy on a building site.



*Sevenoaks School 1960 and 64*



*Stable converted to small hall.*



*Presentation lectern*

At the end of a year, I went to the Architectural Association School (AA). It was a dismal experience. The first term was fine – all my work was ‘stored’ – but, in the second, we were set a massive housing project covering the entire area between Waterloo and Southwark bridges, the river and the railway. It was typical of the AA and much architectural thinking at the time. Working on my own, I couldn’t get a grip on it. Working in teams, the best AA students had a remarkable facility for this kind of thing, but I will never forget the look on Louis Kahn’s face, when, during an unplanned visit, he was shown a model of the best resolved scheme, a kind of large scale *zielenbau* by Birkin Haward, Paul Simpson and Peter Rich.

Seventeen years later, this area of London was to become the focus of a battle between the big commercial developers and the GLC on one side and the Association of Waterloo Groups on the other. Had the developers won, the area would have been razed and rebuilt as an overspill to the City. But they lost and, today, many of the original buildings (like the OXO tower) remain and the Coin Street community and its exemplary housing thrives at its centre. This outcome owes more to David Harter, a brilliant barrister-turned-community-lawyer, than to anyone else. David had been one of the members of my undergraduate group in Corpus.

Recently, I’ve thought a lot about this period, trying to recall how it all played out. I’ve remembered another student in my position – new to the AA and working on his own. He came up with a very loose, minimally developed plan for this vast site together with equally undeveloped but elegantly presented proposals for the housing and National Film Theatre which we had to design for it. We talked about my predicament. I just couldn’t accept what I (privately) thought was his perfunctory approach. So I ploughed on, expending vast amounts of paper, losing countless nights sleep and, worst of all, detesting the superficiality of what I was producing. I couldn’t overcome my gut feeling that clearing the site was wrong and, without an even half-convincing plan for this huge *tabula rasa*, I had enormous difficulty in trying to design site-specific buildings for it. My ambition was unrealistically high for a lone student. (Martin Pawley, fresh from the Oxford School and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, was another lone student who withdrew after this particular year – to return to the AA some years later. We met up at the AJ, when he joined as News Editor.)

Paralyzed and in despair, I slipped away from the AA and almost gave up architecture before returning to the Voelckers. In the intervening year, John and Ann had moved to a beautiful old farmhouse overlooking the Weald at Sutton Valence. There were now four assistants, a roving clerk of works and lots of work – but the practice had changed and all was not well. A few years later, John told me that they had overstretched themselves financially. A house on

which I had worked was under construction and I was now engaged on a dairy unit for Guinness Hop Farms at Bodiam and a new primary school at Staplehurst for the County. The former was never built but the latter stands to this day – much altered and extended since John's fellow Team 10 member, Ralph Erskine, admired it. Jonathan Greig saw both the house and the school through to completion. Several of the other farms I worked on are now abandoned, the land amalgamated into ever larger units. The barns are still there but the sheep and cows have gone and the doors flap in the wind as in a scene from 1930s dustbowl Americas.

The practice continued for two more years before being wound-up in 1965. The Farm Improvement Scheme had run its course, there were no further larger jobs, the new Selective Employment Tax hit architects' profitability and John was on his back, ill. Relief came with his appointment as first Professor of Architecture at Glasgow – but it was to be brief. He became ill again and died, aged only 45, in 1972. Looking back, I can see that my first period of working with John on the Kentish farms was, undoubtedly, the happiest and most productive of all my years in practice.

---



## 9. The Bartlett

At the end of a year in Kent, I went to the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL to join the first of (Lord) Richard Llewellyn Davies' Master's courses. Apart from the studio, the course was horribly uninspiring but included four months full-time, as what today would be called an 'intern', with a building contractor. I was incredibly lucky to be directed to Wimpey's where I worked briefly in all the most interesting head office departments before spending the last two months as a supernumerary site engineer on the Centre Point complex, at the junction of New Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road. It was a formative experience, giving me an insight into large-scale construction that was unique among my peers. The latter were an interesting group – half from the Bartlett and half from Cambridge (Richard MacCormac, Peter Jamieson, Robin Webster, Oliver Spence, Christopher Todhunter and me). To the Cantabridgians synthesis was second nature but the Bartlett bunch – with the exception of Bill Thomas, who had studied Engineering at Birmingham – didn't know where to begin. Luckily for us, our three studio masters – Bob Maxwell, Alan Forrest and Marius Reynolds – were not exactly in sympathy with the noble Lord's ideas.

Halfway through the course, in July 1964, Birgit and I were married at Seal, near Sevenoaks. We spent our honeymoon in France – partly dictated by the need to visit Lyon in connection with my dissertation (nominally supervised by Reyner Banham) on Tony Garnier's *Cité Industrielle*. It was all pretty idyllic and civilized: our tent was only used for one week and we took advantage of the amazingly cheap small family hotels to be found all over France at that time.



*Centre Point*



*Tony Garnier's Cité Industrielle*



*The rather quaint medal*

Returning to England, we moved into a basement flat in Highgate's Wood Lane where we stayed for a year while Birgit taught down the road at a small London County Council (LCC) school for partially-sighted children in Archway and I finished at the Bartlett. I did my final project, a housing extension to Andover, with Oliver Spence. I have no record of it because the RIBA disposed of the portfolio that I had to submit as representative of Bartlett Part II work that year. Such a casual attitude towards a student's work would, I hope, be unthinkable today. Oliver, a climber and the son of a Newcastle architect, was a pleasure to work with. Sadly, he died young.

Towards the end of my last term, Sandy Wilson sent a message asking me to let him know if I would like to join the practice he was setting up. Up to that point, I had intended to approach Philip Dowson at Arup Associates for a job. Instead, after visiting Sandy, I decided to accept his offer. It was a new practice, in a new building (Sandy's house and studio), with interesting work.

For the second year running, much to my surprise, I was awarded the year prize, the rather quaint Bannister Fletcher Medal. Birgit gave in her notice to the LCC, we packed up our belongings and put them in store and went off to Ireland for about three weeks. There, after a fortnight in the far west, we retreated to Dublin and explored Carolin territory. Then back to England where I set off for Cambridge and Birgit joined her parents in the Netherlands while I started work in 2A Grantchester Road and searched for somewhere for us to live.

---

## 10. Sandy Wilson's Cambridge Practice

Two other students of Sandy's had preceded me to Sandy's – MJ Long from Yale and David Lea from Cambridge. It was a beautiful autumn and, with interesting projects, everything seemed possible and the future for the practice looked promising. I found myself job architect for a £250,000 (£ 4.2 million today) biochemistry research laboratory (being done by Sandy in association with the London-based, Cambridge-teaching Michael Brawne). I also helped out on the largest project – the huge £24 million (£426 million today) Liverpool Civic and Social Centre. On the domestic front, I found a maisonette above a newish garage in Chesterton Road to which we moved in early October 1965. A year later, we bought our first terrace house for £4,650 (£83,000 today), 18 Mulberry Close, a kind of poor man's Span estate and still, today, a very good place to live. Shortly afterwards, our first daughter made her appearance at the Evelyn Nursing Home. The event took place while I was visiting Birgit during a coffee-break at the office. The elderly midwife was all of a dither and pressed me, the only other person in the delivery room, into service. I wasn't much help.

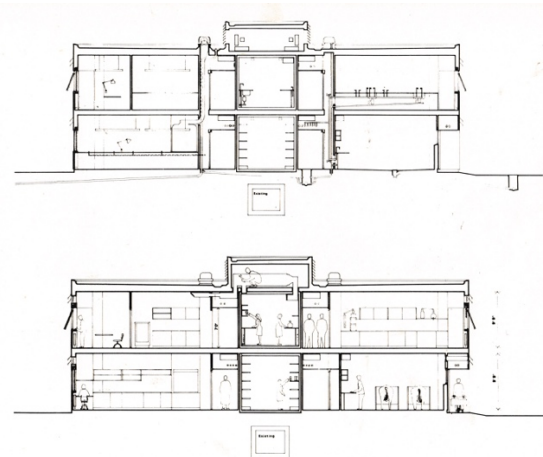
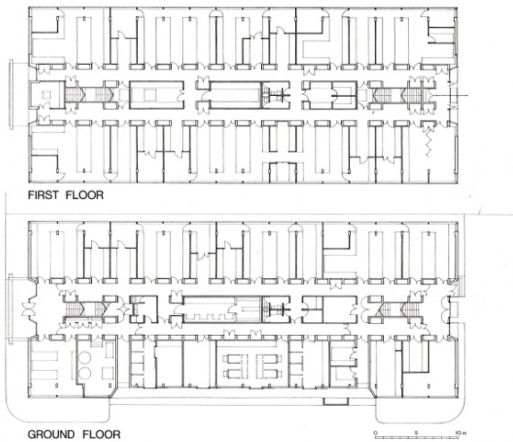
The research laboratory was to be part of the Agricultural Research Council's campus at Babraham, a few miles south-east of Cambridge. The brief – for a tight site – was interesting and complex. Most unusually, large animals (cows and sheep) were to be accommodated in the same building as the labs where their digestive processes were to be studied. It was a fascinating problem involving, besides the scientists and animals, air handling, drainage, controlled environments and vibration-free areas. It gradually dawned on me that Sandy was no all-rounder and, in some ways, out of his depth. Apart from one tiny elevation doodle, he never did a single drawing for the laboratory or contributed in any way to its design. Michael was much more involved, but the design was mine – evolved out of desperation with the process of exploring endless alternatives suggested by Michael and Sandy, none of which actually fitted on the site or would have come within budget and all of which were, in my view, deeply flawed in plan and section. Sandy described my plan as a 'can of worms' – but it fitted on the site, neatly resolved the problem of accommodating large animals close to the labs, provided more area than the budget was supposed to provide, possessed clarity (*pace*, Sandy) and, most important for the client, got built.

The first site meeting was a revelation. Having prepared the agenda and briefed Sandy (Michael was away), we drove out to the site. As we entered site office, Sandy said 'Peter, you take the meeting'. It was clear that he was nervous so, not for the last time, I took over. But, eighteen months later, on completion, Sandy took ownership – the building was featured at some length in the *Architectural Review (AR)* and, more briefly, in *Architectural Design (AD)*. It was also exhibited at the AA and internationally. It was even visited by the odd coachload of Japanese architects.

The *AR* (November 1971) cover design was inspired by our cladding details. Inside, the pages (290-296) included an appraisal by Tony Branton, an architect in the Department of Education and Science Laboratories Investigation Unit. Re-reading it today, I find nothing to object to – it's well-researched, perceptive and generous. But Sandy and Michael didn't like the draft and pressured the *Review's* executive editor, Tim Rock, to cut out some comments (I forget which). Branton only learnt about this after publication and, understandably, objected to the editorial director, Colin Boyne. Tim Rock was sacked. I felt awful but it didn't seem to unduly distress Sandy and Michael.

The laboratory was the first large building in the UK to be clad in Cor Ten weathering steel sheet. I had wanted to clad it in brick (to relate to the original buildings on the site and as a

reaction against the history of the architects for each new building selecting yet another material). Sandy wanted to clad it in tile and Michael in Cor Ten weathering steel – both claimed to be fed-up with designing brick buildings. Unable to agree, they gave me the choice, provided it was not brick. Wary of tile because of potential movement problems (the edges of the floor and roof slabs were cantilevered) and persuaded by Michael’s enthusiasm, I chose Cor Ten – with tiling on some ground floor walls.



*Biochemistry, Babraham, 1969. Demolished 2019. Michael Brawne associated architect. Richard Einzig photos*

The Cor Ten never weathered properly owing to problems with both climate and overshadowing and the over-complex profiling of the ventilation louvres (see the next chapter for more on this). Later, when I visited Cor Ten-clad buildings the US, Berlin and Odense, I realized that we should never have selected that material – the Americans used plate not thin sheet. After 20 years, the laboratory was completely re-clad in anodized aluminium of different proportions and without the louvres – a heart-breaking outcome, given the amount of time and energy that I had put into that building. Accumulating ever more



electrical and mechanical excrescences on its roof and walls, it was finally put out of its misery and demolished in 2019, fifty years after Roger Bailey, Cambridge's most highly respected post-WW2 builder, had commenced construction. Like so many buildings of its time, it had been tightly designed. Early in its life, it had worked well and adapted to change but Tony Branton had been right – tightly planned laboratories are not well suited to accommodating the changes in science, working methods and equipment so constant today.

In 2018, listening to Sandy's section on Babraham on the British Library Sound Archive tapes, I heard him describe the building as a 'biology' lab, fail to properly acknowledge Michael Brawne's contribution as the 'partner in charge', claim the credit for selecting Cor Ten, very briefly identify me as the assistant and state that Peter Smithson had told him it was the 'best building' he, Sandy, had ever done. Elsewhere, Sandy also used to claim that James Stirling once referred to Babraham as 'the first hi-tech building'. I would disagree with that.

### *The practice*

Sandy had not wanted a large practice. The studio part of 2A Grantchester Road was designed, I think, for eight people. But the Liverpool job changed all that. Gradually, as the numbers increased, the office expanded, first into the spare bedroom and then into a single-storey extension constructed in the unused slot of site behind the garage. Unfortunately, the Pearl brothers who built it were unskilled and it proved impossible to insert a damp-proof course in the existing Forticrete block wall. When it rained heavily, a sea of umbrellas could be seen above the drawing boards. As copying machines and drawing storage hangers proliferated, the working space became ever more cramped. It was a relief, when the weather was fine, to enjoy the ritual afternoon tea-break outside, in the garden. With the arrival of the American Jack McAllister these breaks took the form of hard-hitting ball games among the sculptures – the Paolozzi was robust enough, but I used to get worried about the fibreglass constructions.

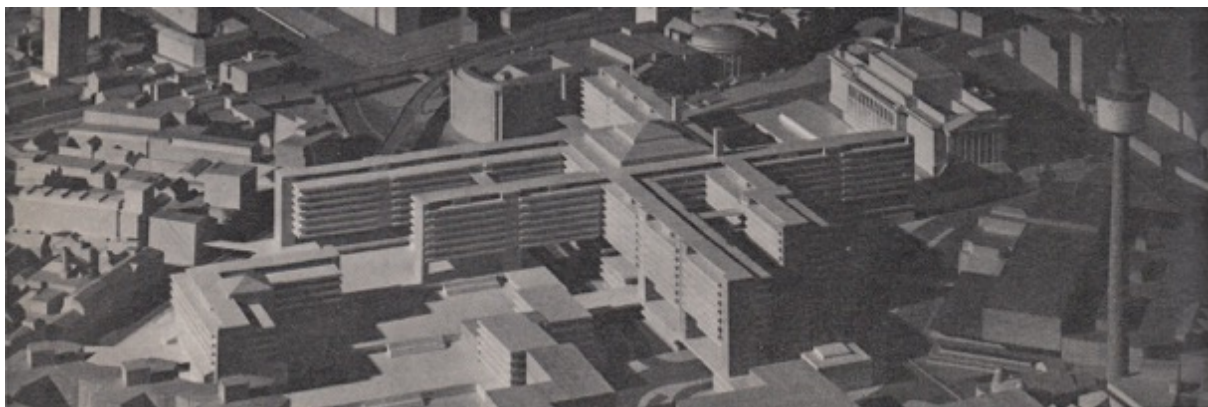
At one stage Sandy became interested in the Archigram group – on the face of it, a rather improbable development. Alex Pike, who had worked with the group on the Euston Station project, was the first to join the office, as a kind of chef d'atelier. Dennis Crompton was then commissioned to make the Babraham presentation model during a brief interlude when copper cladding was being considered. Next, Ron Herron arrived and investigated the possibilities of cast aluminium cladding for the Liverpool project. But Ron couldn't stand Sandy's vacillations and reluctance to engage and commit – something which even his friend, the engineer Frank Newby, complained about after Sandy would casually walk out of design meetings ('Jim Stirling would *never* do that!'). After a while, Ron tried to sort things out with Sandy in private. There was evidently a tremendous row and Ron, having retrieved his drawing equipment from the studio, slammed the front door and strode down the path, gesturing provocatively.

Grantchester Road saw many comings and goings. Among the foreigners, an early arrival was Kazumasa Yamashita (which translates as 'Peace and Justice Foot of the Mountain'), later to design the Face House in Kyoto; Marcial Echenique followed from Chile via Barcelona – and is still here, an English country gentleman and Emeritus Professor of Land Use and Transport Planning; and Jack McAllister, Lou Kahn's job captain on the Salk laboratories, came and went – Cambridge was too small (and slow) for him. The Brits included Edward Elgar who was nicknamed Gerontius by our client, Mr Homes, Town Clerk of Liverpool, and who departed to Oxford to teach at Oxford Brookes; Jeremy Taylor who arrived from Leslie Martin's studio and departed to undertake research at the York Institute

of Architectural Study; the multi-skilled John Rawson who made harpsichords and later ran a model-making business; Alex Pike, the most experienced person in the office, who stayed on in Cambridge to teach and to develop the Autarkic House; and many more ... Quite early on, David Lea had left to work at Merton with Richard MacCormac in London, while MJ, after some practice and teaching in the US, settled in London, as a kind of outstation of the practice. Among others who subsequently moved with the practice to London were Derek Ellis, who had once worked in Aalto's studio and came fresh from SOM in San Francisco and was later to become a landscape architect; Oktay Nayman, a Turk and marvellous draughtsman, who arrived from Sydney where he had worked with Utzon on the Opera House; and John Collier who had worked in the US for some years and was to run the Liverpool job and, later, the production stages of the British Library.

### ***The Liverpool Civic and Social Centre and other jobs***

At times when the Babraham labs were under review or awaiting approval, I worked on the Liverpool offices brief, office layouts and social facilities. The very detailed briefing sheets for each individual work unit were filed in dozens of red binders. They involved much number crunching on the noisy hand-operated adding machines of the time. Jeremy Taylor, who had worked in Leslie Martin's studio with Lionel March on the Whitehall Plan brief, also did a lot of computation with punch cards. Besides areas and growth predictions, we were deeply involved in establishing connectivities. The University had just acquired its first major computer and, having managed to book time on this, we developed a system of 'clump clusters' to identify space groupings. The influence of Chris Alexander loomed large. Looking back, I think we spent – and consequently lost – too much time on the Liverpool brief. Later, when it came to the British Library brief, MJ and I, who had both worked on the Liverpool red books, were determined not to repeat the experience of manual processing.



*Liverpool Civic and Social Centre. Model of the Phase 3 completed scheme. St George's Hall at top right*

There was a lot of model-making on the Liverpool job. John Rawson coordinated a large model of the central hall complete with moving lift in the main space and the Beatles below in the basement hall. It was built out of grey perspex, each of the many parts of which was double-sanded with wire wool. For another model, Ed Hoskins, a dentist turned architecture student, was set up in the garage (where did the Aston Martin DB4 go?) to drill literally hundreds of holes through brass rods through which circular columns were threaded to simulate the extremely long Liverpool facades. Whenever a presentation was imminent and a model about to be completed, the studio would be swamped, after teaching ended at about 6 pm, by curious Scroope Terrace studio staff. The word just got around and Michael Brawne,

John Meunier, Barry Gasson and others would turn up to look on as, exhausted by a run of very late-nighters, we desperately tried to wrap things up.

There were, of course, other projects besides Babraham and Liverpool. David Lea worked on an unbuilt housing scheme in West Road, for St John's. MJ was job architect for the Cornford House and, later, for a project that seems to have been forgotten – the Keiller House. The client, Gabrielle Keiller, known as the 'Marmalade Queen' was a champion golfer, art collector and heir to the Dundee marmalade-making fortune. She must have been introduced to Sandy by their mutual friend, Eduardo Paolozzi. I recall preliminary drawings for a house rather in the manner of Louis Kahn's Devore and Adler houses of the mid 50s. It progressed no further.

Two other unrecorded projects were a grandstand at Newmarket race-course and an entry to the Dublin Town Hall competition. The commission for the former, designed out of the studio in association with Bryn Jones (who had worked in Leslie Martin's studio), was effectively 'poached' by a race-going 'commercial' architect who shall be nameless. The latter was the outcome of an approach from the Dublin firm of Tyndall Hogan Hurley – not, it has to be said, one of Ireland's finest. Two partners came over to Cambridge one very wet weekend when the umbrellas were up in the studio extension. Marcial Echenique and Sandy developed a design based on Liverpool but not even 'the silver tongue of Mr Wilson' (as the Irish dubbed it) was able to wing it to success.

### *Leaving Cambridge*

Sometime around 1968, I suggested to another architect in the practice, David Thurlow, that we should set up a housing society and form a practice to carry out the projects which I imagined would flow from it. The society, Granta Housing, named after the Granta pub in which I first broached the possibility, was quickly formed with the help and participation of a quantity surveyor (Victor Bugg of Davis Belfield and Everest), engineer (Peter Dann), solicitor, accountant and estate agent, all Cambridge based. David and I established a studio in the quantity surveyor's office attic. David left Sandy's and kept himself going on small jobs while I joined him in the evenings. Granta eventually produced a steady flow of buildings and, years later, was taken over by the Metropolitan Housing Association.

Meanwhile, our second daughter was born in 1969. It was a home birth attended, at about 2 am, by our wonderful GP, Graham Petrie, and two midwives.

After five years working as a townsman in what was then a distinctly provincial city – it still is, but not as much so – I resolved that it was time for a change: as a job architect, I was not learning from anyone but was constantly having to take the initiative myself; it was unclear how Sandy wanted to develop the practice; and the venture with David was growing too slowly to support two of us. Cambridge was starting to feel claustrophobic.

After toying with the idea of emigrating to Sydney, I persuaded Birgit that we should return to London. I was aware that Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners had seen better days but had plenty of work and a friendly ex-Cambridge Partner, Ken Jack – and might be ready for some new blood. They agreed to take me on and, while Birgit and the children were at her parents' home in the Netherlands, I searched for a house and found two possibilities on Span estates in Blackheath. On her return, she chose 10 The Plantation and we started to disengage from Cambridge.

There was the usual farewell from the practice – held in the form of a lunchtime picnic in gloriously sunny weather in Grantchester Meadows. I was given a copy of the latest (and last) of Corbusier’s *oeuvre complète* volumes. That afternoon, I handed over the running of the Babraham labs to John Greening. They were not far from completion. In the evening, Sandy very generously gave me a specially commissioned Peter Blake watercolour. He had remembered that, some years before, I had foregone the purchase of some small Blake paintings in order to get a good second-hand camera to record our firstborn. Handing it to me, he said that, should I ever fall on hard times, he hoped I would offer the picture to him.

---



## 11. London and the British Library

We moved on a Friday and I started work on the Monday.

The least said about Burnet Tait, the better. I got little out of my time there. I was too isolated and should have joined it with someone else of my age and ambition. The Bedford Square practice was split into several groups – each led by a partner apart from two led by a pair of extremely efficient associates. There was also an associated firm, Hospital Design Partnership, run by an allegedly bibulous but certainly brilliant partner who developed the NHS Best Buy hospitals. The group I was in was not one of the star performers and its projects and relative lack of work reflected that. Designs were undertaken at pace and, in my case, included a speculative scheme for a National Exhibition Centre at Northolt and the odd office tower for unknown sites in Lagos. The latter were ‘commissioned’ by a gent in a pinstripe suit and carnation buttonhole (perhaps I am imagining the carnation) who would appear in the studio at about 9.30 am, announce that he was booked onto the 9.00 pm flight from Heathrow that evening and needed some drawings by 6.00 pm for a, say, twelve storey tower on a square corner site somewhere in central Lagos. No site survey, no dimensions, no photographs. I never got any feedback but it’s quite possible one or two got built.

Reluctant to bail out too soon – I’ve always been wary of people who change jobs too often – I finally had to accept that I was getting nowhere. In the intervening months, Sandy, who had been reluctant to see me go, had been given sole responsibility for the newly resurrected British Library job and had moved the practice to London where he was setting up in partnership with the highly experienced Arthur Baker. I asked if he would like me back. He would – to work alongside MJ on the Library. Thus it was that I found myself commuting from one heath to the other, from Blackheath to Hampstead, where the much-enlarged office now occupied Romney’s Studio at the top of Holly Bush Hill. (The partnership with Arthur, with whom Sandy had worked in London in the early 50s, was to be short-lived. Hankering after New York, he returned there. I regretted that – his arrival had been the key to my return and I had enjoyed shadowing him on complex negotiations.)

### *The enlarged practice and the Library brief*

The move back to Sandy was to prove fateful – it was to lead, ten years later, to my unplanned withdrawal from architectural practice. Almost straight away I found myself deeply involved in running both the rapidly enlarging office and, with MJ, the Library project. I interviewed secretaries (one, the remarkable Anne Browning, was to stay until the practice was wound up), set up a practice library, organised a job charging system and even held joint power of attorney for Sandy during his absences teaching in the US.

And then there was the huge task of developing the Library brief and design – in which MJ oversaw the development of the computerised briefing system and led for the humanities while I led for the sciences. Having both slogged away on the manually processed brief for the Liverpool Social and Civic Centre, we were determined to automate the more complex Library brief. We had a firm deadline. Life was hectic as we moved mountains – not just with the brief but in looking at other libraries. I went with Sandy to Germany while MJ accompanied him to the US (where I was to research libraries on my own two years later). It was during this frenetic period that our third daughter was born. I was not present – having been sent home by a midwife late the previous evening.

The automation or digitisation of the brief was a nerve-wracking affair. First, we had to find someone to develop a system. Then, having selected Scicon, we held our breath as they

adapted what we later learnt had been a program developed for North Sea oil exploitation into something that could process data for the Library. It didn't help that the target date was 1 April (1972). But Scicon delivered on time and the programme was to be a huge asset on both the Bloomsbury and the St Pancras schemes.

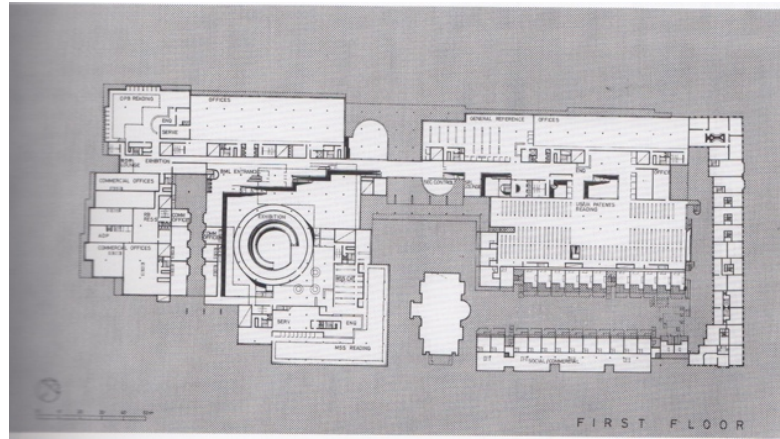
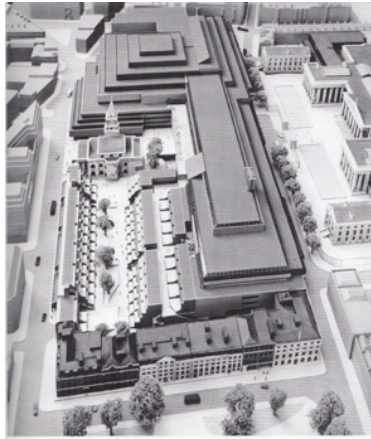
Every so often, I drove up to Babraham to observe and record how the cladding was weathering. It had looked wonderful in the early months – at the time that Richard Einzig had photographed it for *AR*. Sheltered by trees, the patina wasn't developing evenly. It was also becoming disfigured by bird lime – the birds had discovered a warm sheltered perching position under the louvres. In addition, the weathering had been affected both by lubricating oil which dropped on the Cor Ten below the fan housings and by warm air condensing on the steel below the extract fans. It was dispiriting. Inside, the labs seemed to be working well until, on one visit, I was told that the amino acid analysers in the labs were giving unexpectedly high readings, disrupting the scientists' research. At first it was thought that the air lock between the cattle stalls and the labs must be defective, thus permitting the fumes from the cows' urine to escape – but tests proved it was working well. The source was eventually identified as the ammonia in the floor cleaner which, on the recommendation of the flooring manufacturers, I had specified in the user manual.

After a while, we shifted the practice from Hampstead to an old shirt and pyjama warehouse in Wilson Street, on the edge of the City – and my commute became much easier. By this time, I was an associate and, shortly after, with MJ, was offered a partnership. But Sandy made the offer in such a clumsy way that, concerned at what I saw as continuing flaws in the practice, I swiftly declined. Two months later, Doug Lanham (who, following Arthur's departure, had joined as a partner and for whom I have always had immense respect) told me that it was ridiculous that I was not a partner – no one else (apart from MJ, who was about to become a mother) knew as much about the Library job as I did – and would I please change my mind. To Birgit's dismay, I did.

I had always thought that Sandy's association with Michael Brawne was a precursor to a partnership between them. Sandy *and* Michael had both interviewed John Collier when he applied for a job in 1968. Michael had written about libraries and museums and had travelled with Sandy and MJ to see libraries in Russia. They were close friends – the Brawnes were among the very few guests present at Sandy and MJ's wedding in 1972. But it was not to be and it was John who was named together with Sandy and Arthur Baker in the January 1972 partnership agreement. Looking at the partnership accounts, it seems that MJ and I had both joined by April 73, she shortly before me. (This sequence differs from John Collier's account in the British Library Sound Archive.)

### ***The Bloomsbury scheme***

The Library was to be *very* large – occupying the entire area between the British Museum and Bloomsbury Way, the best part of nine city blocks. The only buildings to be excluded were Hawksmoor's Church of St George and the west side of Bloomsbury Square, where we would glimpse Nikolaus Pevsner at work in his ground floor office. The British Museum Library occupied the west end of the building and the Science Reference and Patent Office Libraries the eastern part. The south-eastern part of the site consisted of housing. MJ covered the BML, I the SRL and POL and David Mellor, an associate who had worked on the Myatts Field estate while at Southwark, was responsible for the housing. David was later to be a senior partner at Alec French's practice in Bristol. The Library was planned to be constructed in two stages, with the BML section first.



*British Library, Bloomsbury, 1971-3. It was almost a relief it was never built*

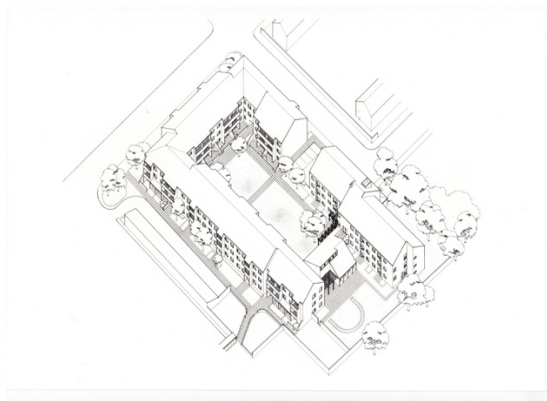
We presented the design on time and then everything went quiet – more or less. Up to that point, we had been working for the Department of the Environment's Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings (DAMHB) – who had responsibility for the British Museum and the newly-formed British Library. DAMHB now handed us over to the relatively newly formed Property Services Agency. Our new Liaison Architect looked at our scheme and observed that the Government was not allowed to construct space for commercial activities. This was unfortunate because we had gone to great pains to make provision for those existing site activities which the scheme would, to the fury of the various emerging protest groups, displace. He added that the scheme was, clearly, uneconomic – PSA research had revealed that 6 metres square (and not the 7.6 – or was it 8? – meters we had adopted) was the most economic dimension for a structural bay. We asked for a couple of days to look into that. A young assistant, David Gibson, had developed a program which, taking into account the huge variety of storage requirements (shelf depths and access for different types and quantities of stored material), swiftly calculated the most economic bay size. Working backwards from the PSA bay size, David revealed that we would need far more built area – which would make the site unviable (and cost many millions of pounds more). PSA had no answer to that.

It was a difficult period economically and politically, the 1973 oil and economic crises hit us, the Minister (Patrick Gordon-Walker) allowed the planning consent on the Bloomsbury site to lapse, the conservation movement got going and the *Architectural Review* attacked the design. The Library wasn't going to happen. Today, looking back, I am glad that the proposal for that site was never built.

### ***Other projects***

There were two other jobs in the office: the British Museum extension, being run by Doug, and a reduced version of the long-running Liverpool Civic and Social Centre project which, following a planning enquiry, died. But then, during the four-day-week, with a Honda portable generator on the roof, we produced the submission which won a limited competition for Lucas Industries' head office near Birmingham. Later, that died, too, when Sandy changed the design after the chairman, who was about to retire, had agreed it. Shortly after, we landed two housing jobs from Haringey – with the warning that the Chief Architect, Alan Weitzel, would lose his job if we were not on site within a year. Together with Derek Ellis, an associate who, as a student, had worked with Aalto, I took on the larger of the two commissions – 84 dwellings on the site of an old cooperage on Brantwood Road.

We had no recent housing experience in the practice so we had to learn the mysteries of the Housing Cost Yardstick at speed. We studied two possibilities – a court and a tower. We knew a tower would be ridiculous, but we wanted to demonstrate how suitable a court would be. We did an analysis and block model of each option and took them with us to the Housing Committee. The meeting was running late and it must have been about 8.30 by the time we presented. After listening to us and looking at the small models, the engaging but very dominant chair, in day-time a union official at Liverpool Street station, stated that the tower was the obvious solution. Others started to agree with him. I was appalled – thoughts of having to resign the commission flashed through my mind. And then, turning to his fellow members, he said ‘What on earth are you thinking about? Of course, the court is right’. We were on site within the year. It was the only job the practice ever did in which the landscape (by Derek) was very much part of the design – in which Sandy had no part. Sadly, in the late 80s, the buildings started suffering from a lack of maintenance.



*Dunbar Cooperage, 1975. 84 dwellings for London Borough of Haringey. With Derek Ellis. John Donat photo*

### ***A new start at St Pancras***

Halfway through construction of the Dunbar Cooperage housing we were asked to undertake a feasibility study for the Library on the old Somers Town goods depot site in Euston Road. Doug was deeply involved with the British Museum extension and MJ was on a kind of maternity leave so I handed the housing over to another partner, John Collier (who had run the Liverpool job and was later to play a major role during the construction of the Library), and returned to the Library project. Sandy, MJ, Doug and I each did a sketch design – all recorded in Roger Stonehouse’s book on the Library. Sandy and MJ’s designs concentrated on the reading rooms. Doug and I were much more concerned about the construction phasing and the basement smoke venting – two problems which had not appeared to be as critical on the Bloomsbury site. MJ’s scheme was the clear front-runner – unlike Sandy, she had phased her reading rooms and accommodated the smoke vents – and it was from it that the Feasibility Study and the ultimate design were developed.

The next five years are, frankly, a bit of a haze. Sandy was elected Professor at Cambridge in 1976, MJ was mothering first Sarah Jane and then Harry (but doing an incredible amount of work at home as well as coming into the office when she could) and Doug was still heavily involved with the Museum extension – although he led the supremely important negotiations on the Library basement smoke venting. I found myself running this huge, £445m., project on a day-to-day basis, coordinating the consultants and chairing their meetings. Nothing had prepared me for this. I once counted the number of different agencies and consultants we were dealing with – it was 37. Within the practice, we had a very good team – including David Gibson, Alison Bell and John Cannon – and were highly productive. The job was



genuinely interesting and, quite apart from developing the design, there were issues such as adaptability, sunlight and the daylighting requirements, vibration problems from the underground railways, smoke venting and the impact of computer miniaturisation. In all the words written about the Library, there is not one word on these crucial technical aspects.

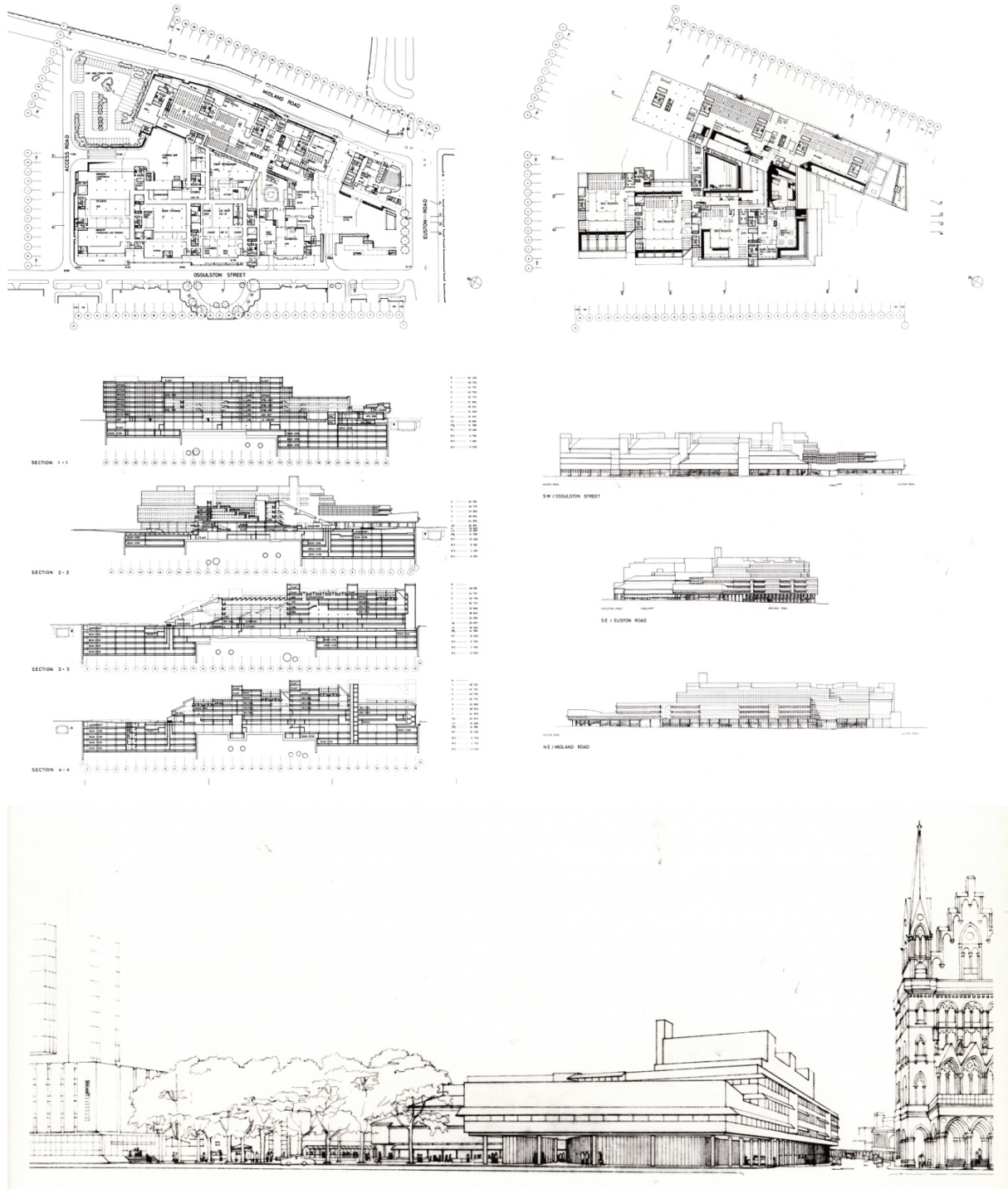


Cover and sample pages from MJ Long and PC's Architectural Design Briefing Guide on Libraries, July 1974

The adaptability issues were widely discussed in a Briefing Guide that MJ and I wrote for *Architectural Design* in July 1974. Solving the sunlight and daylight issue was fundamental to the form of the western half of the Library, along Ossulston Street, opposite the LCC housing estate. Camden insisted on us applying the methods (using sunlight and daylight protractors) developed after the war to prevent the construction of corridor-streets. These methods resulted in podium and tower developments like Castrol House – and would have prevented the as-built form of the Library. We solved the problem by asking Dean Hawkes and David Arnold of the Martin Centre to unscramble the method so as to convince Camden that the amount of daylight in the housing would achieve the level sought by the official method. On vibration, with London Underground lines running both at the south end and through the centre of the site, we had, potentially, a huge problem. Would the rumble of trains be heard in the reading rooms? Professor Grootenhuis of Imperial College helped us here and, following a couple of very tense meetings, suggested that only the southern, Conference Centre, end of the east side need have anti-vibration mountings. The basement smoke venting – for the largest multi-storey hole ever built in London – was negotiated with the London Fire Brigade by Doug. There was much at stake – in floor area, cross venting configurations and in ground level treatment. And then there was the impact of developments in computers.

When, in 1971, we started on the Bloomsbury site, we were working in the world of main-frame computers in central Automated Data Processing suites and large diameter and radius curve co-axial cables snaking all over the place. By 1975, working on the St Pancras site, main frames and co-axial had gone and we had widely distributed desktop computers. At one point, concerned at the increasing references to computers, I asked our liaison librarians, David Rodger and Brian Holt, to update the brief on computer locations – and forwarded their response to Steensen Varming Mulcahy (SVM), the services consultants. To my dismay, SVM reported that the all-air variable air volume a/c system would not cope with the heat output. The only solution was to change to a conventional chilled water a/c system. Now, that would have affected the anatomy of the building and, anyway, the librarians had expressly forbidden any water. After a sleepless night, I returned to David and Brian – and they reduced the numbers of desktops. Today, there are laptops all over the Library.

Something else of which there is a plethora in the Library's public areas are toilets. There are more than enough – unusually, ladies have no cause for complaint. How did this happen? Provision is normally determined by reference to the relevant British Standard Code of Practice. Libraries were not mentioned in that – so I picked out what I considered to be a public building equivalent and consulted both the services engineers and PSA (who had recently designed the Public Records Office at Kew). Neither, as far as I can remember, had any useful comment to make. When the purchasing order came through, the sanitaryware manufacturers must have thought Christmas had come. We should probably have used the scale of provision for offices.



*The British Library 'Final Scheme', 1977. I left the partnership three years later.*

## ***Resigning from the partnership***

Occasionally, Sandy would get invitations to talk about the Library. One of these came from the Library Association's Yorkshire Branch of which the poet Philip Larkin was the chairman. Accepting, Sandy decided that he would talk about the design and I about the briefing process. The meeting was held at the Hull University Library of which Larkin was Librarian. After a mildly bibulous lunch, we moved to the lecture theatre where Sandy and I started our double act. About halfway through my description of the briefing process (not the most exciting of subjects), I glanced down at Larkin, seated directly below me in the front row. Stretched out and leaning back in his seat, he was fast asleep. With his specs tossed back on his head, his eyes were fully open with just the whites exposed. Faced with this alarming sight, I wound up as fast as I could and handed over to Sandy. Before we left, Sandy – as ever, the collector – asked our host to sign his copy of *The Whitsun Weddings*.

Back in London, we presented to ministers (Shirley Williams was the most sympathetic), to the new Property Service Agency (PSA) liaison officers, to the dreaded Dr Bruno Schlaffenberg (Camden's director of planning) and many others. But there were uncertainties as governments and people came and went and morale took the odd dip. Despite the interesting aspects of the job, I began to wonder whether this project would end up being abandoned like the Bloomsbury one (*and* the Liverpool Civic and Social Centre *and* the Lucas headquarters) – was it going to absorb yet another few unproductive years of my life? Additionally, I was tired of collaborating with two people who were too rarely there with me and, in the end, I blew up. The immediate cause was my introduction of a necessary escape stairs in a position that was visible from the Library forecourt. In a break from working at home, MJ came into the office and spotted the offending stairs in a drawing on John Cannon's board. She exploded at poor John (an exceptionally fine draughtsman who suffered from a stutter) – in full sight and hearing of the rest of the team. It was, for me, the final straw. The stairs, by the way, got built – you'd never realise it was there but, if you know where to look, you can see the enclosure from the forecourt. It was a neat solution.

It was October 1979 and Birgit and I were going to New England for half-term. I told Doug of my intention and posted my letter of resignation from Heathrow – and I know that he very kindly spoke for me. We had a wonderful holiday after which Sandy, who couldn't believe my decision, tried to dissuade me. I was not wavering. We remained friends to the end. So, too, did MJ – she understood my frustration at being overpowered by the huge scale and uncertainties of the job. She had been able to get over hers by teaching at Yale and taking on lots of small studio jobs for the artist friends she shared with Sandy. She was a most accomplished architect and, years later, I persuaded the *Guardian* that she merited an obituary and that I should write it. Ironically, it had the effect of altering the generally accepted attribution for the Library from Colin St John Wilson to Colin St John Wilson and MJ Long. Both are wrong. It should be Colin St John Wilson & Partners. The massive contributions of the other partners (and associates) are forgotten. Which brings me to Sandy himself.

## ***Sandy Wilson***

Sandy played a large part in my life – as my First Year Master and Director of Studies, as my employer and partner for 16 years and, later, as my predecessor as head at Cambridge. We got on well together and there was no doubt that he wanted me to work with him, regretted my two departures and always spoke for me thereafter. The Peter Blake watercolour he gave me in 1970 is a daily reminder of his generosity and support.



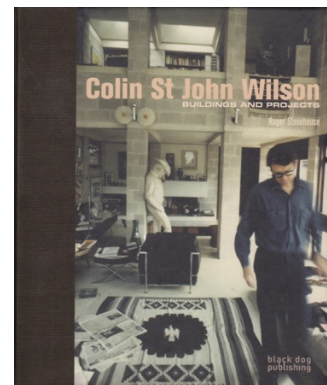
My doubts about Sandy's claims to the authorship of various projects undertaken by Leslie Martin's Studio first surfaced in 2001 when Patrick Hodgkinson, responding to Kenneth Frampton's reflections after Leslie's death (*arq* vol.5, no. 1 pp. 11-12) wrote about the origins of the St Pancras housing and the built version of Harvey Court (*arq* vol.5, no. 4, pp. 297-300). The latter was entirely Patrick's design, undertaken at home, and very different in form and material to the original scheme on which Leslie, Sandy and Patrick had collaborated. Hearing about this article, Sandy telephoned me to say that Patrick's account was incorrect. I offered to publish any rebuttal he sent me. He never took up my offer.

It was only after Patrick criticised one of my 2008 obituaries of Sandy that I really began to appreciate the seriousness of Sandy's – misplaced – claims to authorship and the way in which Patrick was occasionally denied any credit at all for Harvey Court. In my total commitment to the Wilson partnership, I had never questioned the content of our practice brochure. Indeed, years earlier, I had unwisely disregarded a comment made by Doug Lanham (who had worked for Leslie Martin in both Cambridge and Oxford) to the effect that some of the Martin Studio projects should never have been included in our Wilson practice brochure. Like many, I was also misled by the confusing way in which Leslie had credited his associates in the foreword to his book, *Buildings and Ideas from the Studio of Leslie Martin and his Associates*. Now, in discussions with Patrick and his Studio contemporaries about the origins of Harvey Court, the St Pancras housing and the Oxford libraries, the scales fell from my eyes. The subsequent discovery in the British Library Sound Archive of Sandy's claims in relation to the Babraham laboratory was devastating. It set me thinking.

Sandy was a brilliant teacher and critic. He lectured and wrote very well indeed. In essays in *Architectural Reflections: Studies in the philosophy and practice of architecture* he articulated his position with a clarity matched by very few of his contemporaries. He was an accomplished designer. And he had great charm. He really didn't need to appropriate Patrick's work. So why did he do so? I think there were two reasons – mainly the desire to enhance his reputation, of which he was acutely aware, but also the need for commissions.



	WRIGHT	MIES	LE CORBUSIER
BIRTH	1897	1896	1898
END OF FORMAL EDUCATION	20	15	17
END OF APPRENTICESHIP	26	25	22
INDEPENDENT PRACTICE	26	25	34
MATURITY BEGINS	31-33	34-36	35
FIRST MASTERPIECE	35	43	39



Harvey Court designed by Patrick Hodgkinson, H-R Hitchcock's *Perspecta* table and Sandy's oeuvre complet

In 1957/8, in my first undergraduate year, Sandy concluded a lecture with a reference to Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *Perspecta No.1* article on 'The Evolution of Wright, Mies and Le Corbusier'. This identified the dates of Corbu's maturity as starting at 35 and of his first masterpiece at 39. Sandy observed that he himself was 36. (Years later, on being informed that he was to receive a Cambridge honorary degree, he was disconcerted to learn that Corbusier was not the only other architect to be awarded that honour – Leslie Martin was the other.) The culmination of Sandy's quest to ensure his legacy was two books – Sarah Menin and Stephen Kite's biography, *An Architecture of Invitation*, and Roger Stonehouse's *Colin*



*St John Wilson: buildings and projects* – and the donation of the practice archive to the RIBA Drawings Collection together with the all-important funds to enable its cataloguing. It will be interesting to see how much, if any, of Patrick Hodgkinson's work is included in the Wilson archive. Sadly, the RIBA has so far been unable to secure funds for the cataloguing of the Martin archive.

The need to attract commissions was complicated by several factors. Some potential clients thought that, with Liverpool and, later, the British Library, Sandy had too much work on his hands. Others would have noticed that there was little other, smaller scale, work emerging from the practice. In later life, Sandy (and MJ) often complained about not being given work. Even with the appropriated Martin Studio work, the practice brochure was not an effective marketing tool. Unsurprisingly, 'job-getting' didn't interest Sandy and it was, anyway, in the earlier years, restricted by the RIBA code of conduct. He was not one to hob-knob with local authority chief architects (who commissioned many private sector practices) at RIBA conferences and he preferred socialising with his artist friends rather than with more likely prospects. To the best of my knowledge, Leslie Martin never 'passed on' a job to Sandy (as he had to Stirling, Lasdun, Brawne, Macmillan and Metzstein, John Miller, Castle Park Dean and Hook, Chamberlin Powell and Bon and others) – indeed, Leslie's last associate, Ivor Richards, claimed that, in 1970, Leslie only gave up the British Library collaboration reluctantly. Peter Palumbo, the only significant developer Sandy knew, never commissioned him. (Thinking about it recently, it has occurred to me that, on leaving the practice, I might have expected Sandy to pass on a job to me – but there were never any 'spare' jobs to pass on.)

We had a curious relationship. Once I started to work with him, I never enjoyed the kind of master/pupil relationship that Marcial Echenique and David Mellor have spoken about so eloquently. On Babraham, Michael Brawne was in charge and, concerned at the slow pace of design, it was I who took the lead; on Bloomsbury, 'my' part of the building evolved quickly and much of my contribution lay in areas Sandy was not active in; on Dunbar Cooperage, we were under pressure and he did not have the time to become involved; and on St Pancras, we finally came unstuck – it was a difficult time and we needed closer collaboration. I had always been around to maintain pressure and continuity – and get things done. By the time I left the partnership, I had, in sixteen years, completed more buildings than anyone else. Which was no great achievement – it amounted to just two.

The partnership agreement stated that, on Sandy's withdrawal, the practice name was to be changed. That's fair enough but what it revealed was no wish for continuity and, with it, a lack of concern for younger colleagues. This was also evident in the way that, although the partners always lunched together – associates, who could have contributed in all kinds of ways to the practice dynamic, were, in my time, never invited. Indeed, one of my great regrets about the Wilson years lies in the way that, apart from the partners, the names of all the many people who worked in the office are nowhere recorded. There is no mention of them in *Colin St John Wilson: buildings and projects*, published at the time of Sandy's death in 2007. Only a few long-serving members are mentioned in Roger Stonehouse's book, *The British Library at St Pancras*. To my mind, this is unforgivable. (In addition, some attributions made in the first book are incorrect and, in the second, the Dunbar Cooperage housing is absorbed into two other smaller projects and uncredited.)

---

## 12. Cambridge Design

Having resigned, I worked out my year's notice and then, supported by a year's consultancy on the Library, set about opening a London branch for Cambridge Design (the practice that had developed out of that set up with David Thurlow in 1968). Starting from scratch and based in the Wilson offices, I worked up a number of possible projects. Looking back, I think I was pretty enterprising but, having committed myself totally to the Wilson practice, I lacked connections. The only job which brought in a fee (apart from the Library consultancy) was a feasibility study for a new library for Clare College. Shortly after the study was completed, a Clare alumnus, Philip Dowson, was awarded the Royal Gold Medal – and the Clare commission. My study had rejected the idea of siting the library on the Memorial Court / University Library axis in favour of the site on the north side of the court. Dowson persuaded his fellow Royal Fine Arts Commissioners to accept the axis site for a Library and Music practice area. Birkin Haward and Jo van Heyningen later built a new mixed-use court on the north site.

About nine months after I joined Cambridge Design as a partner, Mrs Thatcher announced one of her social housing moratoriums. This proved to be a disaster for the practice. Most of its commissioned work (all in the Cambridge office) was on housing and about half the staff had to go. In addition, there were difficulties in the partnership. I decided to resign and, after a while, the bank released the deeds of our house (37 Blackheath Park, a five storey jerry-built late Georgian terrace house with a long narrow garden, to which we had moved in 1976).

For a few months, I struggled on my own – using the Wilson partnership's rather unsatisfactory new offices in Canonbury Square as a base. It was a thin period for architects and there were few commissions to be had. Birgit went to work as a supply teacher at Crown Woods comprehensive – a job which was to convince her that she didn't want to return to teaching. It was not a good time for either of us – in fact, it was awful and I was very ill.

Scanning the *Architects' Journal (AJ)* one Sunday evening, I mentioned to Birgit (to this day, I don't know why) that the journal was looking for a Technical Editor. Quick as a flash, she replied, 'Why not try?'

---

### 13. The AJ

In 1957, in a studio introduction at the start of our first year, Sandy Wilson had suggested that we might like to consider reading the *AJ* (a weekly), the *AR* (*Architectural Review*) or *AD* (*Architectural Design*) (both monthlies). The *AJ* was easily the dullest – informative rather than inspirational, it looked as if it was intended to be filed rather than read. I'd often wondered what the people behind it were like – so, applying for the Technical Editorship was a way of discovering. It would also be interesting to draft a cv and subject myself to an interview. I'd done a lot of interviewing myself but, strangely, had never answered a job ad before – I'd either just asked for a job or been invited to come and work.

The Architectural Press (AP) was an extraordinary institution housed in extraordinary premises. Publishing the *AJ*, *AR*, *Specification* and AP books, it was owned by two families who, for nearly a century, had been at war. The Regans were the businessmen, pulling in the advertising revenue, placing paper and print orders and settling accounts. The Hastings looked after the editorial side on which one of them, H de C Hastings, was active between the 1930s and 70s. By 1981, both families were in the third generation. The premises consisted of five early C18 houses in Queen Anne's Gate (known in the firm as QAG), close to St James's Park. The houses had been interconnected and, in the basement of three of them there was The Bride of Denmark, a private bar fitted out with the remnants of East End pubs rescued by H de C from skips in the late 1940s and presided over by Michael Regan's Austrian former nanny, Hermine, dispensing coffee and delicious sandwich lunches.



*The AP offices, Queen Anne's Gate and the Bride of Denmark, our 'private pub' presided over by Hermine*

Over the years, the pages of the *AJ* and *AR* had been filled with writing by, among others, Robert Byron, John Betjeman, Osbert Lancaster, Nikolas Pevsner, Hugh Casson, Morton Shand, Sacheverell Sitwell, Evelyn Waugh, Cyril Connolly and Ian Nairn, while the likes of Gordon Cullen, Dell and Wainright, FR Yerbury, Richard Einzig and Phil Sayer had provided drawings and photographs. In parallel with these were the technical editors responsible for the *AJ* Information Library – a venture started in the 1930s with the office handbook devised by Tommy Tait for the office he ran with Sir John Burnet. This was continued and developed after the war by Cotterell Butler (Reg Butler, the sculptor of *The Unknown Political Prisoner*, 1953), Michael Ventris (who deciphered Linear B with John Chadwick), Gordon Hutton, Michael Rostron and Dargan Bullivant.

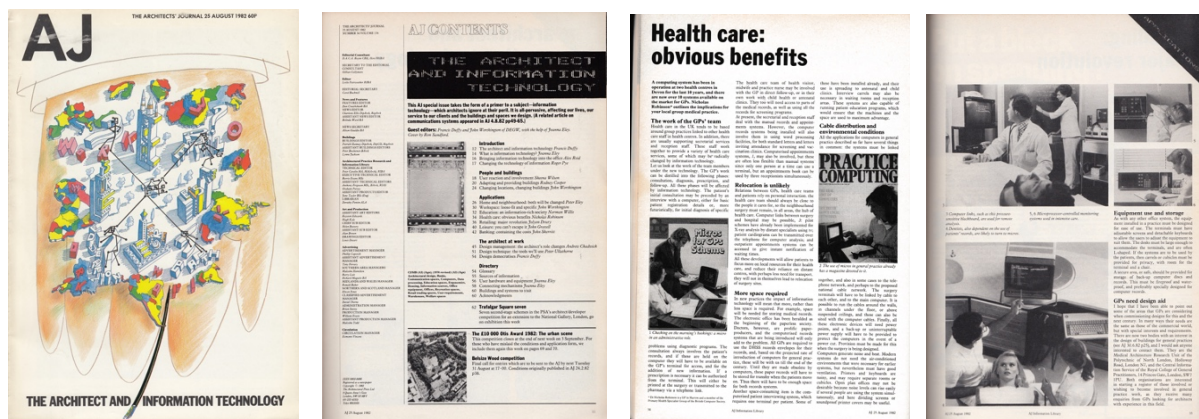
On retiring in 1973, H de C appointed Colin Boyne as *AJ* and *AR* Editorial Director, replacing him as *AJ* Editor by the then Technical Editor, Leslie Fairweather. Thereafter, Colin, who had loved editing, developed a very tetchy relationship with Leslie. It was this pair who interviewed me. Colin was desperate to regenerate the 1960s glory days of the *AJ* Information Library when subscriptions and advertising revenue went through the roof. On the basis of my cv and an apparently glowing reference from Sandy, they appointed me

Technical Editor. Over a weekend, I cleared my belongings from the Wilson offices, dropped my keys through the letterbox and left. It had been a long drawn-out exit and I had asked that it should not be marked in any way. I told myself – but not my new employers – that I'd treat the job as a two-year sabbatical. It was an interesting time and I felt that doors would open to me as an editor and prepare me for the years ahead.

## *The workings of the AJ*

The *AJ* was in trouble. How much, I only realised on discovering that the other person who joined the same day as I did was a 'company doctor'. While I was seen (by Colin and Leslie) as the man who might bring about a revival of the *AJ*'s fortunes, the 'doctor' was to resolve the problems of the Architectural Press as a whole. He produced his report – and departed. My report took rather longer to appear. The publishing programme it outlined was rightly scorned by the other editors – but I stayed. So, with the odd tweak such as the introduction of a Practice section, the *AJ*'s technical publishing programme, of which I was now in charge, continued, for the moment, much as before.

Two challenges faced me. First, coming off the drawing board was rather like, I imagine, coming off drugs. Almost every morning I'd go into Leslie's office and tell him that I really didn't think I could continue. Leslie, an exceptionally kind man, would tell me that he had felt the same way when he became an editor and that it would soon pass. It never really did. Second, I knew nothing about editing and magazine production. In fact, I knew so little that I didn't even appreciate the depth of my ignorance. In between taking on the new Practice section and my share of the various technical 'series' that made up the bulk of the Technical section, I also glibly assumed responsibility for editing the annual Technical Special Issue. It was Information Technology Year and I suggested to Frank Duffy and John Worthington of DEGW that they should guest edit an issue on 'The Architect and Information Technology'. It was a difficult topic to tackle and our coverage, although thorough, looked a distinctly unenticing read. Indeed, Charlotte Ellis, the very forthright News Editor, raised a copy at the weekly post-mortem and, staring at me, asked 'What *on earth* is this?' Looking at it today, I can see that a major problem was the hugely unattractive pages – an extreme example of the kind of undisciplined layout then used by the journal. The other problem was my editing.



*My first AJ 'special issue', August 1982. The content puzzled the News Editor. The layout was clumsy*

The *AJ*'s production schedule was complex. Technical series were planned and commissioned months in advance, buildings coverage three months in advance (which meant that the Buildings Editor was running 12 building studies simultaneously) and everything else on anything up to press day. Once the text was complete and the pictures available, the subediting and layout process could take up to three weeks. Text was supplied typed to be



set at the printers, neither drawings nor photographs were digitized and layout was by 'cut and paste'. It was laborious and involved a lot of people. Timing was all and printer's corrections cost money. Unlike today, the editors did not have bylines.

An effective editor had to be able to structure clearly, write succinctly, edit the prose of his contributors and understand how the production process worked. The vast bulk of my own work concerned technical and practice articles but I also offered contributions to each of the other sections – News, Features and Buildings. Quite apart from gaining an understanding of the editorial and production aspects of each section, I began to understand their fundamental nature and became aware that the way they combined was a key to the success of a publication. This was something that the energetic and highly competent Buildings Editor, Patrick Hannay, who had recently rejoined the AJ, alerted me to. Probing and passionate, he used to refer to the fact that 'we live in a magazine culture'.

Shortly after Patrick's return, Simon Esterson took over as Art Editor. He redesigned the entire journal. From the cover to the page grids and the fonts and the quality of the (now colour) photographs, the *AJ* was transformed. Simon would read our copy, look at the illustrative material and get to the essence of each article. Peering through his printer's eyepiece, he was a stickler for high standards of photography and, abominating white space, would ask us to expand or trim our captions (and even our copy) in order to fill the page. We always did. (Today, Simon is the outstanding editorial designer and art director of his generation.)



Simon Esterson's first redesign issue

As *AJ* Editor, Leslie had a very light touch – his critics would say too light. A most methodical person, he had, as Technical Editor, moved mountains on the *AJ* Information Library programme and co-authored the all-time AP best-seller, the *AJ Metric Handbook*. But the Information Library had almost run itself into the ground and the various *AJ* section editors – News, Features, Buildings and Technical – did their own thing. In very difficult circumstances, Barrie Evans, the Executive Technical Editor, did a particularly good job and I felt badly at being brought in over his head. The weekly post-mortems were awful affairs with Colin criticizing the journal for its lack of campaigns, poor editing etc. etc. I used to feel very sorry for Leslie. It was not a happy place, but Simon's redesign gave hope for the future. Things were starting to change.

## A baptism of fire

One of the things the Regans had done was to buy their regular printer, Diemer and Reynolds in Bedford. This meant, of course, that they lost the benefit of price competition. But it brought a compensating gain in the shape of Diemer's diminutive Managing Director, Ron Norbury, who also sat on the AP Board and, as the firm continued its decline, was appointed Managing Director. Ron didn't like editors and said so. But he seemed to tolerate me. When, about nine months after joining the *AJ*, I told him that I would be going to the US for ten days on a self-arranged 'freebie' to cover 'the world's first intelligent building', he asked if my wife was accompanying me. I replied that she wasn't as it was half-term and she would be with the children. He then asked how many we had and replied that he'd pay for Birgit and one child. I paid for the other two – their first visit to the US and a chance for Birgit to show them where, as a Dutch refugee from the East Indies, she grew up in the war years.

A few months later, Ron hauled me over the coals after his printers had stopped the presses on *Facilities* – a pioneering monthly newsletter for facilities managers and others which Frank Duffy of DEGW had suggested and I'd persuaded Ron to publish. The deal was that DEGW would provide all the copy in camera-ready form. The copy was good but the paste-ups were awful, certainly not camera-ready, and looked ghastly when printed. The stopping of the presses was a terrible event and, for the first of two occasions at the *AJ*, I found myself rushed to St Thomas's by a GP who was convinced I was about to have a heart attack. In the end, after 25 issues, Ron sold the title to DEGW. It had settled down into an impressive publication with comprehensive subject matter, good contributors and cartoons by Hellman. But *Facilities* had been ahead of its time and the AP did not have an appropriate marketing and distribution network – newsletters are very different from magazines. Leslie's only comment was 'Peter, never be the first to do anything'.

### Your introductory copy of

# Facilities

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF:** Managing Directors, Chief Executives, Finance Directors, Administration Managers, Premises and Building Managers, Workplaces and Other Services Managers. All those responsible for the efficient, economic use of buildings in the 1980's.

**FACILITIES: A monthly digest for the office services & building manager**  
How does your Organisation handle the demands made by the new information technology (IT) on your buildings and offices?  
Computers, microcomputers, microcomputers, VDU's, telecommunications equipment, word processors and data transmission equipment are some of the obvious items of IT that are being installed in ever greater numbers and at ever greater rates in the 1980's. All have a significant impact on buildings, requiring change and adaptation in office design and utilization.  
Is your Organisation equipped to find the most efficient, economic solutions to the wide variety of problems that occur as a result of change? Your consultants will help, but can you lead them fully, and are they able to keep up with all the developments in such areas as lighting, acoustics, cabling and dusting installation, the protection of your site and equipment? You need to be informed. **FACILITIES** will help you and your consultants to achieve and maintain a satisfactory, economic and efficient working environment – without undergoing an expensive process of trial and error.  
**FACILITIES** is a monthly newsletter which will provide you with essential information on all aspects of the building that are subject to continuing change. Experts in each aspect give authoritative, up-to-date, concise and relevant information that can be used as the basis for decision-making and for building consultants. Economics, bibliographies and the annual index and leader make it a reference of cumulative and enduring value.

**Some of the Problems that FACILITIES can Help you to Overcome:**

**Space**  
Is an increasingly expensive resource. **FACILITIES** advises on space management, which very few organisations manage to fulfil fully.

**Money**  
Ongoing and maintaining a building is expensive; adapting or modernising in any way is highly expensive. **FACILITIES** will help you to ensure that your maintenance and modernisation is both effective and cost-efficient.

**Time**  
Keeping informed about changes and innovations in new IT products, fitting out, furnishing and servicing, is extremely time-consuming. Experts identify, analyse and judge new developments for you in **FACILITIES**.

**Example 1: Installation of New Equipment**  
This often requires changes in the building: new partitioning, power and light cables, raised floors, air conditioning. Can you anticipate all the potential problems and solve them effectively and economically? **FACILITIES** will help you to do so.

**Example 2: Working Conditions**  
New equipment necessitating changes in the working environment often causes staff dissatisfaction and even absenteeism. **FACILITIES** will help you to create an environment that works.

P.T.O.

April 1985

## A monthly digest for the building administration manager

# Facilities

**Contents**

**Development** 2  
Facilities management: Great Falls are too good for the building Administration and business Development – a comment on all that building change has achieved in a major office – RFE – large scale relocation and the building manager's role in the process.

**Environment** 3  
The new office: This month features an energy and light audit, and a new energy conservation programme.

**Acoustic** 7  
Office noise: A survey of the current literature on office noise, and the impact of noise on the office manager's health, and the impact of noise on the office manager's health.

**Lighting** 13  
Lighting: A survey of the current literature on office lighting, and the impact of lighting on the office manager's health, and the impact of lighting on the office manager's health.

**Energy** 16  
Energy: A survey of the current literature on office energy, and the impact of energy on the office manager's health, and the impact of energy on the office manager's health.

**Facilities** 16

Vol 1 No 4 April 1985

**Basic briefing**

### Wiring strategies: part 2

**Second Data**

Over 100 months' survey of the types of railway system available made possible by British Telecom's interest in the matter. Only time will reveal one change which practitioners will make, but clearly BT will remain effectively a monopoly – a concentration of the wiring industry in the hands of one man.

**What are the plans for the installation?**  
The latter part of the Government's policy to encourage competition and private involvement in the provision of the wiring system to one building or group of buildings, and a gradual separation from any other wiring connected to BT's network. First connection will be made by BT, and the responsibility for the wiring will be the normal practice, but any divergence from the code discussed after consulting with BT will be at considerable advantage, for obvious reasons. A report by DTFL, the organization set up by the Government to provide the necessary technical and liability to provide these services. The latter manager would be an alternative contractor if the installation is a complete entity, outside the scope of British Telecom's role in a separate wiring to those who want to swap their FAX cable.

**Planning the new installation**  
The overall design of the building will condition the need for such services; there is no simple equation. The most important factor to be considered is the need for a management system from day one. The installation and the building manager must be able to manage the building from day one. It is necessary to establish the main wiring routes in order to ensure that the building is able to meet the needs of the building manager. It is also necessary to ensure that the building is able to meet the needs of the building manager. It is also necessary to ensure that the building is able to meet the needs of the building manager.

**Basic briefing**  
This article is a continuation of the article in the previous issue. It discusses the requirements of the Code of Practice described in the previous issue. It also discusses the requirements of the Code of Practice described in the previous issue. It also discusses the requirements of the Code of Practice described in the previous issue.

**Facilities**

Vol 1 No 2 February 1985

*Facilities – Introductory cover sheet, last AP issue, April 1985, and a sample page*

In October 1983, Ron took over as Chairman of the AP and Leslie, with whom he had a long-standing and happy relationship, took over as Managing Director. I temporarily stepped into Leslie's shoes as Deputy Editor. At this time, Colin Boyne also retired. Colin's pepperiness was attributable to the Japanese shrapnel that had lodged in his leg in Burma. Besuited and bowler-hatted, he was a real pro who could handwrite a leader to the exact length and who had been the only journalist to get through the police cordon when Ronan Point collapsed. He had very high standards and never quite accepted me, once saying that I was 'a typical

seat of the pants Cambridge man'. After his retirement, we became good friends and frequent correspondents and I used to visit him and his wife, Rosemary, in Wells, on our way down to sail in Devon.

Scorpio, the columnist on our rival weekly, *Building Design*, was all agog as to who would succeed Leslie as Editor. I was regarded as 'a solid technical man' with odds at 8–7. I hadn't asked for the job and there was no interview. But, with just a friendly and supportive letter from Ron and a helpful list of *AJ* Editor's Jobs from Leslie, I was appointed. I was to have a baptism of fire.

On 30 May 1984, at Hampton Court, Prince Charles delivered his famous attack on the profession. I was not there, Leslie, still officially *AJ* Editor, had the *AJ* invitation. The following day, I had to write the leader. The *AJ* had not been surprised that the Prince had attacked architects – the previous month, our columnist, Astragal, had pointed out that his uncle had done exactly that 50 years before at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) centenary banquet. I was also concerned that a joint RIBA/*AJ* initiative for the Festival of Architecture had been scuppered by the Institute after the journal had committed. The opening part of my leader was critical of the RIBA and observed that, by inviting the Prince, they had provided him with a platform to damage the profession. We always circulated the draft leaders and I remember Patrick Hannay entering my room, holding up the draft and saying 'This is going to cause trouble'.

A month later, by now Editor, I was at the opening of the last of the great RIBA annual conferences, at York. There, in his opening speech, Michael Manser attacked the *AJ* for that leader and its long-standing 'deprecating view of the profession and the Institute'. Those who knew me stepped away and moved over to the other side of corridors. Quite unnerving. Peter Davey, the *AR* Editor, asked me if I knew Michael. I didn't, so he introduced me. It was a frosty meeting. Michael said we should lunch together. The following evening the roof of York Minster went up in flames. Later, in London, Michael and I lunched together and established friendly relations. He was a generous man and, in my view, together with Eric Lyons, one of the two best RIBA Presidents of my time.

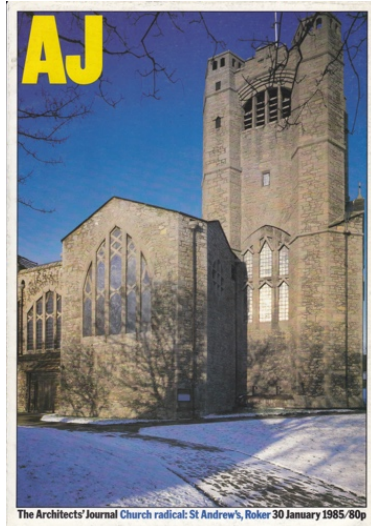
### ***Masters of Building and Magazine of the Year***

That summer, Birgit and I had our first holiday without the children. Driving up to Northumberland, we stopped at York and visited the Minster where, yet again, I was bowled over by (the unscaffolded part of) the interior. Later, we went to Roker to see Edward Schroder Prior's late Arts and Crafts church of St Andrew – an amazing combination of (then) new building technology with traditional forms and materials. York and Roker set me thinking. I had noticed that the *AR* appeared to have dropped its 'history' coverage at a time when architects seemed to be becoming more interested in it – was this an opportunity for the *AJ*? It would certainly offset the technical bias of the journal and could make it look more attractive. As Colin Boyne used to say, 'Architecture is a visual art' – not that he ever seemed to encourage its display in the journal.

Returning to London, I asked Richard MacCormac if he would be interested in writing about the York. He was enthusiastic but we never concluded the conversation. I then encountered Dean Hawkes in Patrick's office and asked if he was familiar with Roker. Of course, he was – he had just taken a party of Cambridge Third Years to see it. And yes – he could write about it. So, shortly after, I asked Dan Cruickshank, the hugely experienced Features Editor and an architectural historian in his own right, if he would commission Dean. It seemed to me important that this was not a one-off so I suggested to a visibly astonished Dan that Roker



should be the first of a monthly series. It had emerged that there were other potential contributions from John Olley, Eric Parry and others who contributed to the Cambridge third year technology course which, based on case studies, always included a historic building. So began what came to be known as the Masters of Building series – later expanded to Objects of Our Time. It was a huge success with the readers, wonderfully edited by Dan and photographed by Martin Charles. But it had been a close shave – years later, Leslie told me that there were people at the AP who, when Roker was published, had wanted him to sack me. I wonder who.



*First Masters of Building cover*



*Magazine of the Year 1985 logo*



*An Objects of our Time cover*

The previous year, in one of my final flings as Technical Editor, I had coordinated my last Technical Special Issue – on Funding for Construction. The case study parts were illustrated by photographs but the rest, on systems and sources, was dry-as-dust material. Paul Harpin, Simon Esterson's successor as Art Editor, commissioned an illustrator, Ellis Nadler, to liven it up. Later, Paul suggested that we enter the article and illustrations for a publishing award. The *AJ* editors were traditionally rather snooty about awards and never entered, so Paul and I told no one and submitted. We took Ellis with us to the awards lunch, where he emerged as the winner of his section.

Now, the Editor of *Building* magazine, Neil Murphy, lived near me in Blackheath. Very much the professional, he looked down both on my obviously amateur status and on the *AJ*. At about this time, he offered me a lift home from an RIBA event. As we wended our way through south-east London's traffic, all he could talk about was *Building*'s many publishing awards. It was very motivating and, flush with our recent modest success, I decided to try again, on a larger scale.

The following year, with a number of beautiful Masters of Building issues, Paul and I submitted again. The competition was stiff – the full range of the best-produced magazines in the UK – including *Building*, whose table at the awards luncheon, was close to the *AJ*'s. Following a glowing but anonymous citation – the *AJ* was declared the 1985 Magazine of the Year. We won 18 further awards over the next four years. But awards are just awards – although good for promotion to subscribers and advertisers. What really matters is the quality of the magazine and the pleasure of putting it together.



## News

The *AJ*'s main rival was not *Building* but the other weekly, *Building Design*. *BD* was a 'freebie' – a very different creature from the subscription-based *AJ*. Tabloid format to the *AJ*'s A4, it used bold display type to splash news headings across its front and inner pages. Its columnist, Scorpio, was rather more hard-hitting and focused on people than the *AJ*'s Astragal although, in Louis Hellman, the *AJ* had a cartoonist without peer. *BD*'s buildings coverage was good enough and its occasional technical articles were concise and well-timed. It was widely read – especially for its news content. In a world where audited readership figures influenced advertisers, *BD* was a serious competitor for the *AJ*.

Until Simon Esterson's redesign, news, under the heading of Report, was rather lost in the journal. That now changed and our news coverage became ever more prominent. The pages were clearly sign-posted as News and the headings (now in bold type) became noticeably snappier – one of best becoming, through an unfortunate error, the subject of a libel writ. Both the number of pages and the size of the news team increased. Leading the latter was Martin Pawley. Shortly before, with characteristic aplomb, he had marked his resignation from the editorship of *BD* with a final leader entitled 'Farwell PKO 376W' – the numberplate of the company Cortina which, following his departure, he had to hand back.

Martin was a formidable character – the best summary of the man and his achievements is the obituary David Jenkins wrote for the *Guardian* in 2008. For me, initially as Deputy – in fact, Acting – Editor, having Martin as News Editor was, at times, like being near the top of a dormant volcano. Not that Martin was ever dormant. I don't think we ever actually fell out although I am certain he sometimes thought me far too cautious. Sometimes but not always. It was a tradition that the *AJ* Editor and News Editor always interviewed the new Secretary of State for the Environment. In my time, these were Tom King and Patrick Jenkin. The latter did not impress and Martin wrote such a scathing account of our lunchtime meeting (8.2.84 p.20) that the *AJ* was never again allowed to interview new secretaries of state. A few years later, as I was making a speech (standing in for the bride's father) at a wedding reception in Leighton House, I looked down from the dais to find Patrick Jenkin looking up at me with a puzzled expression.

Besides running a lively newsroom, Martin contributed to Astragal and authored some remarkable building revisits and features. My favourite among the latter was 'Escape to sea' his contribution to the 1984 Christmas Special Issue, beautifully edited by Dan Cruickshank, on the theme of Escape. Inspired by his own sailing adventures, it featured Victorian shipwrecks, high performance catamaran sailing and the problems of his own old cabin cruisers – all here in the pages of the formerly rather staid *AJ*. I was so elated that I found a rare book of Uffa Fox sailing vessel designs and gave it to a rather bemused Martin. He was a generous man, quick to offer praise and to withdraw it if he discovered that a story had a whiff of 'freebie' about it.

In time, a former *BD* News Editor, Ian Martin, also joined the news team and, later, succeeded Martin. Ian had a past as a musician and a future as a long-standing *AJ* columnist, *Guardian* writer and script writer for some very successful TV series and films. He was every bit as competitive as Martin Pawley but our relationship was less tense. He led a happy team and had a good eye for future talent. The other key member of the newsroom was the News Features Editor, Rob Cowan. Formerly Editor of *Roof: Shelter's Housing Magazine*, Rob was referred to by Ian as 'the *AJ*'s social conscience'. He could turn his hand to writing about anything and, after leaving the *AJ*, moved back to the planning field, researching, teaching, writing and directing.

## *Company take-overs*

In September 1983, returning to QAG after three days away in Lisbon attending the opening of Leslie Martin's Centre for Modern Art, I had found that my key wouldn't open the front door. Shortly after, Bob Monger, the 'post boy', arrived – we were always the first, in my case to get some work in before the phones came on. Bob's key didn't fit either and he surmised that, following a burglary, the locks had been changed over the weekend. When we finally got in, we heard that the locks had been changed following the departure from the AP Board of the last active member of the Hastings family.

Three years later, in the autumn of 1986, we learnt that the AP had been put up for sale. Patrick, by then Father of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Chapel sought me out. (I was not a NUJ member.) He suggested that we should withdraw our labour. I disagreed and, contacting a friendly City lawyer who specialised in such things, was told that as employees, there was nothing we could do to stop a takeover. Patrick and I agreed that we should carry on until the NUJ official came over to advise him. When he turned up, many days later, his advice echoed that of my contact. We carried on, unaware of how the sale was progressing.

A few months after that, in early February 1987, I noticed a large white Mercedes, BG 7777, parked outside the main door. I'd never seen it there before and, as I worked on my own (with Bob down in the post room), I had a very strong feeling that there was someone else in the building. When the phones came on, at about 9.15, Alan, the telephonist, rang through to ask me to be in a meeting room by 9.30. Entering the room, I found the editors of the AR and DJ (Designers Journal), Peter Davey and Lance Knobel, and our Marketing Manager, Rowan Crowley. We looked at each other, wondering what on earth was going on. At that moment, the saloon doors swung open and a very large man swept in followed by the much smaller Ron Norbury. Having finally managed to ease himself into one of the Robin Day plastic armchairs, the newcomer said, 'Gentlemen, I bought you at 4 a.m. this morning.' Our instant reaction was to reach for our biros and pads and slap them down on the table – which clearly unnerved our new proprietor.

Brian Gilbert (the BG of all the lucky sevens) was the head man of UTP. Officially known as United Trade Press but known to its competitors as Unlikely To Publish, UTP was in the 'trade magazine' business, run by advertising men. All very different from the more up-market *AJ* and *AR*. Later, we were to discover that our purchase had been financed by Cyril Stein of Ladbrookes. I forget what BG said, apart from the fact that he was now going out to the printers at Bedford and would return at 5 p.m. to meet all the AP staff. I can't remember that meeting either except that, at the end, he said he'd like to see me alone the following day. Which sounded interesting.

It was. BG opened by saying 'You're my flagship publication.' This was news – I'd always thought the *AR* was (I never told Peter Davey about this). He continued, 'I want the next issue to be different – redesigned.' This was becoming awkward. Explaining our complex production process and lead-in times, I pointed out that the bulk of the next issue (the Building, Technical and Practice sections) had already been laid out. But, seizing the opportunity, I promised that we would produce a significantly new publication in three weeks. This, I thought, was our chance to expand the *AJ* and do some things that we'd sometimes talked about but never had the resources for. He accepted my proposal.

## Expanding the AJ

Developing the new sections (Regional Reports, AJ Review, Private View, and AJ Appointments), enlarging some existing sections, reordering the sequences and adjusting the design was a rush job. Simon Esterson returned to help with the design tweaks and I assembled and glued together the final dummy myself. Despite some agonizing moments with the cover – the original transparency of John Outram’s new office building was not up to scratch – we made it on time. BG summoned me and announced that his ‘friends in the trade’ were much impressed. I replied that we weren’t entirely happy and invited him to sit in on our weekly editorial meeting the following day.

BG sat, somewhat uneasily, squeezed in at the back of the room. It was the custom at these meetings for everyone to participate – editors, secretaries and librarians, seated around a large round table. The secretaries and librarians were invariably very good critics. BG could understand neither why they were allowed to talk nor why, having heard everyone’s views on the redesigned issue, I declared that, rather than make any instant decisions, we’d go away and think about things. It was agreed that he would send a car for me at noon on Monday.

The white Mercedes was waiting with BG himself in it. He chatted about his power boat/cruiser as we travelled along the Embankment before turning north towards Bowling Green Lane and the converted warehouse where UTP was based. Instructing the driver to get some pastrami-on-rye sandwiches, he led me up to his office and, opening a filing cabinet drew out a bottle of champagne just as the pastrami-on-rye was slapped down on the coffee table. ‘What have you decided?’, he asked. Explaining where we wanted to make some further changes, I said that, if he’d cover us for the paper, origination and printing of the additional pages, I could find the money for a freelance news photographer and regional reports. Perhaps he had been expecting me to ask for more but it actually gave us exactly what we could manage and I could easily juggle my ‘contribution.’ It was perfect.



The rushed redesigned cover



The new Regional Report page ...



... and Review section

Working on the AJ continued to be hugely rewarding. Certainly for me and, I hope, for others, too. It was also quite exhausting and one of the great things was that we each recognised that, sometimes, we needed help. If a contributor failed to deliver or someone was having to deal with too much, then another editor would invariably bring forward one of their own projects and take over. There was also respect – or tolerance – for opposing views.

For me, being a part of producing 56 well-designed pages full of news, buildings, technical and practice information and reviews every week gave a great feeling of achievement when compared with the years of uncertainty on the British Library. Every Friday evening, at about 5.45 p.m., with the printer's van driver standing in the corner of the art room, the news editor, art editor, I and, sometimes, others would flip through the final page proofs, chuckling with enjoyment at the way the whole had come together.

The level of individual commitment to the *AJ* was extraordinary. The Great Storm of 1987 occurred on a Thursday night. Our press day was Friday. There were no trains working. For me, with trees across the road, there was only one way out of Blackheath Park. I made it down to Deptford where I had a puncture. The High Road was a bit like a war zone with garbage bins, street signs and sheets of corrugated steel flying around as I changed the wheel before making it to QAG. Gradually, on foot and by bike, all the others appeared including, after lunch, Barrie Evans – who had driven up from near Portsmouth, along a hazard-strewn A3. The printer's driver managed his usual three trips in the day, up and down the M1. And we put the issue to bed slightly earlier than usual.

### ***Leaving the AJ***

The *AJ* was all-engrossing but I didn't see a future for myself at the AP. Shortly after UTP took over, one of the directors, Colin Urquhart, asked me to become Editorial Director of the *AJ*, *AR* and *DJ*. But I enjoyed editing far too much and had seen what being Editorial Director had done to Colin Boyne – and instantly declined, telling no one of the offer (which was, in any case, a ridiculous proposal). Two attempts to return to practice came to nothing. An offer from the National Building Specification did not attract me. And a headhunter who asked me to consider the Editorship of the *Law Society Gazette* was met with mirth. And then, one Sunday evening, someone phoned to tell me that the first attempt to find a successor to Sandy Wilson as Professor and Head at Cambridge had failed and that he (the caller) and some others thought I was one of the two obvious contenders for the post. Astonished, I told him that I'd never get the votes and would he please forget it. A few months later, someone else repeated the approach. Eventually, I decided to apply. I was intrigued that anyone should regard me as a suitable candidate but didn't think I stood a chance. However, I drafted a seven-page summary of my thoughts on 'an approach for the early 90s' and reached the short list.

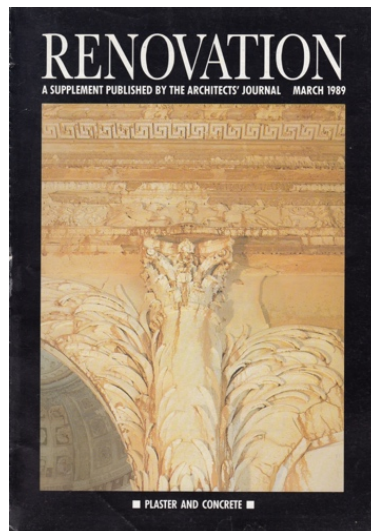
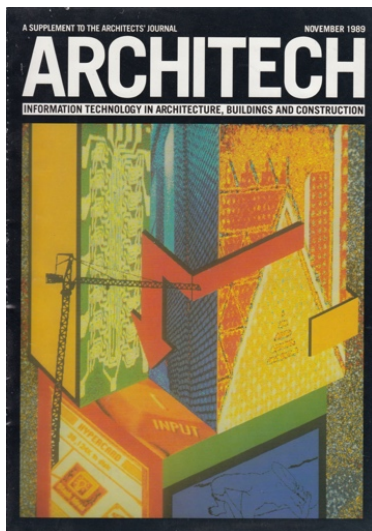
The interviews took place on a cold Saturday morning in late January. It had been a busy week at the *AJ* and, while Birgit drove us up the M11, I tried to get my thoughts together. I was first on at, I think, 9.30 am. The heating in the building was out of order. The first shock on entering the freezing Syndicate Room was its sheer size. The second shock was the seating at the large oval table in the centre – twelve (or was it thirteen?) seats on one side and one on the other. The chairman, opposite me, was not the current Vice-Chancellor but the previous one – the process of filling the prospective vacancy had taken so long. Senior figures of the architectural profession were well represented – there was a Royal Gold Medallist, an experienced head of school, a distinguished planner and a number of Cambridge professors from a range of disciplines, including Engineering and History of Art. 'Well, Mr Carolin' the chairman asked, 'what would you do if you were elected Professor of Architecture and Head of Department in this University?' Not quite what I had expected – but I started talking. After a while, the chairman said, 'I'm going to have to stop you there because Professor X has to catch a plane to Los Angeles at 8 this evening. [*General laughter.*] Now each of my colleagues will ask you a question.' And, starting at one end and finishing at the other, they did. And that was it. 'Thank you. We'll be in touch.' Outside,



in the town, over a much-needed coffee, I told Birgit that I didn't rate my chances (not that I ever had). On the drive home, the conversation switched to other matters. But, later that afternoon, I heard that – very much the complete outsider in a strong field – I had been elected, some 18 months before Sandy was to retire.

A year after the UTP take-over, the AP was, once again, on the market. BG's backer, Cyril Stein, wanted his money back – he was moving from 'communications' into 'hospitality' (the Hilton Hotel franchise). BG sold out to Robert Maxwell (and is, today, a highly respected figure in media management). I knew it was very bad news – years before, at the time of the Pergamon debacle, my father had told me Maxwell was not a man to be trusted. AP duly became part of MBC (Maxwell Business Communications) under Kevin Maxwell. I never met him, contriving, whenever I heard of an impending visit, to be out of the building. I was working my way out and had little to worry about apart from the interference of Maxwell's advertising men, which could be fended off using their own preferred weapon, waffle. The one person I had a lot of sympathy for was Leslie. As Managing Director, he had turned round the AP's fortunes but, in the process, had to endure a difficult time with his fellow Directors. After Ron Norbury's retirement things must have become very awkward for him.

Leslie, Colin Boyne and, I imagine, Ron all suffered when, following Maxwell's death, it was revealed that he had pillaged the pension funds. The AP scheme had been a very good one and, shortly before he retired, Leslie had to sign it over to the Maxwell organisation. Having persuaded the company to pay into my existing retirement income plan, I was the only current or former employee not covered by the AP scheme.

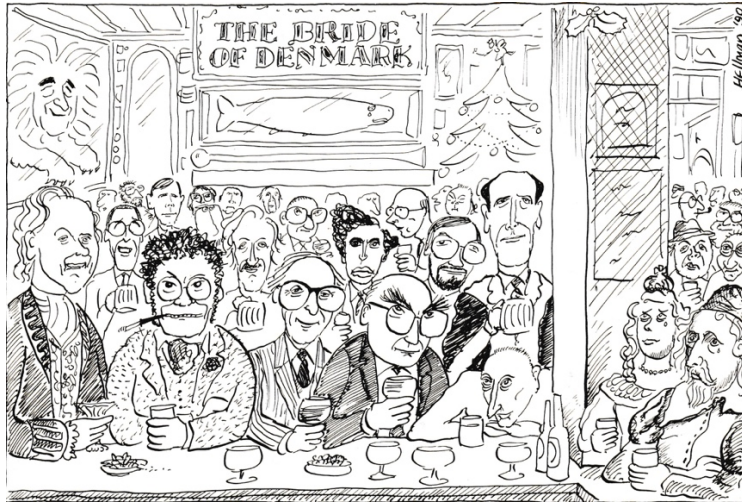


*The AJ published an annual index, and two supplements and reprinted many technical series as booklets*

## ***Looking back***

Much of this account of my time at the *AJ* has dealt with the management of the firm. I make no apology for that – going through the two take-overs was a remarkable experience and I was closer to Ron and Leslie than any of the other editors – indeed, I stayed in touch with both of them until they died. The *AJ* and the *AR* editors owed them a huge debt. I would have liked to write far more about the *AJs* of the period – but others can do that, the raw material is all there, in the old issues. Looking at them today brings back the excitement and enjoyment of working with wonderful colleagues and contributors. We innovated in all kinds of ways – producing new sections in the journal and new supplements (on computing and renovation) alongside it. We also reprinted many technical series as stand-alone booklets.

We even managed to get ourselves overseas, something normally reserved for *AR* editors. Patrick Hannay went to Hong Kong, Germany, Austria, and Italy; Peter Blundell-Jones and Martin Charles to Sweden; Rob Cowan to Philadelphia; and Ian Martin to the Soviet Union.



*AP Christmas card by Louis Hellman, 1990. Front two rows, l to r: Dan Cruickshank, Rob Cowan, Peter Davey, Patrick Hannay, Leslie Fairweather, Barrie Evans, Colin Boyne, Colin Davies, Ian Martin, PC in gown (I never drink beer!), Queen Anne and Astragal (both weeping). Others include Gavin Stamp, Martin Pawley, Colin Amery and John Betjeman. Top left is Robert Maxwell substituting for the Bride of Denmark's real lion – seen at right in a Martin Charles photograph for an earlier Architectural Press Christmas card.*

It had been an extraordinary eight years – acquiring a new skill and undertaking a range of related activities. Supported in the background by a superb Editorial Secretary, Deirdre O’Dowd, I had visited the printers (but not often enough), accompanied regional advertising reps to their ‘clients’, co-hosted the advertising managers’ lunches at QAG and joined their dinners at the annual Building Exhibition. Most testing of all, I had organised and hosted several AJ/Bovis annual architecture awards dinners at the Royal Academy. Leslie had initiated these events with Tim Battle of Towco. I had to make the single speech of the evening and, with a poor voice and no public speaking experience, got coaching from an out of work actor. Leslie’s last major guest had been Jimmy Saville (fresh from his Stoke Mandeville hospital-building triumph). The principal guests in my time were not so controversial.

In a letter, shortly after we left the AJ, Patrick Hannay told me that the fact that I was an ‘all-round architect’ and ‘filled a huge generation gap’ (between Colin and Leslie on one side and the AJ editors on the other) ‘made all the difference’. But from my own point of view, it was the sheer talent and commitment of my fellow AJ editors that enabled us to achieve what we did – producing, week after week, a journal that was truly architectural, lively, wide-ranging and accessible to non-architects. If I have regrets, they are for some of my poor editorials. They would have been better if I’d played more of the journalist and been more sociable and thus more sensitive to professional politics. But, somehow, I have never been able to get on with the RIBA. And then there was the matter of libels. At my leaving party, Leslie said no other *AJ* Editor had racked up so many libel settlements. It wasn’t what I wrote so much as the headlines and snippets of the irrepressible News team and Astragal. Sometimes, I caught them in time, sometimes, they just slipped through (but made for amusing dinner party stories which I cannot possibly repeat here). A year after I left, stepping off the escalator in Holborn underground station, I spotted Michael Rubinstein, the *AJ*’s wonderful libel lawyer, rushing towards me. ‘Peter’, he said. ‘So good to see you. Life hasn’t been nearly so exciting since you left.’

\* \* \*

## ***BBC Omnibus and the Prince of Wales***

One warm late July evening, during the break between the *AJ* and Cambridge, I found myself at home discussing the Prince of Wales' views on architecture with two BBC producers planning an Omnibus programme intended as a response by architects to the Prince of Wales' 'Vision of Britain'. The latter had been presented as a TV programme and was shortly to be the subject of an exhibition at the V&A. I managed to persuade the producers that it was not a good idea to mimic the Prince by placing me on a river boat and getting me to expound my views on the National Theatre (which the Prince had described as a nuclear power station). But I did agree to be interviewed. Time was short as Birgit and I were about to leave for the Netherlands. Two days later, I found myself in a very small south-facing, generously-glazed, unventilated office in the BBC TV centre. In the room, besides me, there were two producers, a cameraman, a lighting man or two with their equipment – and a fridge. The heat was horrific and the sweat poured off me. The following day I contacted the producer. He agreed to find a better recording space and to fly me back from Amsterdam for a day.

The programme, entitled 'Second Chance', was shown on BBC 1 in early September 89. Denys Lasdun and Sandy Wilson defended The Theatre and The Library, Richard Rogers featured prominently and so, too, did Frank Duffy and Michael Heseltine. Charles Jencks had an interesting line on the Prince's nostalgia for a time when buildings respected a Christian culture. The RIBA President was unconvincing and my own contribution, despite being given the last word, was unimpressive. The critics were underwhelmed. In the *Guardian*, I was described as 'the only architect to get further than bent-kneed respect' to our tormentor – showing 'genuine, polite outrage' at the Prince's intervention in the National Gallery controversy. *The Independent* headline picked up my reference to developers consulting the Prince of Wales during the planning process.

A few months later David Lea phoned me. He had just finished designing the next stage of his buildings at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester. The first stage had been published in the *AJ* and, following that, was praised by the Prince of Wales in his 'Vision of Britain'. On showing his proposal to the chairman of the RAC governors, the developer Tony Clegg of the Mountleigh group, David had been instructed to add crenelations to the walls 'because the Prince will expect these'. David explained why he could not do this. To no avail. Not long after, his drawings were returned – with crenelations added. The scheme had been approved by the Prince and David was told to get on with it. What, he now asked me, could he do? I suggested that we contact Colin Amery, then involved with the Prince's architectural endeavours. If Colin was shocked, he didn't show it but suggested that David return the drawings to Highgrove House – which he did and, in due course, received an apology. Sadly, overtaken by events at the College, the project was never built. Clegg's deference to the Prince was a perfect example of what had been predicted in the *AJ*'s controversial post-Hampton Court leader.

---



## 14. Cambridge yet again

Writing this section is going to be difficult. I'm still a member of the two institutions involved and many of those who I worked with are still around. I am constrained.

It was now 1989. I'd graduated from Cambridge in 1960 and had completely forgotten what a strange set-up a collegiate university is – and yet here was I heading a Department in one. How on earth did everything fit together? I'd never been an academic elsewhere, so I had nothing to compare it to. As for Architecture schools – I had never even taught in one and I had yet to be an external examiner. Nor had I a doctorate – in my day as an Architecture postgraduate, that was extremely rare. But at least I knew what it was like to start from scratch at the top – there was nothing to do but to learn on the job.

As far as the Department was concerned, Sandy Wilson gave me two pieces of advice – don't wear a grey suit and don't ask the University for more money. I ignored both although I hardly ever wore a suit. The Secretary-General of the Faculties (the principal academic adviser to the University Council), perhaps imagining that I might wish to behave like a new broom, said 'You'll just have to take your Department along with you.' I can't remember what the Faculty Board chairman, a historian, said but we always had a sandwich together before Board meetings and that was a wonderful way of discovering how things were done.

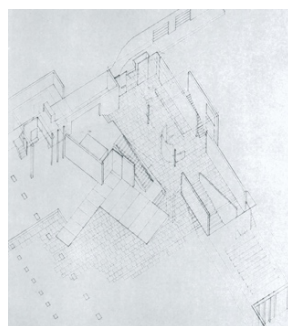
And then there was the other institution, the College. I'd been elected to a Fellowship at my old College, Corpus Christi. I would usually go into Corpus for lunch and, in the evening to Hall. It all felt very strange. Two Fellows noticed my puzzlement and, independently, assured me that I would find the College a curious place and that, if ever there was anything that I didn't understand, I should not hesitate to ask them. Both were women and both were American – Diane Dawson, an economist and the College's first female Fellow, and Charlotte Erickson, Professor of American History. Perhaps the biggest changes since my time were that the entire undergraduate body no longer dined in Hall each evening and that half the student body was female (as it was, too, at Scroope Terrace).

### *A difficult environment*

There's a box file which contains a collection of papers, letters, postcards, photographs and so on from my years at Scroope Terrace (the Department of Architecture's premises). They relate to students, academic colleagues, assistant staff and visitors. They remind me what an interesting, busy and rewarding period it turned out to be. But it was very difficult to start with and I wondered if I'd made the worst mistake of my life. It wasn't just that I was, on the face of things, ill-fitted to the job. It was more than that – it was the academic context with its emphasis on the individual rather than the group. It was a world away from the *AJ* with its need to sink any differences, collaborate and produce the journal every week, on time.



*Part of Scroope Terrace frontage*



*Images of undergraduate work from my box file*



The biggest challenge the Department faced was that, among the academic staff, the individuals had coalesced into two groups: the rationalists, mainly based at the Martin Centre, and the phenomenologists, at Scroope Terrace. Following my election, the latter had offered their resignations to the acting Head of Department. He persuaded them to withdraw. But it was quite clear that I was unwelcome. One member of the group told me that ‘the *AJ Metric Handbook* will be no use to you here’ – a bizarre statement and a complete misreading of my position. Anyway, I’d never had anything to do with the *Handbook*, it was an AP publication. Following my arrival, the hostility and, in one significant case, lack of cooperation, continued.

Having created the conditions for a ‘debate’, Sandy had been unable to organise any kind of reconciliation between the two factions. There had been an extended correspondence between him, Peter Carl (the most approachable phenomenologist) and Nick Ray (one of the three surviving practitioner lecturers and a member of neither group) but it had resolved nothing. It was not a format I felt able to adopt. In any case, I thought matters had gone too far and become too personal for any kind of debate. We had to find some other way of creating a climate in which we could work together harmoniously.

I started (together with Birgit) by inviting all the members of the academic staff and their spouses or partners to dinner in Corpus one Saturday evening towards the end of my first Christmas vacation. I was intrigued to see who would come. One of the phenomenologists declared that he would decline but then accepted after his wife announced that she would come on her own and, in the end, everybody accepted. Concerned that the two groups would not mix, I determined on a seating plan, the devising of which introduced Birgit to the faction memberships. After drinks in the Old Combination Room we moved to the coffin-shaped New Combination Room where the beautifully polished combination table had been covered by what looked like well-worn sheets on which the candlesticks and place-settings had been laid. I sat at one end, Birgit at the other. At one point, all the staff moved on two places. Alas, the carefully devised seating plan overlooked the fact that this placed one poor spouse between the most vocal of the two factions, Marcial Echenique and Dalibor Vesely, who engaged in vigorous exchanges over her head. Despite this, the evening was a success.

The next step at attempted reconciliation occurred when, two months later, Peter kindly invited me to dinner in his flat where he and Dalibor had asked a student (Mark Hewitt, who I had enjoyed meeting two years previously after he had won an AJ student competition I had devised) to present his recent Diploma studio project for offices and a large underground grotto in Spitalfields. Having spent ten years of my life working on what was effectively an office building with a very large underground space, I remarked that the project totally ignored certain key constraints. This implied criticism of the metaphorical nature of the project was bad enough but I made things worse by observing that the ground level frontages presented the usual problems with such buildings, as in Arup’s Broadgate development. These comments were not intended as insults but were taken as such. The evening was not a success.

Over the years, I suppressed my reservations and, as far as I could, supported the ambitions and programmes of the phenomenologists’ studios. In the case of Eric Parry’s, this involved securing substantial University funding for the use of the Engineering workshops – resulting in some wonderful work (described in *On certain possibilities for the irrational embellishment of a town: ten urban artefacts* by Peter Carl and Eric Parry, published by Black Dog Publishing). There were many difficult moments but the personal hostility gradually dissipated and the Department seemed to become a happier place. Looking back,

given the context and my own abilities, I don't think there was any other course of action open to me. In any case, I sensed that the issue of research publication (of which more anon) would, sooner or later, bring matters to a head.

### *Expanding horizons*

It was puzzling to be told by students, curious to know what I thought, that some of the phenomenologists felt that Architecture students should be members of a single college. True or not, this was a sharp reminder of the tendency of Architecture schools to go it alone, considering themselves unique within their host institution, a condition that, in the UK, at that time, applied only to London's AA School. In any case, Cambridge's great advantage is the opportunity to live and engage with students and Fellows in other disciplines. Most of my Department colleagues played a full part in College life – indeed, at one stage, Nicholas Bullock was Vice-Provost at King's and Paul Richens Vice-Master at Churchill.

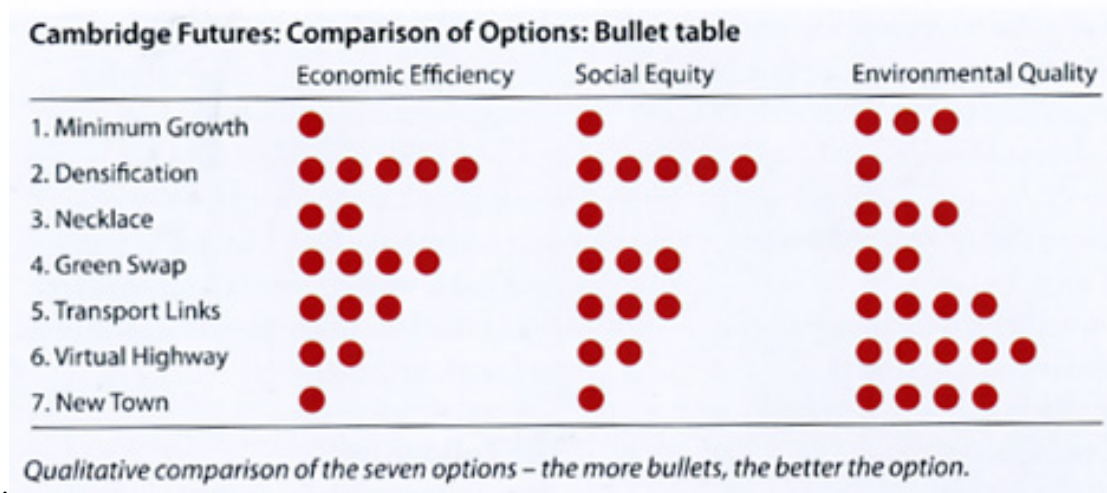
Over the years, we took every opportunity to make a contribution beyond the Department. The first was when, with the Department of Engineering in tow, we bid for and won a large grant from the Arup Foundation to develop a post-qualification part-time Master's course for young architects and engineers. The key figure on the Arup side was Jack Zunz, who I had met when he led the structural engineering team on the British Library (as he had on the Sydney Opera House). Unbeknown to me, the University had no rubric for a part-time Master's degree but, pressured by the Government, it was ready to create one – indeed, our bid was delivered to Arups by the Secretary General of the Faculties himself. The framework we devised was adopted by later part-time Master's courses throughout the University. Robin Spence and Giles Oliver played major roles in developing and 'delivering' this Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment (IDBE) course – the early years of which were extraordinarily exciting. A similar course was subsequently established by the University of Oxford and the Prince's Foundation.

Another contribution to the University was our take-over of the University audio-visual unit. This was a facility which we had made much use of but had become threatened with closure. With the support of other Faculties and Departments, François Penz secured its equipment, employed new staff, found premises close to Scroope Terrace and relaunched it as the Cambridge University Moving Image Studio (CUMIS). The Department used it intensively but so, too, did others. By the end of its first year, it had interacted with almost as many institutions – forty-eight, including the Vice-Chancellor's office – as the University Counselling Service. Through it, the Department attracted some very highly qualified PhD candidates, both home and overseas. Sadly, it did not survive the upheavals of the mid-noughties.

The Department's most significant contribution to the University and the city region was Cambridge Futures. The mid-nineties was a period of intense frustration for both the University (wishing to expand in West Cambridge) and hi-tech industries (attempting to locate in the city region). Existing planning policy favoured constraint. With preparation of the forthcoming County Structure Plan imminent, debates had become fraught and elected representatives were cowed by headlines declaring 'Cambridge is full'. Around this time, our IDBE course was working with senior officers of both the County and the City, using some of their problem sites as topics for design projects – a process which was regarded by the over-stretched officers as very helpful. It occurred to me that we might expand this collaboration to work a much larger scale. I'd been impressed by Donald Schon's observation that one of the things that universities can do is to help solve society's 'planning messes' and to do so on the 'neutral ground' of a university. Together with Louis McCagg,

an American alumnus who had returned to Cambridge as a Development Office volunteer, and with John Durrant, the then (Labour) mayor of the City, I formed a town/gown group with members of the local government, business and academic communities to explore how the planning paralysis might be broken. The Vice-Chancellor, Alec Broers, was very supportive. Marcial Echenique, the University's Professor of Land Use and Transport (and a member of the Department of Architecture) joined us and played the key role, developing a research project to evaluate seven different forms of development for the city region.

Chairing Cambridge Futures and its 50-strong steering group was one of the most exciting things I've done. It ran for just over two years, and we raised all the funding locally. The final presentation was in the Senate House – where academics were joined by local politicians and officers and businesspersons – and from there the exhibition went on to the Grafton Shopping Centre. Cambridge Futures released the planning logjam. It was fundamental to the 2003 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan and to the expansion that followed. It also received an RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) award for innovation.



*Combining land use and transport models, Cambridge Futures evaluated seven options for the city region*

Beyond the University, the Department provided CPD for the RIBA Eastern Region (geographically, the largest in the country) with an average of 800 attendees a year. This was a thriving, profitable venture which made a valuable contribution to the University's annual return to HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) on CPD numbers. On the national scene, in 2000, the Department became the first (and, so far, only) Architecture school to mount and co-host an annual RIBA conference – in Manchester. The topic, 'Cities for the New Millennium', drew heavily on Cambridge Futures.

### **Teaching**

In my time as a student, when studio teaching was organised by years, we had to submit completed, fully labelled projects together with at least one set of 'working drawings' a year. Not that anyone except, perhaps, the examiners, did more than glance at the latter. By 1989, all this had changed – projects were more exploratory and far less resolved (but, some might argue, less superficial). In addition, the year system was breaking down – the fourth and fifth years were combined into four studios. In principle, the ability to offer a choice of teaching approaches is fine but, as implemented at Scroope Terrace, the selection process, dominated by the phenomenologists, was not, in my view, satisfactory, creating an unacceptable amount

of angst. About two years after I arrived, there was a move to expand the studio system into the second and third years. Such a move had been resisted by Sandy but, this time, the momentum among most of the permanent and visiting studio teachers was unstoppable. I made the change but insisted that it was operated through a totally transparent ballot system.

As a studio teacher, I certainly benefitted from the new system. Di Haigh (a wonderful teaching partner who really led the studio) and I had three most enjoyable years. We had some very talented students working on rather ‘un-Cambridge’ projects (i.e. not always set in London) including some in Leicester and others based in the city’s other university – Anglia Ruskin University in East Road. One certainly got to know the members of a small studio better than those in a year. Cambridge has since reverted to teaching by years – but with three studios in each year.

Lecturing was something quite new to me. To the surprise of the people who ran it, I signed up for a course for recently appointed Lecturers. Not that it helped much. Following the resignations of a number of architect Lecturers who withdrew to concentrate on their practices, there was a shortage of people to lecture on construction and professional practice. So, based on my technical editing experience, I helped fill those gaps in the requirements of the accrediting bodies for the profession. In my last few years, at the suggestion of Giles Oliver and Andrew Saint, I also delivered the First Year first term Theory lectures, based on the work of Gunnar Asplund.



*Buildings by Asplund. Photographs by Martin Charles*

Together with other architects worldwide, I’d rediscovered Asplund in 1985, the centenary of his birth. The following year, Birgit and I went to Sweden, visited many of his buildings and viewed some of his drawings in the Stockholm archive. On our return, I set about getting the Asplund travelling exhibition to London (at the AA in 1988) and suggested to Dan Cruickshank that we do a Masters of Building series on him. Peter Blundell-Jones was the principal author (and later produced a very fine monograph on the architect) and Martin Charles was the photographer. The weather that summer was dreadful, and I would look at the Scandinavian forecast each day wondering if we were going to have to pay Martin more ‘standing time’. He was a superb photographer but, sadly, he didn’t like Asplund’s buildings. However, his slides ‘made’ my lectures.

There was one lecture I used to give, ‘Cor Ten Catastrophe’, about the Babraham Biochemistry labs, which always seemed to hold students on the edge of their seats. It was the story of how the Cor Ten cladding of my first significant building, featured in the *AR*, slowly disintegrated. In its early life, I visited and photographed the building on a regular basis – so the evidence of the growing problems with bird lime, condensate, over-elaborate



profiling, oil spillage, and concrete staining were all recorded. Finally, there was a slide of the disintegrating material in a skip. People don't expect lecturers to talk about personal disasters – but they do listen.

### ***Research and arq***

The Department was very highly regarded for its teaching, being rated Excellent in the 1992 HEFCE Teaching Quality Assessment. It was also, throughout the 90s, invariably declared to be the leading university Architecture department in those rather suspect Good University Guides published annually in some papers. However, right from the outset, it was clear, to me at least, that research publication was the Department's Achilles heel. It didn't help that what was widely recognised as the Department's research entity, the Martin Centre, was housed some distance away from Scroope Terrace and that those who worked there, the afore-mentioned rationalists, were involved exclusively in science-based topics such as environmental design, earthquake mitigation, land use and transport planning, acoustics and computing. The historians and theoreticians, including the phenomenologists, restricted themselves to Scroope Terrace and the studios – as did most of the third group, the ever-diminishing number of lecturers who were also practising architects. For the rationalists, producing and publishing papers was a way of life but, despite much effort, the significance of the RAEs (Research Assessment Exercises) was not universally accepted – indeed, one notable research project, Dalibor's book, which continued throughout and beyond my time, was finally published after his retirement and never submitted to an RAE. Following the debacle of the 2000 RAE, the Department was consolidated on a single site, at Scroope Terrace, where all research is now combined under the Martin Centre umbrella.

As an aside, I should make clear that I deeply regret it no longer seems possible for a practising architect to be a University Lecturer. However, whatever one may think of the effects on Architecture teaching of the RAE and its successor, one has to recognise their importance for the University's funding.

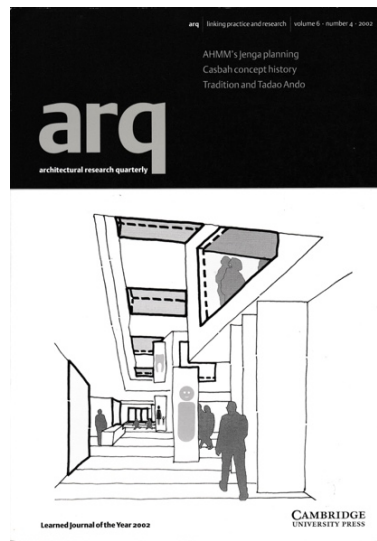
In my own case, I arrived without a research portfolio. But it seemed to me that what I *could* do was to put my editorial experience to use because, following the post-Maxwell decline of the *AJ*, there was no UK outlet for architectural research. I approached CUP (Cambridge University Press), one of the largest publishers of learned journals, to see if they were interested in publishing an Architecture research journal. They weren't. And then the Editor of the *AR*, Peter Davey, approached me on behalf of EMAP (the new owners of the *AJ* and *AR*) to ask if I agreed with others in the academic community that there was a need for such a journal. Of course, I did – and was asked to develop one. The full story was recounted in 'In unchartered waters', *arq* vol. 21, no. 4, 2017 pp. 315-320. *arq* (*Architectural Research Quarterly*) set out to define the scope of architectural research, always opening each issue with a work of architecture and following it up with a wide range of papers on architecture-related topics. A4 in size, heavily illustrated and including letters, opinion pieces and reviews, it was a reaction to the dry-as-dust, under-sized and poorly produced overseas architectural research publications. In 2002, in vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 203-207, it featured an exposé of the 2000 RAE in which the ratings of both UCL's Bartlett and Cambridge dropped from 5 to 4. There were no architects on the national assessment panel. UCL and the Bartlett were so outraged at the assessment that legal action was considered.

For the first two years I was *arq*'s sole editor, seeking, encouraging and receiving papers, getting them refereed, editing them for publication, collaborating with the Art Editor on layout and with the publisher on marketing – a formidable task. Initially, there had been a good take-up of subscribers but, after twelve months, numbers steadily declined. It was

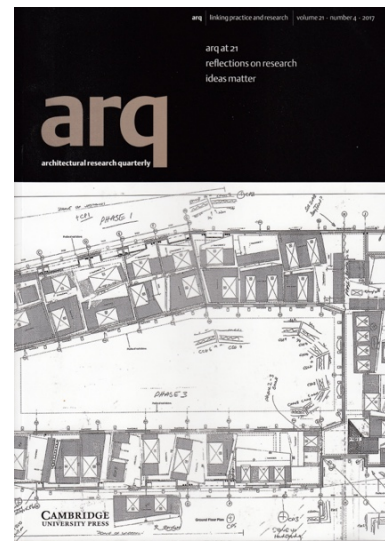
belatedly discovered that EMAP's subscription renewal software covered weeklies and monthlies – but not quarterlies. Shortly after this discovery, there was a change of Managing Director and the newcomer pulled the plug on *arq*. I returned to CUP and was able to make a publishing proposal complete with samples. This time, they were interested and, having consulted referees, they agreed to take over subject to a redesign (which I was happy to see) and the introduction of an American Joint Editor. Thomas Saunders, Dean of Architecture at Minnesota University and former Editor of *PA (Progressive Architecture)*, was the obvious choice. Tom was good to work with, but it was an inescapable fact that the majority of the material was being attracted by Cambridge and that all of it was being processed here. After three years, the American link was terminated, and Charles Rattray from Aberdeen joined as Associate Editor to cover book reviews and an endpiece – a very happy arrangement.



*arq* covers: First, 1995



*Learned journal of the year, 2002*



*Twenty-first anniversary, 2017*

Starting *arq* from scratch and producing four 100-page issues each year was immensely time-consuming. I could never have done it if, in the years between my departure from the *AJ* and the year we started *arq*, computers and emails hadn't become commonplace in publishing. Nor could I have done it if I had just put out a call for papers and sat back. EMAP were commercial publishers, quite unused to scholarly journals, and the only way to get going quickly was to be, like an *AJ* editor, highly proactive. But, on top of everything else I was doing, producing *arq* was enjoyable. The quarterly served the international architectural research community generally and only a tiny proportion of the papers it published were from Cambridge. In 2002, CUP, for the first time, was awarded the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers Charlesworth Award for Learned Journals, a kind of Learned Journal of the Year, for *arq*.

### ***Fund raising and the Castello del Trebbio***

At the time that I was elected, there was a general assumption that the Department would have to start fundraising externally for Visiting Professorships and so on. But before approaching potential benefactors we had two successes. The first was securing the Arup Foundation's support for the IDBE course, the second was securing a substantial increase in our teaching funding from the University. The Arup funding did not actually serve to improve the Department's financial position – it was ring-fenced for the course. But the University funding which, despite Sandy's advice, I had sought, plugged a significant gap in our studio teaching provision which had been obscured by rather dubious methods.

A major problem was that, apart from our University funds, all of which were earmarked for Departmental use, we had no ‘free’ funds to use as we wished. We didn’t even have the money to pay the entry fees for student entries into the annual Royal Academy Summer Exhibition student prizes for Architecture. Fortunately, shortly after I returned, I was asked to advise the first of several colleges seeking to select architects for new buildings – and offered a fee for this. I asked for the fee, the first of many, to go to the Department. Cambridge students did very well at the RA, winning prizes every year and enjoying the experience of Varnishing Day in one of the great top-lit galleries with walls lined with pictures and tables piled with food.

Approaches to potential benefactors were gently but politely rebuffed. Architects were disregarded as a likely source of significant gifts, and developers and large contractors were much more interested in supporting ‘new’ universities or engineering departments. It took some time to get the University Development Office to show some interest in the Department and both its efforts failed. The first was when they ‘identified’ the recently retired relatively young director of a famous practice that had been taken over as a good ‘prospect’. They hired the gold (bronze actually) Jaguar used on such occasions, collected him from his home and showed him round the University. I strongly suspect that he was picking up leads for possible commissions. Predictably, nothing came of it. The second was when, at our suggestion, they invited the extremely distinguished Phyllis Lambert to spend a day in Cambridge. Once again, the Jag was put into service, whisking her to Scroope Terrace, where a display of books had been organised, to the University Library, where she looked at some Cockerell drawings, then to lunch with the Vice-Chancellor and some others of us and, finally, in the late afternoon, to Trinity where we had assembled a sparkling audience including Richard MacCormac, the architect of the Winstanley Lecture Room, in which we were gathered to hear her lecture. Unfortunately, no one, not even Richard, knew how the extremely sophisticated projection system worked. We waited and waited while some brave souls struggled with the electrics. Meanwhile, Ms Lambert was heard muttering ‘Heads would roll if this happened in Montreal’. Finally, something worked and she went up to the lectern. It was, as expected, a good lecture – but I couldn’t wait for the evening to end.



*Castello del Trebbio and the very long pergola*

The most intense of my abortive fund-raising years was in 1995. First, a letter arrived from Rome, offering a former Medici hunting lodge near Florence, the Castello del Trebbio, to the Department as a base for a postgraduate course in building conservation. The offer came from an alumnus of the University. I asked the University Registry how we should respond. He said go and see it and report back. Birgit and I flew out to Florence where we were met by a black-suited driver wearing dark-glasses who led us to his black-windowed black Mercedes and whisked us up the autostrada. Eventually, we turned up a long and very bumpy poplar-lined drive leading to the Castello. By now it was raining buckets. A very tall Eritrean carrying a vast umbrella escorted us through the deluge, into the Castello and up to a

bedroom which occupied an entire floor in the tower. That evening we dined with our host who, trying to light the fire, released a wasp nest. Waking early the following morning, I opened the shutters to find myself overlooking a mist above which only the top of a cedar and the dome of a distant church could be seen. After breakfast, we were walked round the estate to see: a farmhouse where Amerigo Vespucci had stayed before departing to discover the Americas; a hillock where our host suggested the helicopter ferrying Cambridge lecturers and students from Florence airport could land; what must be the longest vine-covered pergola in the world; and the belvedere from which, in 1944, General Sir Harold Alexander and the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan had watched the battle for a pass in the Gothic Line (and where a distinguished Cambridge Architecture librarian had completed his PhD dissertation). After a weekend in Florence, we returned to Cambridge and I drafted what is probably the only fully illustrated report of its kind that has ever been submitted to the University. Sadly, it all came to nothing: the University was unable to secure the assurances that it needed. In any case, it is well known that such centres in Italy have proved extremely costly ventures for several American universities – and the Trebbio offer did not come with any endowment.

Our second, and more genuine, fund-raising attempt in 1995 was a visit to Hong Kong. Jessica Rawson, the distinguished Chinese art specialist at that time Warden of Merton, had told me that, if I wanted to raise money, HK was the place to go. She provided me with one key introduction and the University Development Office supplied another. Jessica's contact, a very successful architect, gave us a delicious lunch but made it clear that things had changed, all benefactions were now heading into China. The University's contact invited us to an 8 am breakfast at the Mandarin and delivered the same message. Sipping his tea and eating nothing, he also revealed that this was his third breakfast of the day. So that was that. But I managed to visit most of our Hong Kong and British students and graduates in their offices. The others congregated in our flashy hotel foyer. They were universally welcoming and hospitable. We went to Guangzhou for a day, a New Territory village another day and many spots familiar to Birgit from when she lived there in the late 1940s and the 50s.

### ***Royal Gold Medals***

Over the decade, I sat on three RIBA Royal Gold Medal juries. On the first, in 1990, the leading contender was Aldo van Eyck. It is public knowledge that the jury inspected some of his buildings in the Netherlands, the only time, I believe, that such visits have been made. The award ceremony, recorded on video, was not without its hitches. The President's speech was, I strongly suspect, written by a journalist friend. I had been asked to draft the citation and deliver an encomium, which I did, but without knowing that van Eyck's son-in-law, Julian Wickham, had also been asked to speak. Julian followed me but he, in his turn, had been unaware of my involvement and after a stumbling start, gave up because I'd said so much of what he wanted to. I felt very, very sorry for him and upset at the RIBA's incompetence.

My second jury was in 1999. The suggestion that Barcelona should be considered was initially rejected as impossible because the award has to be to an individual. In the end, it was presented to five individuals involved in the city's regeneration but is recorded as being awarded to the City of Barcelona. The same kind of issue had arisen in 1971 when the Architectural Press was nominated but the award went to H de C Hastings and is recorded as such. The last time I sat, in 1998, I had hoped that Rafael Moneo might be selected but there was strong support for my fellow Brazilian, Oscar Niemeyer. I thought him way past his best and unlikely to appreciate the honour. Moneo was to receive the award four years later.



## ***Leslie Martin***

Leslie, who had been a somewhat distant presence within the Department during my undergraduate years, was still living nearby, in The Barns at Shelford. We had renewed our acquaintance during my time at the *AJ* when he arranged for Trevor Dannatt, Lionel March and me to fly out to Lisbon for the opening of the Gulbenkian Foundation's Centre for Modern Art. His oeuvre complète, *Buildings and Ideas*, had been published in 1983 (and featured at length in the *AJ*). Seven years later, he and his wife, Sadie, were working on a book of 'papers and selected articles' by, but mainly about, him. Trevor, Leslie's trusted sounding board, and I would be invited out to The Barns to discuss progress. Sadie, a talented architect and designer in her own right, was doing the layout. As an undergraduate, I had instinctively warmed to her and to Muriel Wilson, Sandy's first wife – both hospitable, interested and interesting.

Sadly, Sadie fell ill and the project stalled. After she died, Leslie revived it. On completion, Trevor and I were summoned, carefully positioned facing each other across the kitchen table while Leslie, with his customary check list to hand, showed us his paste-up. As he opened the first page, we saw the words, 'Edited by Peter Carolin and Trevor Dannatt' on the title page. Taken aback, we glanced at each other – and said nothing. The book is definitely Leslie's but we do admit to the Foreword which I drafted, giving Sadie due credit in the final paragraph.

Although they kept their distance, Leslie and Sadie had a great affection for the Department and briefly endowed a prize for the top Diploma student, whom I would take out to The Barns with his or her portfolio. It was clear that Leslie really did not know what to make of the Cambridge Diploma Studio 1 drawings – the times had changed so much – but he would make some encouraging comments and then offer a tour of his picture collection. The latter would be done with such enthusiasm that one could be forgiven for thinking it was the very first time he had shown it to anyone. He was a wise man. He thought it better not to become involved or comment on the work or ideas of his successors, writing:

*'... the situation is always changing and ... the assumptions of one generation will be challenged, elaborated, or developed by the next.*

*'This is the process that gives us the capacity to meet new problems. Each generation develops its own code of understanding. Each generation rewrites history ...'*

## ***Professor and/or Head***

Birgit and I (and our children) had been very happy in London. We'd never regretted leaving Cambridge in 1970. London offered us variety and opportunity and we loved where we lived. In particular, she had close friends and a job which she liked. During my 1988 interview, I was asked whether, if elected, I would move to Cambridge. Not thinking that I would be elected, this was not something that Birgit and I had discussed properly. But it seemed to me unthinkable that the Professor and Head of Department should not live in Cambridge, so I said that we would move. Timing that move was awkward and, with a daughter in her final 'A' level year, we decided that, for the first year, I should be a weekly commuter, renting a College flat. Finding a house was difficult but, eventually, entirely by luck, we found a large semi-detached Edwardian house (34 Selwyn Gardens) to which we moved in August 1990. It was to serve us well, accommodating, thanks to Birgit (who also had a very busy life), many overnight guests, parties and student lunches and dinners.

Sandy, despite owning 2A Grantchester Road, had never lived in Cambridge during his tenure. And, in a number of different ways, it gradually became clear that what the 'University' had wanted was someone on the spot to 'manage' the Department. Traditionally, in Architecture, that person was the Professor who was also Head of Department. The former post had tenure, the latter was subject to a Faculty Board vote every three years or so. Some of the academic staff who had registered very strong objections to my election as Professor opposed my re-election when my first Head of Department renewal was due. They had a point. I never, as the fiercest of my critics observed, 'professed' and removing me as Head would have given me no option but to resign. But my renewal was approved so I carried on, trying to ensure that the studios had the autonomy and resources that they needed and that the University had no cause to regard the Department as a liability.

Originally, I had hoped that it might be possible to make a partial return to practice but it rapidly became clear that combining practice with the headship and editing *arq* was not something that I could manage. But it was, in my view, unfortunate that the Department did not have a practising architect as professor. I hoped that my successor would be a practitioner although I wondered how, with the ever-increasing volume of administration, s/he would manage as Head of Department, let alone do so for as long as I had. Today, the two roles are separated and the headship is rotated at three year intervals. Looking back, I appear to have played a transitional role between the old and the new system of Department headship.

### ***The Chancellor's visit***

A few weeks into the 1996 Easter Term, I was told that it was high time that the Chancellor (the Duke of Edinburgh) visited the Department. He would be in Cambridge towards the end of term, at a time when the students' work would be on display for the examiners and the Annual Exhibition – on the face of it, a good time for a visit.

It was a fraught occasion. From the moment that he started to ascend the History of Art steps to the moment that he departed by the Architecture entrance, the Chancellor had nothing but criticism for what he saw although, looking at the photographs, you'd never realise that – he is smiling throughout. It's a story that I have recounted on many occasions but do not intend to repeat in full here. I felt particularly upset for the few, mainly postgraduate, students who I had asked to explain their work. It was a relief when, after I had thanked the Chancellor for his visit, the Vice-Chancellor, David Williams, who had observed everything from a discreet distance, came up to me and said 'Peter, it's wonderful to see the glint in your student's eyes as they talk about their work.'

What went wrong? I had been warned that the visit was unlikely to be a success. The Chancellor was known to enjoy his many visits to the Department of Engineering but had displayed no interest in architecture or architects. Over the years since, thinking about it, trying to look at things from his viewpoint, I have come to appreciate his difficulty. There's something very predictable about engineering – artefacts, be they dozens of lawnmowers made by third year students or a test rig of some kind, are easily understood and compared. On the other hand, Architecture students present their work in many different ways, all highly individual. The Chancellor clearly found the fragmentary manner in which student work tends to be displayed in such exhibitions, difficult to engage with. He was not alone – most members of the public do. His response to the sole undergraduate present to describe the work of her studio, Debbie Scher, was to say 'You could explain away anything here.'



*The Visit: José's leaner and bench, Emma's station waiting room folding seat and Nick's drinking fountain*

The Chancellor was also baffled by the fact that the Department was displaying work that was not simply 'architectural'. To a Chinese post-graduate (now a professor at Sheffield) who was doing research into the acoustics of long enclosures, he said 'I thought this was a school of architecture.' He showed no interest in this work which had been initiated as a response to the difficulty of hearing announcements clearly during the King's Cross Underground station fire. With one exception, a 'leaner' and bench for Leicester Square, he was completely non-plussed by the extraordinary range of public realm artefacts which Eric Parry's studio had produced. Two, both beautifully conceived and exquisitely made in the Engineering Department's workshops, were the subject of particular scorn. One, a folding waiting room seat, was criticised on grounds of safety which the student had anticipated and for which she pointed to her solution – to which she got no response. The other, a working drinking fountain, the maker of which was, thankfully, absent, evoked the comment 'Looks like a dog has been here'. The only thing in the entire exhibition that really interested him was a working model of the proposed baggage handling system for Heathrow Terminal 4, a visual simulation of which was being developed in the Martin Centre.

The Chancellor was a man who liked to engage with ideas and projects. We didn't give him a chance. We should have omitted the undergraduate work, focussed on a small part of the postgraduate work, presented it in greater depth and given him time to explore it.

## ***Leaving***

The variety of those years was extraordinary. Besides the Department, there was the College and my membership of various University bodies such as the Sites and Town Planning Committee, the Board of Continuing Education and, most enjoyable of all, the Fitzwilliam Museum of which I was a Syndic for eleven years. I chaired the Museum's newly formed Education and Research Committee, bringing together representatives from a range of Faculties and Departments, exploring and enabling ways of using the collections for teaching. I was also chairman of Fitzwilliam Museum Enterprises, at that time, one of only two commercial companies in the University.

I should have continued until 2003, when I would be 67, but that would have meant the Department would have had the same head for 14 years. Too long for any institution – and Birgit was concerned that it would be too long for me. So, in 1998, I requested permission to retire in 2000. It was suggested that I should take advantage of the then current early

retirement scheme – but that would have prevented my vacancy being filled for some years, so I declined. Giving two years notice was intended to allow the University to start the search for a replacement in good time, as with my own election in 1987, and to allow a proper hand-over (especially important with an RAE imminent). Alas, the University had other things on its mind. As 2000 progressed and no successor had been appointed, the academic staff asked me to stay on for a year, till 2001, but I declined. As head, I'd never felt free enough to take a sabbatical and I needed a break now and was, in any case, still editing *arq*. Nick Bullock took over until the arrival, a year later, of a new Professor and Head.

Leaving the Department was more of a wrench than I thought it would be. It was a friendly place to which the Assistant Staff made a significant and largely unsung contribution. Marion Houston was the Department Secretary around whom everything revolved – calm, kind and capable. At the opening of the 2000 Annual Exhibition, the students gave me an oak box containing a CD of drawings and messages for the occasion. Printed out, they are now bound in a book. I was also given a copy of Peter Carl and Eric Parry's book, *On certain possibilities for the irrational embellishment of a town: ten urban artefacts*, complete with a generous dedicatory note.

The academic staff hosted a dinner in the Faculty Library at which they presented us with two Rietveld 'Z' chairs made out of elm by a former student turned cabinet maker, Nic Rhode. The extraordinary thing was that not only had Birgit and I sat on the original chairs while having tea with Mevrouw Schroder-Schrader in her Utrecht house in 1967 but that end of the Library used to be part of the First Year studio and the very space in which I had worked and met Sandy in 1957. Full circle. (Oddly enough, I'd also been given a chair, the first Shaker chair assembled in the UK, when I left the AJ.) There was a party and another gift from The Martin Centre and a final tea in the Gallery with the Assistant Staff, at which I was given a bottle of claret and a mysterious brown paper bag which turned out to contain many mini-Mars bars. Apparently, my hosts had long ago discovered that my 5 pm trips across the road to the post office were to counter my late afternoon sugar deficiency with a Mars bar. 'You thought we hadn't noticed!', they chorused.

Looking back, I realise that, had I known what those first few years were going to be like, I would not have applied for the post. Accepting it was a hard way to discover that there can be aspects of the world of Architecture education with which I am uncomfortable. But, in compensation, there was much that was really rewarding – getting to know students (undergraduates and postgraduates) and colleagues and helping to enable and observe the diversity of the studios; the humanitarian projects led by research student Tom Corsellis; the workshop productions in both Architecture and Engineering; the 'premieres' at the end of François Penz' Easter vacation video courses; Giles Oliver's Saturday morning IDBE crits; research projects of many kinds including Cambridge Futures and the work of the Cambridge-MIT Studio that followed it (both masterminded by Marcial Echenique); the suppers with post-graduates and their partners (which Birgit did so much to enable); and so much else .... together with the college dimension which enriched everything (and got me through my first year).

---



## 15. Retirement

I'd always been very dismissive of people who retired early – in their 50s. Now, in my 84th year, I'm horrified that I retired at 64. But, even without having another job, I have been busy. Initially, there was a lot of work helping charitable trusts, Cambridge colleges and CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) select architects for new projects. Indeed, I was CABE's first 'enabler', helping with the Lincoln Museum, the Birmingham Central Library and the Turner Gallery in Margate. The first got built, the second and third were, for different reasons, cancelled. I was one of just two members of a very large panel who voted against the later abandoned Snøhetta scheme for Margate (but then agreed to the Chairman's plea for a unanimous vote). I simply did not believe the conclusions of the expert cost, engineering and museum assessors. My reservations were to prove well founded – building an art gallery in the sea is not a sensible idea. As an enabler, I found that the most useful thing I could do was to 'walk' the lay members of a panel through the buildings on the drawings, which many cannot read.

In 2004, I was asked to advise the Trustees of the Commonwealth Institute in their efforts to dispose of their Grade II\* 1962 Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall-designed building in Holland Park. Every effort to make the building profitable had failed, it was decaying and leaking (despite being re-roofed) and it had proved impossible to sell because the planning and conservation authorities would not allow it to be modified or demolished. Researching its history and working with Arup's to establish the position on the structure and the storm water disposal, I became convinced that there was no way it could be adapted for contemporary museum use. The developers who were instrumental in eventually solving the problem of the building and site agreed with my conclusion and asked me to act as a witness at the planned Inquiry. But, before that, the planning and conservation authorities threw in the towel and approved substantial changes. Today, the building is occupied by the Design Museum and only the hyperbolic paraboloid roof remains of the original structure.

### *Local planning*

Cambridge Futures continued after I retired but, no longer able to call on the Department's resources, I resigned as Chairman. Then, at a few hours' notice, I found myself called upon to act as Chairman of the newly formed architecture centre Shape (Shape Cambridge). I thought it unlikely that Cambridge was large enough to sustain a centre. It wasn't, despite our efforts. My next role was initiated by the local planning authority. Following the 2003 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, the City recast its Conservation Panel as a Design and Conservation Panel to deal not just with conservation matters but also with the large-scale projects expected to flow under the Plan. I was asked to join and was shocked to discover, at my first meeting, that I was the new Chairman. I did the job for some years but, fed up with drafting too many critical reports, I eventually resigned. Walter Segal had once said to me 'If one can't write positively about a building, one should write nothing'.

Another involvement with local planning was the Cambridge 2030 project which Peter Landshoff and I co-directed. This was a visioning project for the city region which had its origin in a rather contentious article I had written about planning in the area. It caught the eye of Peter (an old friend and retired particle physicist who, post retirement, had become very active in planning issues) who asked what we might do about my criticisms. Very briefly, with the help of local community groups and specialists, we set up ten study areas and summarised the issues and suggestions for each. It was both enjoyable and eye-opening. The two most interesting sessions were one with local sixth formers and another with the

local business community. The sixth formers, heading for university, deplored the lack of vocational training opportunities for their non-academic contemporaries. The business group focused on the lack of any body to speak to Whitehall with one voice for the local government, academic and business communities. It was following this that such a body, Cambridge Ahead, was established – undoubtedly the best outcome of Cambridge 2030.

## *Editing*

At the time of my retirement, I was still editing *arq* and had intended to carry on. But, without an active foothold in academia, it became clear that I should withdraw. Finding someone to take over was difficult but eventually Richard Weston and some colleagues at the Welsh School of Architecture in Cardiff, agreed to do so. CUP asked me to consider staying on the masthead as Founding Editor but I declined, feeling that a clean break was better. Some years later, dismayed at a paper on John Voelcker that *arq* had published, I resigned from the (inactive) editorial board of the (somewhat changed) journal.



*Covers for the visioning project and two periodicals on which I collaborated in retirement*

The local RIBA chapter had, for many years, published a ‘gazette’ aimed at both architects and the public. Funded by the chapter and through advertising, it was sent free to its members and others on the mailing list. It was edited by a group of two or three local architects who, after a few years, would hand over to another group. Bobby Open, who I had first met when he was a student, and I edited the *Cambridge Architecture gazette* for several years, changing it into an all colour, 16-page, staple-bound, bi-annual with a consistent format which managed to absorb increased advertisement space in an acceptable way. It changed dramatically after we handed it on.

The third publication I edited in recent years was the annual Corpus journal. By 2009, this was, in the words of one well known journalist and Old Member of the College, ‘Worse than the most awful parish magazine’. Unstructured, uninspired and with an ever later publication date (it had slipped from early December to mid-May) it had become an embarrassment. The new Master agreed to let me redesign and edit it on his behalf. I had a good idea of what I wanted to do and gave Dale Tomlinson, who had redesigned *arq* with me when CUP took it over, a design brief. We changed the title from the clumsy and misleading *Letter of the Corpus Association* to *The Letter*, increased the page size and radically ‘upgraded’ and expanded the contents. For the first few years, I edited the journal and wrote

most of the obituaries. After six years, I handed over to the Master and, for the last few years, have contributed the odd feature, edited the most boring contents (lists of publications and prizes and so on) and supported, to a significant extent, the current Editor.

## ***Building***

As is well known, Corpus went through an unfortunate period in the noughties – in the space of eight years, it had six Masters and an Acting Master (including the one who retired at the start of the period and the one who took over at the end). The original cause of the difficulties was the proposal for a new library and, inevitably, I and Sandy Wilson (an Old Member and Honorary Fellow) were involved. Things became so difficult that, now a Life Fellow, I withdrew from the College for five years while Sandy effectively severed his connection. I was not involved in two substantial buildings – one completed and the other conceived – during that period. Both are, in my view, deeply flawed.

Following the arrival of a new Bursar, Tim Harvey-Samuel, I took part in the selection of an architect for a new dining hall and kitchen at Leckhampton. This was a very successful project undertaken by a Cambridge architect, Patrick Ward of HWM, who had not previously worked for a college. After its completion, we started planning for what was undoubtedly the most difficult construction project ever undertaken by the College on its Old House site – the renovation of the kitchens, the creation of a new servery and the recovery of the Wilkins stairhall. Later, the refashioning of the post room area and renovation of the Parker Room (the College's finest meeting and dining room) were added to the contract. This project concerned the most heavily used part of the College as well as the oldest part and it had to be completed on time.

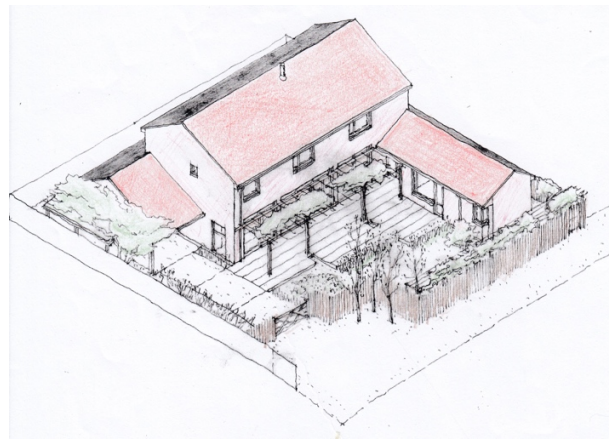
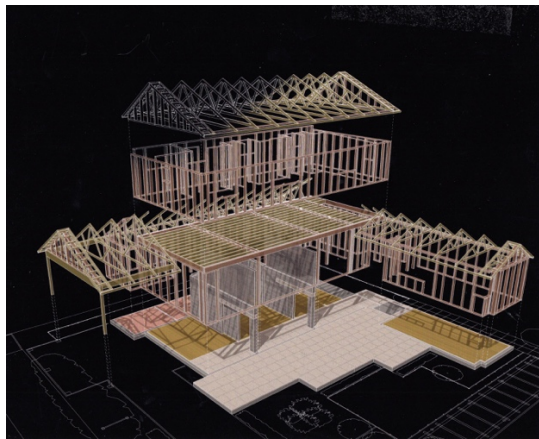
The archaeological investigations were fascinating. We uncovered the earliest tennis courts in Cambridge, the original open hearth in the medieval hall and a group of mid C14 carved stone corbels. Construction was by no means simple but the job was completed on time and within budget. The architect, Nicholas Ray of NRAP (who I had first met on the British Library Bloomsbury job and had been a colleague at Scroope Terrace), did a very fine job on this, his last project before retirement. What pleases me most about these two projects is the way they draw on the past. The Leckhampton dining hall retains the institutional memory of its predecessor, replicating its section and simplicity in enlarged form. In the case of the Old House project you could be forgiven for thinking that nothing has changed – and yet everything has.



*Leckhampton Dining Hall; New Servery and restored Stairhall in College; and our Orchard End home*



Birgit and I also did a building on our own account. In the 1930s, the then owners of our Selwyn Gardens house had acquired an adjacent plot of land, on which a small garage had been built. Originally one of a group of Edwardian pleasure gardens, it was served by a lane leading from Grange Road. By 1990, the garage was in a bad way and the garden overgrown. Sometime in the 1980s, an outline application for the construction of a house on the site had been rejected. Following an appeal, the Inspector stated that the plot was not large enough for a house. By 2003, policy had changed and ‘densification’ was no longer discouraged. 34 Selwyn Gardens was now too large for us so we applied for consent to build on the plot – and, without any difficulty, were granted it. The next step was to prepare construction drawings. I faced two difficulties. First, I was still editing *arg* and trying, ever more desperately, to find someone to take it over. Second, it was nearly a quarter of a century since I had built anything other than a kitchen. I’d never used CAD, I had no technical library and I was completely out of practice. I lacked both confidence and the time to fight my way through. I asked for help. I did the design and an executive architect was responsible for everything else.



*Orchard End preliminary structure study The site was once a C19 pleasure garden plot*

The house was built in seven months – it should have been six but the programme overlooked the Swedish window manufacturers’ summer closedown. Handover was on Christmas Eve 2004. The day before, as I arrived on site at about 8.30 am, the site manager, Darren Knight, said ‘Peter, there’s something for you and Birgit in the kitchen. It’s not from the firm – it’s from all of us on the site.’ There, on the worktop, was a bottle of Moët et Chandon, a white azalea in full bloom and a card from all eight of them, wishing us a very happy first Christmas in our new home. (We actually moved in about a week later.) Six months later, the building team, wives and children, returned one Saturday lunchtime to see how we had settled in. As the champagne cork flew up, it bounced on the high roof, then on the low roof and returned to my hand – and the children shouted, ‘Do it again!’

Birgit is very happy with the house and, trying to ignore my mistakes, I find it pleasant to live in. Designed to sit comfortably with its neighbours, it is of conventional form with a shallow pitch to its south and west-facing garden-side roof surfaces and a steep pitch to the north and east boundary-side surfaces. It is a source of pleasure that the house does not draw attention to itself – indeed architects tend not to identify it as ‘architect-designed’. The ‘garden’ is really a large, partly paved, mainly gravelled dry garden with not a blade of grass. At our neighbours’ request, an existing large Portuguese laurel was retained on one boundary but otherwise all the trees – three birches, a crab apple and a fig – are new. A vine and a beautiful white wisteria cover the pergola, providing shade in summer and enabling low sunlight to penetrate in winter.



Designed around furniture which either we or our families have owned, the house incorporates features both from the houses of our tropical childhoods and from each of the other four houses we have lived in together. The scale and module are set by Birgit's large wall-mounted mid C17 six-fold Japanese screen (a view of Kyoto) in the living room. All the principal rooms face south. We live on the ground floor. The self-contained first floor, designed for our children, grandchildren and guests could, in the long term, be let off to a research student and his partner in return for a modest rent and keeping an eye on us.

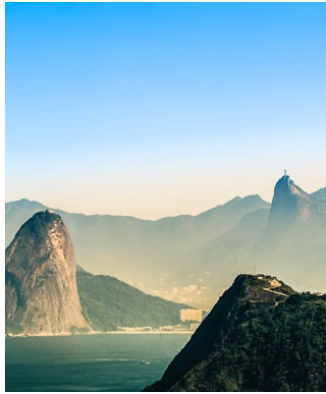
Wanting to build quickly to avoid disturbing our neighbours (a mistake – the gesture was not universally appreciated) I decided on timber-frame construction. In order to provide some thermal mass, the walls around the centre of the house are in masonry – which works well and ensures a pleasant acoustic. We adopted a two-stage tender process. On being appointed, the contractors suggested the use of a prefabricated system. This seemed an interesting idea, worth exploring, so we approached three firms. One, with strong Swedish connections, was clearly the front-runner and we were impressed by the houses they showed us. They claimed that they could easily adapt their system to our design. The price was right so we went ahead.

Thermally, the house works well. Now with retro-fitted PV panels, it has an 'A' rated Energy Performance Certificate, is comfortable in winter and, thanks to cross-ventilation, is generally cool in summer. Like a Passivhaus, it has a mechanical ventilation system with heat reclaim. We've hardly ever lit the wood-burning stove in the living room. Our guests, remarking on the light and the calm of the house, invariably say how much they enjoy visiting and staying with us.

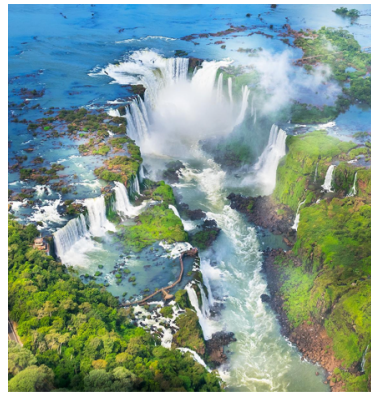
## *Travel*

In 1998, I'd been invited to Santiago by the Architecture School at the PUC. Birgit accompanied me. I admired the School and we liked Chile and the Chileans we met. It was an interesting and slightly awkward time because General Pinochet had just been detained in the UK and we were offered hospitality by both supporters and opponents – with hardly a whisper uttered about the detention. On the return flight, we stopped off in Rio for four days. It was the first time I had been in Brazil since 1951. The amazing topography of the city was, of course, unchanged and so was much else, including the wonderfully courteous people. Although I had lost much of my vocabulary, I'd never lost the accent and words started to come back. We decided that, following my retirement, we would return.

We did – in 2002, for a month. Varig flew us to Rio and then around Brazil on six separate flights. In Rio, we stayed in Flamengo, an unfashionable district close to the city centre, where my grandparents had lived. Unlike Copacabana and Ipanema, it still retains the scale of the national capital of my childhood. We rediscovered the older parts of the city, the Tijuca forest, the town of Niteroi across the bay and the old imperial summer capital of Petropolis. Next, on our way to the great waterfalls at Iguassu, we stopped in Curitiba for two days. This used to be known as an extremely boring place (my father's company had a mill there) but was transformed in the 1960s into the most liveable and sustainable city in Brazil thanks to the initiative of the university architecture school dean and later city mayor. Much of our time was spent in old colonial towns and cities in the gold mining area and along the coast – places about which my grandfather had often talked but I had never seen. It was a wonderful trip and everything went like clockwork. But for the take-over of my father's company in 1953 and the fact that I went to university in the UK, I might well have followed the pattern of the previous generations in my mother's family and returned to Brazil to work there until retiring to Britain.



*Rio – entrance to the Bay*



*Iguassu Falls*



*Ouro Preto colonial mining town*

In 2006 I was offered the chance to visit again – this time as a lecturer on a Swan Hellenic cruise, a role which three other Fellows of my Cambridge college regularly filled. Birgit and I joined the ship, small by cruise ship standards, at Manaus, having flown out by way of Sao Paulo and Brasilia. Thence, we sailed down the Amazon and along the coast to Buenos Aires. We stopped at two points on the Amazon, at Belem, Fortaleza, Recife, San Salvador, Rio, Paranagua and Montevideo. I gave an introduction to Recife (my mother's birthplace) and a commentary as we entered Rio's Guanabara Bay and moored alongside at the very point that Birgit and I (on different ships) had left for the UK in, respectively, 1952 and 1951. It was impossible to sustain a full programme on architecture in Brazil so I included three lectures which reflected the history of the British in Brazil – the two most popular ones being on the sea journey to and from 'home' and the Battle of the River Plate, 1939.

A few years later, wanting to visit Madeira and experience something similar to the long sea journeys of our youth, we travelled in an even smaller vessel from Naples to Ushuaia. It was full of incident – and never called at Madeira. One last sea journey took us to the Baltic. Two memorable river journeys took us from Cologne to Budapest and from Amsterdam to Berlin. Our other travels were in Europe. Now they are in the British Isles.

Our world grows ever smaller. Birgit enjoys her University of the Third Age groups and contacts with family and friends. Following changes in the College, my work there has come to an end. My last contribution was a booklet, *The Courts of Corpus Christi*\*, containing an edited version of Oliver Rackham's celebrated paper on 'The Making of Old Court' and a reprint of mine on 'The Theatre of New Court'. I now read the books that I missed before retirement (the magnificent University Library is close to hand), try to recover my practical architectural skills and do the local shopping that Birgit can no longer manage. Occasionally, our children and grandchildren visit us, sometimes we go to London and visit them. We ceased to hanker after life in London long ago – as we grow old, the scale of Cambridge suits us.

\*[https://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/the\\_courts\\_of\\_corpus\\_christi.pdf](https://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/the_courts_of_corpus_christi.pdf)

---



woods. Diagonally opposite each other across the pool, are Dittisham village and the hamlet of Galmpton.

Going downstream, towards Dartmouth, the river narrows dramatically. High among the trees on one bank lies Agatha Christie's house with, down at river level, its old bath house. Further on, on the same bank, the smoke from the Paignton to Kingswear steam train can sometimes be seen as it cuts its way through the woods. And then the river gradually opens up and Dartmouth with its large anchorage and busy ferries come into sight.

Upstream from Dittisham, round Lower Gurrew Point, where there can be interesting conditions with a strong southwest wind and a flood tide, and, past Lower Dittisham Creek, there's a beautiful wide stretch with Stoke Gabriel on the north bank. Cormorants dive into the river, sheep graze in the steep hill fields and old lime kilns and D-Day embarkation slipways can be glimpsed on the riverbank. And there are creeks, leading to places like Tuckenhay, up which Thames barges used to be rowed with sweeps to pick up cargoes of cider barrels.

In 1976, when we first went to Dittisham, it was still a 'working' village but, over the years, it has been partly taken over by second-homers, some of whom are clearly wealthy. It remains a wonderful place from which to sail a dinghy.

---



## 17. Birgit and our children

Anne-Birgit (née Warning) was born in Shanghai, in 1936, the second of three daughters, whose mother was Belgian and father was Dutch, working for a Netherlands shipping line based in the Far East. Early in 1942, after Pearl Harbour, the family moved to the United States via Australia, having left Java weeks before the Japanese invasion. There, her mother and sisters lived in New York for four formative years, (learning English but speaking Dutch at home), while her father travelled between the US, Canada and the UK by air and sea, lending his shipping expertise to the Allied convoys across the Atlantic.

In 1946, the family moved to the Netherlands, where they were reunited with their Dutch and Belgian relatives who had survived the invasion, occupation and devastation of the war. The following year, they moved to Hong Kong which remained their home until 1958. Birgit and her sisters were educated in the local mixed school system until 1952, when the entire family travelled by sea via Africa and South America to Europe, visiting Britain – in search of a suitable boarding-school for Birgit and her younger sister Helene – and Switzerland, France and Scandinavia. After such rich and varied experiences, settling into a small girls' boarding school in rural Sussex was a huge adjustment.

Holidays spent in Kent with a Prep School headmaster and his wife, together with other 'holiday kids' was liberating. Thanks to their advice and the school's support Birgit went to Edinburgh University, instead of Oxford, to read English from 1955 till 1959, followed by one year at Hughes Hall in Cambridge, where we met. After a year teaching in New England and a coast-to-coast trip across the States, she returned to London where, after three years teaching, first in a mixed Grammar School and then in a special school for the partially-sighted, we married. Marriage in London and Cambridge, the decision to become British and the birth of our three daughters finally confirmed her sense of home and identity.



*Birgit, 1971*



*Our three daughters ...*



*with Birgit in Gulliver, Norfolk, 1974*

Professionally, Birgit's career has been a patchwork affair – teaching throughout the age-range, from pre-school to adult education. In the 60s in Cambridge, she briefly tutored and translated from home. In the 70s and 80s, in London, she counselled in schools, the community and at Childline. Finally, in the 90s and 00s, in Cambridge again, she counselled in two Sixth Form Colleges, Higher Education and voluntary organisations (where she pioneered setting up services for children and adolescents around issues of divorce and death), worked from home as a psychotherapist and finally, after her retirement, volunteered as a primary school governor and children's mentor. In 1999, she co-edited *Time to listen to children: personal and professional communication*, published by Routledge and still in print today.

Looking back on the apparent lack of continuity, the thread that unites it all is Birgit's keen sense of the importance of children in society, her own and those of others too. Her professional commitments have always been made to fit around the needs of her family. In that sense she is an old-fashioned wife, with an eye to the wider picture. She says she knows how very fortunate she has always been to be able to combine a richly rewarding marriage and family life with a very absorbing profession, both in teaching and counselling. In short, the best of both worlds.

Together with our three grandchildren, our three daughters are living and working happily in London.

---

## 18. Looking back

In my second undergraduate year, I lived in a room above Kings Parade. The view was spectacular – King’s Chapel to the right, William Wilkins’ screen and porters’ lodge ahead and, beyond them, James Gibbs’ Fellows’ Building. Meanwhile, at Scroope Terrace, David Roberts had introduced me to Hawksmoor and his plan for Cambridge, Colin Rowe to Alberto Sartoris’ *Encyclopedia* and Guisepppe Terragni, Sandy Wilson to *Perspecta* and thus to Louis Kahn, and my own searches in *Zodiac* to Franco Albini and Vittoriano Vigano.

The following year found me in Corpus Old Court, the oldest surviving court in Cambridge, built between 1352 and 1375. By day in the studio and at night in my room, I was churning out drawings, experimenting with different design approaches and drawing techniques, working with a Graphos pen and a constantly sharpened clutch pencil. The materiality conveyed in the AA thesis drawings of two recently arrived research students, Anthony Eardley and John Dalton, had made a deep impression on me. I was on a high. I definitely wanted to be an architect, to design and build. Lots.

But life didn’t turn out that way. I never meant to leave architectural practice but that was what followed after I resigned my partnership with Sandy Wilson, Doug Lanham, John Collier and MJ Long. Together with John Honer and many others, they went on to build a great Library. And there’s quite a bit of me in it – aspects of its basic anatomy and the Science Reading Room, the levels, the unusual solar shading system and so on.

I may have left practice – but I did not leave architecture. I was incredibly fortunate to be taken on by the *AJ*. My father’s career had stalled at 47 – mine restarted at about that age. It was hard at first but I relished the opportunity to range widely and at pace over the entire range of architectural endeavour, working with wonderful colleagues to surprise our readers (and ourselves) with a constantly developing weekly publication. It was extraordinary to be able to bring our ideas to fruition so quickly.

The unexpected return to Cambridge brought me back to where I had started in architecture. And once again – but in a very different way – I was starting from scratch. Simultaneously, sitting on committees selecting and appointing architects, I was also, for the first time, seeing architects through the eyes of a client. Meanwhile, I enjoyed the richness of the collegiate University and the decentralised nature of the institution itself – the variety and freedom it offers is exceptional. So, too, in my experience, was its interest and support.

Wherever I have worked, I’ve been fortunate to have been helped (and often taught) by wonderful colleagues, contributors, and students. Only a few are named in this account – but I try to remember them all, architects and engineers, academics and editors, librarians and secretaries, caretakers and technicians, sailors and students, and builders. Working with others is so much more enjoyable than on one’s own.

I owe much to Birgit – without whom so much of this story would never have happened. She, too, has also had an exceptionally interesting and varied working life – pioneering working with children and young persons but also with the bereaved.

It’s a source of immense sadness that I end this memoir at a time and in a country in which hunger and homelessness, poverty and populism, nationalism and a lack of fairness are all around us. It could have been so much better. We must hope that the young will succeed where we have failed and transform it into a better place. I am sure that they will.

---