

Andrew Rabeneck

Architect, planner and construction historian

Born 21.03.1942.

Life story by Andrew Rabeneck.

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1. Antecedents

I recently finished translating the memoir of a family member, Irène Micol née Catoire, from French to English.¹ It's a touching, detailed memoir of youth and adolescence in France by a girl born in Paris to Russian émigrés in 1924. The stories of Russian governesses and family life in the suburbs at Bourg-la-Reine are vivid in their evocations. They include intersections between the Catoires and the Rabenecks; accounts of my grandparents' frequent visits from London to Paris with my father Leo between the wars.

Finishing that translation coincided with a tip off to a 1991 Guardian profile of W.G. Sebald by Maya Jaggi.² Sebald is a specialist in recollection, and he sums up the essence of it for émigrés, such as my family. Sebald explores:

"The effects political persecution produces in people 50 years down the line, and the complicated workings of remembering and forgetting that go with that". He is interested in the long-term effects on émigrés who "may appear well adapted but, especially as they move towards old age, are still suffering from having been ostracised, deprived of country, family, language. There are damages to people's inner lives that can never be rectified."

Until 2004, I had no interest or intentions with respect to the memories of my family, beyond the normal boxes of old photographs, mostly of unidentified people, a few battered files and some portrait paintings on the walls that had somehow managed to escape a worse fate.

Then, before the centenary of Anton Chekhov's death in 2004, I was contacted by a BBC Radio Three producer, Julian Evans, who had been in touch also with Harvey Pitcher, a Chekhov scholar. Through his own research Harvey was aware that I possessed a memoir written by my great uncle Lev Rabeneck, originally published in 1958-9 in a Russian émigré magazine *Renaissance* in Paris. It tells in a beautifully limpid way of his presence with his brother Artemy at the deathbed of Chekhov, who was staying with his wife Olga Knipper in Badenweiler, Southern Germany.³ Evans wanted a reading of the memoir for a radio program, and Harvey was in touch with people in Moscow, where the centenary was set to be a major literary event. This resulted in my

¹ See Memoir of Irène Micol at [Lives Retold.co.uk](https://livesretold.co.uk). This memoir was started in early 2021, during Covid lock down.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/22/artsandhumanities.highereducation>

³ Lev's memoir about Chekhov can be found at [Lives Retold.co.uk](https://livesretold.co.uk).

meeting on-line Julie Solovjova, a retired physicist and local historian who was interested in the history of the Rabenecks, a family to which she was related.

In fact, she had already completed a book in Russian about the Rabenecks, Rabenecks - Moscow Manufacturers. I was immediately curious to see what she had made of our family, the past of which I knew only through a few manuscript memoirs written in English by my great grandfather Edouard Rabeneck in the 1930s, by my Grandfather Krot (Charles) Rabeneck, and by Lev Rabeneck himself. I had never really paid much attention to this material but when I saw Julie's book, I undertook to produce an English translation that she could publish for me in Moscow, since she had the means of production in place as well as access to the original illustrations. Her book consisted of some detailed archival research into land transactions, civic records, etc, but also memoirs gathered by the Shchelkovo Local History group about the Rabenecks, whose industrial business and homes were located at nearby Sobolevo. We set about the translation with the help of Google Translate (much more primitive in 2004 than it is now). By dint of refining our drafts, and sending fragments to and from Moscow for editing, we managed to produce an English language facsimile of Julie's rather *samizdat* production, supplemented by a volume of appendices, the memoirs I had in my possession cross-referenced to Julie's text. The result was a mish-mash, but it was readable and it brought the family to life for me for the first time. My Russian grandparents Krot and Olga, as well as Lev, had always been reticent about recalling life in Russia, and they drew a veil over the revolution and their escape in 1919. For example, Krot had been a keen photographer in Russia and had brought 3000 glass plate negatives with him to England. But he never had them printed and eventually threw them out unseen. This and other actions exemplified the awkward but understandable relationship between life and memory.



Julie Solovjova's books arrive in London from Moscow, 2007.

By 2004 both my parents were dead; my father Leo died young at 67 of liver cancer in 1981, and my mother Norah in 1991. I had been married to Jennifer since 1967, and we had two sons Felix Arthur born in 1971 and Leo Henry born in 1973, but had been separated since 1980, and I was then living alone in London. My grandmother Olga had died in 1987, while I was working in America. She had been almost the last of my close Russians. In a way, the activity around Rabenecks - Moscow Manufacturers provided a sort of licence to confront Rabeneck history in a way that would have seemed indelicate before. Certainly, talking about life in Russia was not a topic to be raised with my grandparents, it was obviously just too painful for them until the end of their lives. They were happy to talk about their war work in Cairo, or their long stint as translators in Vienna after the war, but never Moscow.

Through the translation of Julie's book, through genealogical research into the family, and later through Russian blog sites put up by keen local historians in the area northeast of Moscow where the Rabenecks were based, I am starting to build a clearer picture of the family and some of its personalities.⁴ And I am beginning to wonder what trail I should leave for my own children and for those that come after them. I am getting emotionally closer to the idea of writing a memoir of my own life, daunting though that is. . .

⁴ <https://trojza.blogspot.com>



Olga, née Trapp, and Charles Rabeneck around 1913.

My father Leo had arrived in England in September 1919 at the age of five with his parents Olga and Krot. They were put up by Olga's parents in their fine house, 'Bushmead', at St Neot's in Cambridgeshire. They had spent several months in Finland because Krot's cousin Lev Rabeneck had made a point of securing the Finnish passports that enabled them to leave Russia. Krot and Lev had both been deeply involved in managing the Rabeneck fabric works at Shchelkovo and Reutovo, northeast of Moscow on the Klyazma River, particularly their transition to management by the Bolsheviks following the October revolution of 1917. The directors still controlled the bank accounts and thus the payroll even as Soviet commissars took over the management of the factories. As German-Russians without Finnish passports, they would have risked imprisonment or exile inside Russia had they been unable to leave. England was quite familiar to them, they had often visited, particularly Manchester and London, in connection with their cotton spinning, weaving and dyeing business. Once settled, Olga and Krot moved to London, and Leo was sent to Colet Court preparatory school and then St Paul's School, where he did well, later going to Imperial College to study mechanical engineering, specialising in water engineering. By the late 1920s Leo had become a smart young adolescent, frequently visiting Paris where the families of Ludwig Rabeneck, father of Lev, and his brother Edouard were established.,

as well as Edouard's daughter Sophie married to Vladimir Catoire. He was fond of tennis and other sports, jazz and girls, and was close friends with his cousins there. Edouard, Lev and Krot had penned their memoirs in the expectation that the Soviet madness would soon end, and they would be able to return to Moscow.

My mother Norah was the fourth child of Henry Brooks and his wife Frances Bennett, born like Leo in 1914. Henry was a banker at Rothschilds in the City and Frances was a homebody and keen gardener. Norah's parents were quite old fashioned in their outlook, and she became impatient with their way of life and the busy household of four girls and the only son Frank. She hankered after a London life of art, literature and sophistication, and by 1940 she had left home to set up a beauty business in Dover Street, Mayfair, based on the physiotherapy she had studied, and on her own preparations, lotions and powders, made from the finest ingredients. She was beautiful and fashionably dressed and she soon attracted a clientele of influential women, many in the theatre, as well as writers and artists. She led a busy social life.



Norah and Leo in 1940.

In 1940 Norah met Leo and they fell in love, getting married at St. George's Hanover Square later in the year. Norah was living in Cambridge Square on the Hyde Park Estate, and Leo was down in Esher to be near his work. They stayed together in London until I was born in March 1942, in the heady, dangerous capital that was constantly under bombardment, an atmosphere vividly described by Norah's friend Molly Panter-Downes in her 'Letters from

London' for the *New Yorker*.⁵ It was a hectic, exciting and stressful time. But then the Paddington area and the Hyde Park Estate suffered some bomb hits and Leo and Norah decided to move to Mill Hill Northwest of London to sit out the war with Norah's parents who had a large if unexceptional suburban house with a big garden. I'm not exactly sure when that move took place, but I must have been about two or just three, vaguely remembering hiding under the stairs when there were V-2 bomb warnings, but most memories are of the garden with its rabbits and hens, and of the warmth of granny Brooks' busy kitchen. The Brooks' two elder daughters had already left home and were driving ambulances and nursing; in January 1943 their son Frank was killed in submarine action, a tragedy they never fully recovered from. Norah, Leo and I were at Mill Hill, while the youngest daughter Catherine was in Hampshire with her baby boy Christopher to be near her Navy husband, Harry Duffin.

Somehow the war finally ended although I have no recollection of that. The next memorable event was finding myself in February 1947 on P&O's liner *Strathmore*⁶ with my parents and a nanny, heading for India where Leo had been offered a good job with Paterson Candy International, a water treatment company. It was fabulous to be on the ship, and every moment was filled with excitement. I just about remember the thrill of passing through the Suez Canal, stopping in Aden and arriving offshore in Bombay, where the ship was nudged into the dock by tugs fore and aft.

In Bombay we had a flat in a modern building in a heavily built-up area several floors above the street. There was a balcony that ran around the flat on two sides on which when he wasn't working slept Lalu, our driver and factotum, a sweet older man fond of children. I don't remember much more about the domestic arrangements except that we had a cook, the food was delicious, and I was closely watched over by my English nanny. I was struck by the bright colours, smells and bustle of the streets and the soaring paper kites endlessly swooping over the rooftops. During the day we'd go as often as not to Breach Candy Swimming Club in south Bombay, with a fabulous outdoor pool right on the ocean. Now it is surrounded by high-rises and new sea defences separate it from the sea, but it remains impressive. I was happy to spend all day in the pool while Norah lolled in a deck chair under a large straw hat, catching up on the latest news from London and Paris, or reading a new novel sent to her by one of her clients. Occasionally we would go out of town, mostly to the up-market suburb of Juhu Beach a beautiful sandy strip north of the city lined with coconut palms. I have few other reliable recollections of our life in Bombay.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mollie_Panter-Downes

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Strathmore

But life in Bombay did not suit Norah. Although Leo was doing well at work bringing modern water supply to Indian cities, Norah was bored. The ex-pat community of Bombay were hedonistic, enjoying cheap gin and sex but lacking cultural curiosity and for the most part not engaging with Indians. Norah on the other hand was reading Jung, the Bahgavad Gita and other Hindu and Buddhist texts, developing a fascination with oriental philosophy that stayed with her for the rest of her life. I do not know whether it was infidelity on Leo's part that affected her decision to return with me to England; perhaps she was just completely fed up and feeling neglected. Before her eyes Leo was turning from a cultured young cosmopolitan into an ex-pat businessman, and he seemed to be enjoying the easy life of Bombay. So, we returned to England in early 1949 with nanny Beth on the P&O's *Strathnaver*, arriving at Tilbury.⁷

Norah found a handsome flat In Kensington Park Gardens on the first floor as I recall. This was a grand old terrace of stucco buildings near Notting Hill Gate the principal rooms of which looked out over large communal gardens accessible from a small back garden. The flat was big enough for Norah to set aside a room in which to give her 'treatments', re-building her clientele from before the India adventure. It had a room for the succession of *au pairs* Norah had to look after me. It was also perfect for safely riding my tricycle unsupervised around the gardens. Furthermore, the flat was close to my great uncle Lev and his French second wife Madeleine, so while my Russian grandparents were still in Vienna, I nevertheless maintained a Russian connection through Lev. Furthermore, Lev and Madeleine had close friends nearby with two sons a bit older than me, but still up for playing in the gardens. Norah resumed her social life and, I realised later, began to have affairs, notably with the artist Mervyn Peake whom she had met before going to India. He had made a charcoal portrait of her in 1947, and now he visited us in Kensington Park Gardens

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Strathnaver



where he made portraits of me too.⁸ Mervyn was very dashing and mischievous, with long hair, a figure of excitement. His illustrations for *Grimm's Household Tales* that had come out in 1946, captivated and terrified me, and my mother would give me his books as they appeared – *Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor* and *The Hunting of the Snark* were just as magical, although I never warmed to his Gothic novel fantasies such as *Titus Groan* and *Gormenghast*. Other acquaintances included Jan Le Witt, a Polish artist whose studio in Holland Park Avenue we could visit on foot, with its smell of turpentine and work in progress on every surface, thrilling for a young boy.⁹ Jan encouraged my scribbles and when his graphic work for the 1951 Festival of Britain in partnership with George Him became famous, I basked in his renown at school. Another friend, and probably a lover of Norah, was Philip Thornton, a big handsome man, author of popular ethnographies that touched on little-known worlds that intrigued her, including the Berber music of Morocco, the music of Albania, and the spiritual life and music of Bulgaria.¹⁰ Norah had also met Laurens van der Post, whom I recall giving me

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mervyn_Peake

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Le_Witt

¹⁰ *Voice of Atlas*, 1936, London A. Maclehose; *Dead Puppets Dance*, 1937, London, Collins; *Ikons and Oxen*, 1939, London, Collins.

five shillings in a café next to the Royal Court Theatre. She was a close friend of Sibyl Bedford and Enid Bagnold, who sent her proofs of their books for her opinion,¹¹ as well as of other writers particularly Mollie Panter-Downes, but I think her strongest attachments were with actors, first Diana Wynyard and Peggy Ashcroft, whom she met as her clients, but also Anthony Quayle and Paul Scofield. She was close friends, too, with Joyce Grenfell and her husband Reggie. Joyce was a renowned comedian and mimic, who later starred as a protagonist of the St Trinian's film comedies.¹² She was the daughter of a rich American socialite, Nora Langhorne. Later in 1951 Norah befriended Mary Martin, who was in London to star in the West End production of *South Pacific*. Joyce and Mary both helped Norah with valuable introductions in Washington and New York, including Jack Kennedy, when she went on a tour promoting her preparations.

Norah had impeccable taste and was always fashionably dressed. I recall frequent visits to dressmakers and milliners, who would copy styles she'd seen in *Vogue* and *Harper's* for her. She was also an astute collector of furniture with a penchant for the *empire* style. There were bargains to be had in post-war London. I was thrilled to join her on visits to P.C.L. German that had just opened on the Edgware Road, and another Olga who had no shop but sold *objets* and furniture from her first floor flat in Orme Square overlooking Kensington Gardens.

When we returned from India I had been just too young to enrol in a local school, so Norah put me in a pre-school class at the Lycée Française on Cromwell Road, hoping I would absorb some French (she herself spoke good French having been sent for two terms to a convent in Belgium before the war, as were her sisters). My only recollection of the Lycée was making a yellow and green raffia covered napkin ring that I accidentally dropped in the lavatory and took home wet. I was then enrolled in a preparatory school, Westbourne House near Chichester in Sussex. I have no idea how the school came to Norah's attention, except that it probably related to Halnaker Park a Lutyens house on the nearby Goodwood downs, where Norah had grand friends, Charles Gordon-Lennox, 10th Duke of Richmond, and his wife since 1951, Susan Grenville-Grey who was a client of Norah's. Going away to school, I was thrilled to escape close feminine supervision in London and eagerly boarded the train at Victoria with my tuck box and a wardrobe of uniforms from Billings and Edmonds, the *de rigueur* school outfitters off Hanover Square.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enid_Bagnold

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joyce_Grenfell

2. Preparatory School

Westbourne House had only about 80 pupils, all boys. Geoffrey and Joan Shilcock had run it since 1932, but it had been located at Shopwyke Hall near Chichester only since 1945. Some of the staff



like Miss Blackman (Blackie) had been with the school since before the war, and it had quite a congenial family atmosphere. The grounds were very extensive and in free time we could roam the boundaries of the school and look out at the edge of Tangmere, one of the Battle of Britain airfields, now home to jets like the twin engine Meteor. There was a distinct connection with nature, through the landscaping and flowerbeds around the house, and through agricultural use of some of the grounds. The school had a couple of ponies, too. We enjoyed harvesting potatoes, and haymaking in large open fields. We also thrilled to the discovery of fragments of aeronautical equipment occasionally found in the fields and woods, thrown off wrecked planes. The school swimming pool was newly built in an enlarged crater from an Me109 crash. The war was still a fresh memory.



Parents were permitted to take boys out at the weekend and occasionally Norah, and less frequently Leo, Olga and Krot when in England on 'leave', came for me and we'd go to Halnaker Park, to a restaurant in Chichester, or to Bosham, the nearby yachting mecca. These were very special outings, to which one might invite friends who lacked available parents. The teaching was generally quite good and class sizes were small. Blackie taught French, and I was also doing Latin as a Common Entrance subject. We were enrolled in the Cubs and did camping in the grounds, besides exhausting amounts of team sports and athletics. The summer Sports Day was a huge event to which most parents came. I did well at the high jump, but little else; the Fosbury flop had not yet been invented. Contagious diseases tended to sweep through the school with ease, and I had a particularly bad bout of measles, although in retrospect I enjoyed the cossetting of the sick room under the watchful eye of matron and Mrs Shilcock. The holidays were mostly spent in the flat in London, visiting all the South Kensington museums over and over. My favourite was the science museum because of the wonderful models in glass cases that could be operated by buttons and handles. But whenever Leo was on leave, he'd take me off, memorably to Somerset, where we stayed in a farmhouse, I learned to ride and we hiked Dunkery Beacon. It was always a relief for Norah to have me taken care of by other relatives; she could get on with her life.

In 1952 I was taken to a seaside hotel in Sussex by Norah and Mary Martin, together with her daughter Heller Halliday, a few months older than me. It was exciting being with the two dynamic mothers, and I completely fell for Heller and ran around like a fool. Quite an awakening! 1953 was a busy year preparing for Common Entrance exams and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth was on June 2. I can't remember quite how it happened, but I found myself high in a stand on East Carriage Drive with Norah (and as I recall my cousin Chris) waiting interminably for the royal carriage to go past. Luckily, I had a small balsa-wood model of a Hawker Hunter that I could whittle and

sand quietly on that drizzly day. We were distracted by our packed lunch and by announcements of the Everest expedition triumph led by Edmund Hillary and Norgay Tensing, dubbed by the press “A coronation gift for the new Queen”.¹³ When the procession finally came by it was indeed impressive, the imposing Queen of Tonga in an open carriage was a hit with the crowd, but it was over too quickly.

1952 was also probably the year we moved house, to a basement flat at 61, Cadogan Place, although reached by steps at the front it had a largish patio at the back and did not feel dark at all.

Here too there were large communal gardens, entered using a key, where I was free to roam and explore. Norah was able to continue her ‘treatments’ in the new flat. We were now also closer to Harrods, the department store, which was exciting, particularly the food halls and the pet department on an upper floor. My collection of Meccano pieces and motors came with us and continued to grow as did my fascination with aviation. In the summer Norah and I went to Menton, near the Italian border on the Mediterranean, as the guests of her client Victoria Colman, known as ‘Va’ who had a charming little villa on the road up, but out of town towards Castellar. Va was a member of the Colman mustard dynasty of Norwich. She also had two adopted sons Anthony and Ben, a little older than me but willing to involve me in adventures exploring the old town of Menton, going to the beach, or climbing up in the mountains just above the house. Ben, in particular, impressed me with his drawing ability, especially using broad felt-tip pens made by an American company Flo-Master, quite a novelty at the time. I loved the Mediterranean climate, the soft light and the exoticism of the flora and fauna. I remember visiting the artist Graham Sutherland, a friend of Va’s who lived across the valley. Va was what we now might call a health nut, trying to follow the prescriptions of Gaylord Hauser, and daily making yogurt in little hexagonal glass pots. She and Norah discussed vitamins, diet and health matters endlessly, or so it seemed to us boys. I drew a lot, in emulation of Ben.

We went to Menton the next year, too, after the coronation, and it was marvellous to return, finding the house with its plants and cats and Adeline, Va’s excellent cook and housekeeper who came down from Castellar on the bus to make us delicious ratatouille and other Provençal dishes. Norah and Va discussed books a lot that year, both being keen on Arthur Koestler, and excited by the appearance in English of *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Eugen Herrigels’s best seller musing on the mystery of Zen principles of thought and

7. Reuters (2 June 1953), “2 of British Team Conquer Everest”, The New York Times, p. 1, archived from the original on 15 October 2009, retrieved 18 December 2009

action.¹⁴ Koestler fascinated them through his cosmopolitanism, his experiences in Russia, his ongoing critique of neo-Darwinism and his respect for the paranormal. *Darkness at Noon*, his chilling 1940 allegory of Soviet Russia seemed increasingly potent as the Cold War developed through the 1950s. Zen and Buddhism, too, continued to attract Norah and I remember her battered copy of the Bhagavad Gita going everywhere with us, as well as Alan Watts' 1948 *Zen*. Somerset Maugham was also popular, perhaps because of his nearby villa *La Mauresque* at St Jean-Cap-Ferrat. Ben, Anthony and I continued our adventures, swimming off the rocks at Cap St Martin and meeting Bernard Simon, a boy from Reims, whose uncle Maurice was renting a grand villa in nearby Garavan, the *Val Rameh*. We'd all been on a hike together in the mountains when Bernard suggested we come to the villa for a birthday party, and Andrew, "Do bring your mother if she'd like to come".

So we went, although I don't remember much about the party. One of Bernard's older brothers, François was there in his smart French Navy uniform, an elder sister Denise plus their parents, Jean and Marguerite Simon, as well as the host, her brother Maurice, recently returned from French Indo-China, who was renting the Val Rameh. The house was full of beautiful Vietnamese and Chinese furniture and



decorative art that he'd brought back with him. With all the introductions on our arrival Norah met François, tall and handsome, and it was clear they got on well. She invited him to visit us at Va Colman's house. He came with some records and was excited by Va's excellent selection of LPs. He clearly knew quite a lot about music and books; once we went with him to hear Artur

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen_in_the_Art_of_Archery

Rubenstein play in front of the church in the *vielle ville*. Some days later we went with François and Denise to visit Robert and Renée Mauchamp, family friends of the Simons who lived across the valley from Va. They were fine watercolourists and they lived in an airy studio house full of beautiful furnishings. Denise was teaching art at the time in school and was clearly quite close to the Mauchamps.

Back in London I prepared for a new school year which would include the Common Entrance exam in October or November. My marks were adequate (most school reports said I could do better if only I tried!) and I was accepted to start at Charterhouse school the following year, 1955. The summer of 1954 was eventful. Norah and François's love affair was blossoming; she invited her father to the Var to meet François, and they began to look for a house in the upper Var, while



Norah's father, Henry Brooks, Norah and François on the beach in 1954.

François was living in a rented house in LaValette, at the foot of the mighty limestone Coudon mountain near Toulon to be close to his Navy work. He was a junior legal officer with a circle of sporty friends (one even named Casanova) who enjoyed sailing and exploring the islands off the coast, including renting an old fort at the far end of Porquerolles that we visited the next year. Meanwhile, in the background Norah's divorce proceedings continued, whereby she secured a commitment from Leo to pay my school fees and three return flights to Nice a year. But that summer was also one of Leo's 'leaves' from India and he took me with his parents Olga and Krot, also on leave, from Vienna, to Italy for some tourism. Leo rented a large Jaguar saloon and we visited Pisa, Florence staying in Fiesole across the Arno, Rome and Naples including Pompeii and Paestum. I was knocked side-ways by all

we saw, by the architecture and by the paintings and sculpture. It was my first exposure to classical art and to the renaissance, and it had a profound effect. The food was wonderful, too, helped by the knowledgeable gourmet tastes of Krot and Leo.

In late October Norah and François were married at Carqueiranne, near Toulon. I was unable to be there because of school, but I had already been to the restaurant at the seashore, owned by Bernard and Solonge Brugerolles, friends of François, where the wedding took place. Most of François' family came, his elder brother Philippe, Denise and Bernard, as well as their parents Jean and Marguerite. I was happy for my mother, and slightly in awe of her rangy, attractive new husband. The Simon clan, particularly Marguerite, were apprehensive about François' marriage to a divorcée Englishwoman quite a bit older than him, but they were pleased that the marriage made him so happy. Later in the year, over the Christmas holidays I flew out on a BEA Vickers Viking into Nice, joining Norah and François in their search for a permanent house. They had been staying in the village of Bargemon in the Haut-Var around 400 metres above sea level, but the search nearby had been fruitless, when the hotel owner Monsieur Lagadou suggested they look at a property of his near the next village Claviers, that was in poor shape but could be restored. The house was spectacular; it was beautiful and commanded fine views. Most importantly, although it lacked electricity or gas, it had its own spring; water autonomy was crucial. Norah and François fell in love with it immediately despite the obvious challenge of renovation. Built in 1739 as a summer retreat for the District Attorney of Aix-en-Provence, the architecture of Les Ginestières (the yellow brooms) was restrained but solidly bourgeois with large rooms and a magnificent central stairway leading up to a pigeon loft that was to become my room at the very top of the house. It was surrounded by 17 hectares of neglected olive trees and vineyards laid out on beautiful dry-stone walled terraces. In front of the house three magnificent ancient mulberry trees kept the terrace shady through the summer, and a couple of 'bassins' captured water from the spring so one could swim among the frogs, butterflies and little water snakes.



My impression of the Ginestières as a sixteen-year-old 1958 - Black and White photos of Les Ginestières from 1966

3. Charterhouse

Life at Charterhouse school was something very new. No more cosy familiarity (650 boys) but what seemed a harsh almost military pattern of life. There were daily visits to the vast 1927 Zeppelin shed of a chapel designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, roll calls and regimented study periods in the common rooms. New boys were bullied mercilessly and made to ‘fag’ for older boys, cleaning their kit and making their toast on the house boiler. The daft school argot had to be learned for a new boy’s test. At first, we’d be sat at long tables in the common rooms keeping our books in mean lockers, later graduating to a study ‘carrell’ cubicle that could be modestly personalised, and eventually to a shared or private study that could be papered in posters and memorabilia. There were frequent beatings for misdemeanours administered by supercilious senior boys. My ‘house’, Verites, in the main building of Philip Charles Hardwick’s handsome neo-Gothic campus, was one of the nicest, with spacious dormitories and a live-in housemaster.¹⁵ The teaching varied; gloomy classicists: “Rabeneck, pray construe . . .”, but also bubbly and brilliant Europeans and Russian refugees like Oleg Polunin who taught biology and botany.¹⁶ The emphasis on team sport was even more intense than at Westbourne House, with relentless effort required daily. I was mostly relegated to teams styled ‘Etceteras’ except for hockey at which I was quite good. Team sport was relieved by more individual pursuits such as cross-country running, but also by even more collective ones like the Combined Cadet Force, which taught military drill and discipline with visits to nearby military establishments. Later we were allowed to sign up for an RAF section that had a full-size glider; we would spend ages assembling it and dragging it across playing fields. It was fun. The school library was imposing and easy to reach from Verites; periodicals, particularly *National Geographic*, with its photos of bare breasted natives, captivated me. A consolation of school life was friendships, particularly with Patrick Channon, a boy of my age who shared my passion for aircraft in all forms, including making models in a disused little workshop in the basement of the house. Neither of us was particularly sporty, but we were keen on bicycles, saving up to buy or trade bits and pieces with friends or down at the bike shop in Godalming. I put together a pale blue Claud Butler frame with Campagnolo gears and Swiss Weinmann brakes; it was a refined object of pure passion that later came to France with me on one of my trips to Claviers and remained there.

The setting of the school was beautiful, on a plateau above Godalming, and the grounds were rich in woodlands. At weekends we were allowed out on ‘exeats’ with relatives. Norah came and took me to see Mollie and her husband

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Charles_Hardwick

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Polunin

Clare Robinson who had a handsome old mill house – Roppeleghs - nestled in a riverbed near Haslemere. The house was beautifully furnished and full of fascinating books and furniture. Mollie was a cracking cook and she and Norah enthused about Marcel Boulestin and Elizabeth David endlessly. David's *French Country Cooking* and *A Book of Mediterranean Food* had recently been published and Norah certainly identified with her rebellious independent spirit and her insistence on good taste in all its manifestations. Mollie's two daughters Virginia and Diana were often at Roppeleghs with assorted boyfriends, and we'd have quite a party before walking the meal off around the grounds. Mollie's work for the *New Yorker* was much in evidence and sometimes there'd be a colleague like her editor Gardner Botsford also at lunch.¹⁷ It was heady stuff for a schoolboy. I was rather in awe of Mollie and Clare, and they were very generous in asking me over, even when Norah could not be there. Eventually I was allowed to go on my bike on a Sunday, and I began to see them as family. Other memorable friends of Norah's included Lanning Roper and his wife Primrose, another client of Norah's.¹⁸ Lanning was a successful American landscape architect who wrote a gardening column for the *Sunday Times*. He and Primrose had married in 1952; they lived in a coach house hidden behind Onslow Square in South Kensington. It had an exceptionally large and secluded garden where Lanning experimented with plantings. After Norah moved to France we sometimes stayed there together on her increasingly infrequent trips to London. Eventually Primrose bought a sweet little house in Clavières after they had visited Les Ginestières together. She, too, was a keen gardener and painter.

¹⁷ <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/10/11/gardner-botsford>

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lanning_Roper

4. Les Ginestières

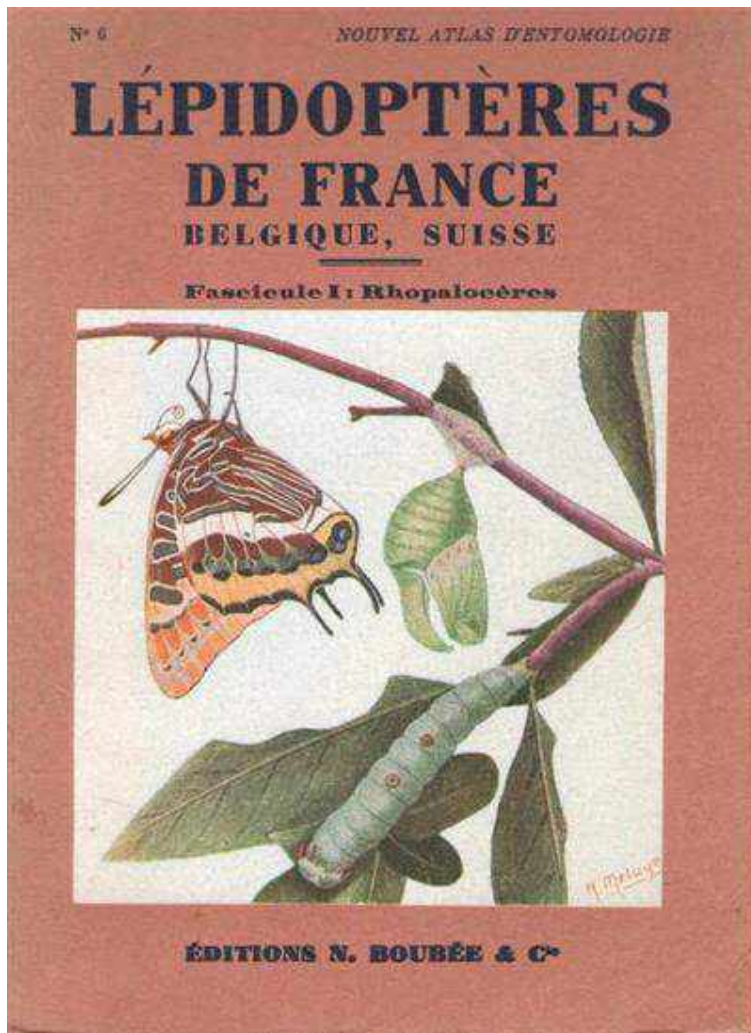
Norah and François had bought Les Ginestières in early 1955, I went to Clavières in my spring holiday, and we stayed in the little *pension* in the heart of the village run by Madame Billard, while they worked out how to go about renovating the house. She'd feed us *daube de sanglier* (wild boar stew) with fettucine. The roof of the house needed repairing, and the external walls needed re-doing in lime render. The floors were in surprisingly good repair with their hexagonal red *tomette* tiles from Salernes, nearby. The ground floor had a large kitchen. But the other side of the central hallway was just a vast stable with a manger and a pigsty in one corner. François decided to install gas lighting in the main living spaces, because the pipes could eventually be used for electricity whenever that might arrive. We had four large propane gas bottles outside the kitchen to provide hot water, cooking and lighting. We still needed many paraffin lamps with glass mantles, and lots of candles besides. Cleaning and filling lamps became a memorable holiday chore. The gas lighting was very agreeable, and we soon became used to taking a lamp up to bed at night. Heating was provided by generous fireplaces in the main rooms helped by paraffin heaters on casters. Later François bought a US Army surplus generator that he installed at the back of the house, but we rarely used it because the noise of the diesel engine was inescapable in the quiet of the countryside. François was very excited by the potential of the large acreage at Les Ginestières and was particularly keen on growing lavender and having a large-scale beekeeping operation, quite apart from putting the olive trees, vines and almond trees back into production.

Norah was visibly pregnant that spring and I returned to school to await the outcome. At the beginning of July Norah and François came to London. She had been seeing her gynaecologist, Dr Arthur Schlyer, and wanted to have the baby at the London Clinic, where he practised. Claire Marguerite Adeline was born on 24th July; luckily, I was out of school by then and François took me along to see Norah in splendour in her room with the adorable new red headed baby. He then took me along the Marylebone Road to the Globe pub opposite Baker Street station where I had probably my first beer. It was exciting in a heady, improbable way. A new chapter was beginning.



Norah triumphant in the London Clinic after the Birth of Claire, July 1955

We were quite soon back in Clavier, in a whirlwind of builders and plantsmen, beekeeping equipment sellers and all sorts of help from the village in the form of Monsieur Gamel and his mule, Jeanine Guigou to look after Claire, and others. The main planting of the lavender was to be in the autumn and the ground had to be prepared. Ploughing in the summertime was hard, and much watering was necessary. But by the next year I was caught up in a cycle of hard manual work of watering and cutting lavender, baling it up and stuffing it into the 2CV to take to nearby Seillans where there was an oil distillery that supplied the perfume trade in Grasse. It toughened me up and I found it really stimulating. The puny plants we'd put in well-spaced soon grew to be a metre in diameter, smelling divine and each covered in insects and butterflies. I was excited by the rich entomological life and, passing through Paris, I stopped at a specialist shop, N.Boubée in the Place St André des Arts, to equip myself with a net and what they called a killing jar, some setting boards and an atlas of French butterflies. I became an enthusiastic hunter of butterflies for several years.



One day Norah's furniture arrived from London in a large *Bishops Removals* van, and we were surprised at how well her rather superior bourgeois pieces sat in the generous rooms of Les Ginestières. Most of them were French to begin with. Soon we were able to move into the house and start living in this fabulous place. Surprisingly little needed to be bought apart, obviously, from the baby's layette. She was quite a noisy baby, but I enjoyed taking part in caring for her and I was really pleased to have a sister.

I think it was during that winter of 1955 that we went to Reims to meet François' family on their home turf. I took the train to Paris and went in a Simon company car to meet Norah and François at 16 rue du Marc in the centre of town near the majestic cathedral. The house was an imposing three storeys directly on the street, reached through a *porte cochère* and with a large garden at the back. The family ran a major funeral business in Reims, and Jean Simon was a director. François' mother ruled the roost at home and the house hummed with cooks and maids and even a seamstress in the attic. Baby Claire was naturally the centre of attraction, and the relief at François and Norah's

achievement was palpable. Jean was not very tall, but funny and a keen actor, whereas Marguerite was imposingly grand and Edwardian while at home (later when staying in Clavier she relaxed a lot, making wonderful pastry with her 'cool hands'). Because of their business the Simons were well connected in Reims society, to the extent that Jean bought grapes from the best houses to make his own champagne. He had several thousand bottles in his cellar that a vigneron came to turn every couple of days. I found it amazing. The house was full of children and their friends, animals and visitors. The cooking was simply wonderful, Marguerite showing off a bit for her new English relatives, and meals were served for between ten and twenty, day in and day out. François's brother Philippe was there, as was his sister Denise as well as Bernard. Norah was impressed.

Besides taking us to visit the quite fabulous Reims cathedral that he knew well, François organised for us to visit several champagne houses and their cellars, which was memorable. The cellars were carved into solid chalk and went on for hundreds of metres into the hillsides. We went both to Ay and to Pommery as guests, as I recall; there were no 'winery tours' in those days. We also visited close friends of François and Denise, Charles and Brigitte Marq who ran a large stained-glass studio in succession to Brigitte's father Jacques Simon (no relation) in the centre of Reims. For me this was a quite magical experience with vast full-size windows and huge layout tables where they were then working with Jacques Villon and Marc Chagall on windows for the cathedral of St Jean-de-Metz. The next year I went with Denise to visit them in their house in the Ardèche, a savage but beautiful barren limestone landscape on the edge of the Massif Central, where both were working on etching. After that I quite often took the train to Paris and stayed with Denise in her little studio off the rue Daguerre at Denfert-Rocherau. It was very picturesque, in an alley, with huge industrially glazed windows. Rue Daguerre was (and still is) home to a very animated street market. She generously provided me with a base in Paris that was less stuffy than staying with François' elder brother Philippe near avenue Wagram.

In 1956 Norah became pregnant again, sadly later giving birth to a stillborn girl, Alice. She was deeply affected by the experience and never recovered from it. Back in England school life continued quite uneventfully for me through 1956, but in 1957 Olga and Krot returned to London from Vienna where they had been working as translators for the War Office since the end of the war, seconded to support the Political Directorate of the Allied Council in Austria, a multi-national organisation set up in 1945 to administer Austria. Krot, in particular, had enjoyed mixing with the high-powered political negotiators, Russians, French and American as well as British. He and Olga both spoke all four relevant languages. On their return they found a first floor

flat in Hornton Street, near Kensington High Street. This very much enriched my palette of possible places to stay in London between school and catching the BEA plane to Nice. I had been staying either on the sofa at Lev and Madeleine's or with Felicity Anne Cumming in her sweet house in Smith Street, Chelsea. Her mother had become Lev's first wife after divorcing Robert Cumming, her first husband.¹⁹ Felicity had two daughters by her first husband, Henry Bowes-Lyon Young, Felicity Anne and Jessica, about my age and 'sort-of' cousins for me. She always felt close to the Rabeneck family, and was very kind to me. She'd married the writer Richard Mason,²⁰ in 1948, so her daughters and I shared mothers who were on their second marriages. Now I could stay with my real *Baboushka* and *Diedoushka*, to be spoiled with lovely Russian cooking. Olga was a wizard at *piroshki*, *borsch* and anything with sour cream or pickles. They adored rollmop herrings and sprats. Their flat was stuffed with furniture that had been in storage during their travels, including family portraits and large pieces of Biedermeier furniture that Krot loved. Over the sideboard was an amazing huge gouache of Moscow, full of life.²¹ They had a television on which we watched sport, particularly horse-racing which Krot adored, and a gramophone for music, while Olga quietly sewed or played patience using pretty small Piatnik playing cards she'd brought from Vienna. They renewed acquaintance with a wide circle of Russian émigré friends, including George Behr and his English wife Jenny, and Olga was happy to return to the Russian church in Ennismore Gardens. Occasionally we'd have some vodka and smoked salmon on *blinis*, which made me feel very grown-up. Plus, their flat was a short walk from the BEA air terminal on Cromwell Road, whence smart and rather strange special coaches in grey livery took me to Heathrow airport. When Felicity and her husband moved to Rome later in the 1950's I went only to Olga and Krot's as my staging post to Claviers. The planes got more modern; the rattling Vickers Viking gave way to the smoother four-engine Vickers Viscount, that in turn ceded to the sleek De Havilland Comet jet. Every now and then we'd make a trip to Cambridge, where Olga's brother George taught in what became the famous 'school for spies' run by Dame Elizabeth Hill,²² ²³ a close friend of Olga's, and Krot's sister Lessie, married to Olga's brother John Trapp, would come over to visit. These were very jovial Russian get-togethers at which I was quite out of my depth but happy to be with these warm people.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Cumming

²⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Mason_\(novelist,_1919-1997\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Mason_(novelist,_1919-1997))

²¹ The painting was rescued from Moscow by Leon and Marie Catoire, as recounted in the memoir of their grand-daughter Irène Micol. It was a large gouache by the painter Yon showing a bridge over the Moskva river with the Kremlin in the background, and the quays of the river bustling with shops, carriages and passers-by. It was very animated, and it was large, about two metres wide and almost a metre tall.

²² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Hill_\(linguist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Hill_(linguist))

²³ The teaching of Russian at the 'Joint Services School for Linguists' is told in detail in Geoffrey Elliott and Harold Shukman's 2003, *Secret Classrooms: An Untold Story of the Cold War*, London, St Ermin.

Also, in 1957 I became more interested in music and started to learn the trumpet at school. Charterhouse had a magnificent music school built in the school chapel, part of the original school complex, before Gilbert Scott's 1927 chapel, a Zeppelin-shed, got built. There was, too, a rich legacy of Vaughn Williams who had been a pupil at the school, before becoming Britain's favourite composer. Fortunately, it also had soundproof practice rooms. The trumpet is a demanding instrument and I found it hard to learn, but that did not damp my passion for music. I was listening to jazz and R&B on *Radio Luxemburg* in the common room; this was before the arrival of transistor radios. Besides music, all my museum going in London and meeting Denise Simon had awakened an interest in art generally that drew me to the school's freshly built art building, a modernist box on *piloti* at the edge of a vast playing field. This was the domain of the art master, Ian Fleming-Williams who created, within a conventional public school, an alternative realm where outcasts of all kinds could find refuge. He was a wonderful teacher, both in informal tutorials and in his memorable epidiastroscope lectures.²⁴ At first, I just tried to make paintings and took part in life classes, but Fleming-Williams also ran little seminars for keen pupils at which he talked about art history in a really engaging and knowledgeable way. He had a huge collection of art postcards and would quiz us mercilessly using them as flip cards. We learned a lot. It was in this way that I first started to think about architecture, idly designing little buildings.

Eventually Fleming-Williams got me interested in stage design because it was quite architectural, I suppose. In 1958 the school was to put on an abridged version of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, with some of Grieg's score as the school play for the end of year. I was asked to think about sets for the production. We had a good selection of full-height canvas flats and I drip painted them in the school colours as a motif. The flats were first painted navy blue and were then generously dripped with pale pink from the top, *à la* Clyfford Still or Jackson Pollock. The result was quite striking and considered a success. Also, in 1958 I was participating in athletics more seriously. It became a way to travel and see other schools. I specialised in throwing the javelin, which I much enjoyed, securing a place on the team. We went on coaches to Marlborough, Rugby, Lancing, Wellington and a few others.

I had sat and passed the usual O level exams in an undistinguished way, and in the summer holidays Leo invited me to India to go touring by car towards the South with his new fiancée, Barbara. We went off in a large Jaguar saloon, visiting Bangalore and the hill resort of Ooty, seeing magnificent architecture

²⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-ian-fleming-williams-1153742.html>

and even visiting a game reserve at Mudumalai in the Nilgiri mountains where I got to ride on an elephant.

In my last year at Charterhouse, 1959, I sat geography and general studies at A level, not a scholarly selection. I needed to decide on a future course of study. Leo had now remarried; he and his new wife Barbara had just relocated to the UK from Bombay, and they came to visit at Charterhouse. I vaguely remember a discussion with my father about the possibility of studying architecture, an idea to which he did not demur, and I sent off for prospectuses of the Architectural Association, the Bartlett school of the University of London and the Regent Street Polytechnic. With the help of Ian Fleming-Williams it was arranged for me to visit the Polytechnic and I was duly interviewed by the head of the school of architecture, John Walkden. I had little to show, but I did have a few attractive pastel drawings I had done of chickens in a farmyard, and that seems to have done the trick. I was offered a place on the five-year course to study architecture. My fees would be paid by my local authority, and I would have the right to a maintenance grant sufficient to live on, depending on how much my father contributed. It's hard to imagine today how simple and undemanding the procedure was, and how highly it depended on the simple judgements of Mr Walkden and his colleagues, rather than rigorous testing and academic record.

Leo and Barbara moved into a rented first-floor flat in Southwell Gardens off the Gloucester Road, with a small bedroom for me at the front, overlooking gloomy St Stephen's church. At first we got on OK but that was mostly because Barbara and Leo were out a lot and travelling, too. Their social life seemed to be controlled by a friend, John Smithard, also back from Bombay, a rather creepy cove, I thought. When we did spend time together differences loomed. I suppose I was just a normal teenager, resentful of Barbara and happy to let her know it. Fortunately, around the corner in Cornwall Gardens, in a capacious basement flat, lived a group of new London friends, Nick Pollock, John Laflin, architecture students Andrew Wright and Tim Wylie, a fashion photographer Shaun Woodnutt,²⁵ an advertising writer John Reynolds, as well as various girl-friends who came and went, including Patricia Marks, later to marry Nick Pollock's friend, art student Antony Donaldson who was then also at the Regent Street Polytechnic. There were friends who lived with their parents further out of town but who came to stay like Tim Street-Porter, also a Poly architecture student. There was plenty of jazz played loud on extemporized audio equipment with huge speakers. Bebop was king, but we also loved radical new sounds from Charlie Mingus and Ornette Coleman. For pop music we danced to Ska and American R&B such as James Brown,

²⁵ <https://ryde-ora.ptly.eu/uk/ryde/uploads/files/Obituaries/ShawnWoodnutt.pdf>

Wilson Pickett and Rufus Thomas. We despised white English pop music. This new scene was where I wanted to be, and I waited for Leo and Barbara to be out of town before inviting my new friends around for a party. There I fell for Suzanna Roper who came with the Cornwall Gardens crew, and we spent the night snogging; the flat was a mess even after clearing up, and that precipitated my move to an attic room in Elm Park Gardens above the flat of *Baboushka's* friends, George and Jenny Behr, whose daughter Natalie, studying textile design at the Royal College, was part of our scene. Leo agreed to pay me an allowance of £25/month which was quite generous on top of my maintenance grant, enough to buy records and keep the wolf from the door. I had a small Dansette record-player and a paraffin heater, and Leo had given me a full-sized drawing board and tee-square (surplus from his company's drawing office). I lived mostly on porridge and baked beans, but I was happy, thrilled to be on the loose in the big city.

5. Regent Street Polytechnic

The School of Architecture at the Poly was in an annexe building in Little Titchfield Street in the heart of the rag trade district. Our classrooms/studios were at the top of the building, but they had to be vacated each day at 5.30pm so that the evening school could use them, and all our stuff put away in lockers. The first year consisted of small design projects in studio, tests of ingenuity (bridges made of macaroni), and lots of coursework on building construction, structures, history of architecture. Later, specialist subjects like lighting and acoustics were also taught. Construction and structures were quite rigorous, taught by older staff and with demanding homework. Drawing was also taught by excellent, inspiring staff, most notably Malcolm Hughes who was a muscular abstractionist but could draw beautifully, too.²⁶ He was able to change one's thinking in really exciting ways. There was some mixing between the years so we newbies met students who were further through the course and could guide us. A year ahead of me were Peter Tabori, a brilliant Hungarian who had escaped from prison following the Russian invasion of 1956, Chester Jones and Peter Britton, as well as Basil Spence's son John. In my year were Tim Wylie and Tim Street-Porter. There were about 20% women students. Every Friday evening there was a 'hop' in the basement gymnasium with current pop records, attended by ravishing girls from the commercial studies department (secretaries-to-be) and the sociology department. It was blissful. Our social hub was an Italian coffee bar in Great Titchfield Street where one could nurse a cappuccino for an hour. But nearby there were also two cinemas that were probably at least as formative for me as the formal teaching. They were the Cameo-Poly located in the main Polytechnic building and the Academy on Oxford Street. Both were showing foreign films we wanted to see, Ingmar Bergman, Satyajit Ray, Andrzej Wajda, Jean-Luc Godard, Roger Vadim, Roberto Rossellini, Louis Malle.

I was also making friends outside the Poly, including some with whom I was keen to start a jazz group, including a guitarist, bass player piano and alto sax. I had bought a new flügelhorn that I liked for its mellow tone and we practised weekly above a pub near the Poly. But most of my new friends came through those in and around the Cornwell Gardens flat. John Reynolds introduced me to Tony Armstrong, a tailor and dressmaker through whom I met John Jesse, a dealer in Art Nouveau, and his girlfriend Sally who made and sold handbags with Perspex handles.²⁷ Tony had a shop/workroom at the top of Portobello Road near Notting Hill. We used to spend Thursday evenings in the Six Bells

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_Hughes

²⁷ Sally's brother Mick Fleetwood, a drummer, ran a successful blues band *Fleetwood Mac*.

on King's Road which had good blues and jazz bands in a large upper room.²⁸ Also on the King's Road we met Jim Wedge, a milliner, Sally Tuffin and Marion Foale who were dress designers, shoe designer Moya Bowler, Paul Babb a fashion student at the College, Virginia Ironside, daughter of Janey Ironside, professor of fashion at the Royal College of Art since 1956, photographer David Cripps, film maker Anthony Balch and others like Mim Scala, John Summers and Anthony Haden-Guest who were always around but you weren't always certain what they did. We were surrounded by lovely girls, modelling for the early efforts of our designer friends, and just finding their way into the modelling agencies like Lucie Clayton's that had grown out of a secretarial school; Twiggy (with her Svengali Justin de Villeneuve), Grace Coddington, Prudence Pratt, Sandy Moss, Jean Shrimpton, Jenny and Patti Boyd. My friend Peter Britton from the Poly had started dating Veronica Marsh, a fabric designer, while Chester Jones had started earning extra money from modelling and was going out with glamorous models. I seem to remember him winning away beautiful Vicky Strevens from Tim Wylie at some stage. Tony Armstrong made us smart straight leg trousers in wonderful morning suit striped wool that we bought directly from Dormeuil in Soho's Golden Square. Jackets and coats often came from second-hand stalls in Portobello and Church Street markets. Shoes came from theatrical shoemakers Anello and Davide in Drury Lane, elastic sided ankle boots, very pointy or chisel toed, with Cuban heels, a fashion later taken up by the Beatles and other pop groups. It was a time when the 1960s 'swinging London' fashion scene was taking off. Mary Quant and Alexander Plunkett-Green had opened their boutique Bazaar on Kings Road in 1955, and that was hugely successful. A '21Shop' had opened in the staid Woollands department store on Knightsbridge, selling clothes by Tuffin and Foale, James Wedge, Veronica Marsh, Janice Wainwright and other graduates of the Royal College of Art. The 21 Shop provided a commercial outlet for them before they were able to launch their own shops. In the evenings there were also frequent dances at the various art schools, the Royal College, Chelsea, St Martin's and the Poly itself. Life was buzzing.

Quite apart from the social and emotional excitement of the fashion world, book and record shops were a valuable refuge and I spent a lot of time up and down the Charing Cross Road going to Foyles and Zwemmers art bookshop where one could pick up second-hand rarities of modern architecture publishing (Editions Morancé folios, etc.), and Watkins in Cecil Court with its rich vein of esoterica. The jazz Mecca was Dobell's record shop at number 77, which had a few 'listening booths' so you could try-before-you-buy. Doug and Ray were committed modernists and the shop was bebop-heavy, but they

²⁸ Wally Fawkes, George Melly and George Chisholm were the rather traditional jazz house band, but Thursdays were 'blues evenings' featuring artists such as Zoot Money, Alexis Korner, Graham Bond and others.

also carried traditional jazz and they had a rich selection of US imports and continental jazz records too, usually 10" LPs featuring American artists making a living in Europe like Sidney Bechet, Bud Powell and Lester Young. Not all stimulation came from Soho; HMV records on Oxford Street had a huge eclectic selection as well as Harrods record department with its rather superior listening booths. There were small bookshops all over town, particularly around Gloucester Road and Notting Hill. I was fascinated by little magazines like Michael Horowitz's *New Directions* full of Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, and *Ambit* with contributions from Eduardo Paolozzi and J.G.Ballard.²⁹ London was still reeling from the Whitechapel Gallery's 1956 *This is Tomorrow* show that launched the pop era in Britain and that turned us all on to Richard Hamilton, Paolozzi, the Smithsons, John McHale, Reyner Banham.³⁰ I was also very impressed by Bryan Robertson's curating of the Whitechapel Gallery shows that brought much of America's abstract expressionism to London, particularly Mark Rothko in 1961. My mother Norah was close to the Gimpel Fils gallery run by brothers Charles and Peter, who had shown her friend Jan le Witt, but also several of the American abstractionists as well as St Ives painters like Peter Lanyon, a friend of Rothko's. They also showed the Irish painter Louis le Brocquy who soon, with his new wife Ann Madden, became close friends with Norah and François, often staying at Les Ginstières before finally settling nearby.³¹

In the summer of 1960, after the first year of school I went to Rome to visit my 'aunt' Felicity who had a lovely apartment at the top of a building on Via Vittoria near the Piazza di Spagna. It was the year of the Rome Olympics and there were wonderful new buildings by Luigi Nervi to explore. Although still married to Richard Mason Felicity was in a romantic relationship with a very glamorous theatre designer Beni Montresor, and he became solicitous of my progress in drawing, sending me out to see important Roman monuments.³² I didn't attend any of the Olympics, but went to Milan from Rome to see the Triennale design exhibition, partly because I was becoming interested in Italian modern architecture that felt quite different from the rather 'brutal' Corbusian style popular in the English architecture schools. In the Polytechnic library I was thrilled by the magazines *Casabella*

Continuitá, being edited by Ernesto Rogers and *Domus* by Gio Ponti. I stayed in a Milan University student dorm and spent long days at the exhibition that I found completely compelling, discovering the furniture of Vico Magistretti, the lighting of the Achille Castiglioni and Gae Aulenti, and the architecture of

²⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambit_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambit_(magazine))

³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Is_Tomorrow

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_le_Brocquy

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beni_Montresor

Gio Ponti, Carlo Scarpa, Ludvico Quaroni, Franco Albini, and BBPR (Belgioiso Peressutti and Rogers), particularly their Torre Velasca of 1958 and their recent brilliant renovation of the Sforza castle with its incredible treasures, such as Michelangelo's Rondanini pieta, the most moving piece of art I shall ever see.



Torre Velasca. Milan, 1958. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

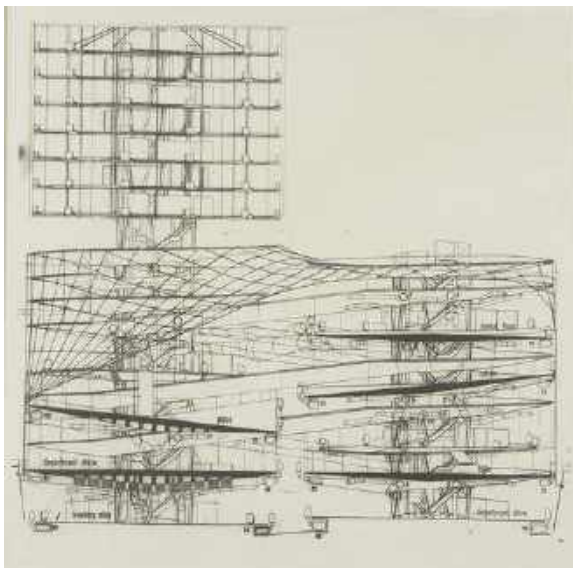
In early 1961 a group of us decided that if we lived together, we could afford the tail-end of a lease on a house. I can't remember who actually spotted Stanhope Terrace, but it was a great find. The old couple who had lived there for many years just wanted to leave with a minimum of fuss. It was a handsome stucco terrace house with a columned porch directly opposite the Lancaster Gate entrance to Kensington Gardens, set back from the noisy Bayswater Road by a little triangle of green.³³ The freeholders, The Church Commissioners, approved our taking up the lease. Our housemates included me, Chester Jones, John Reynolds, Tim Wylie, Michael Collins, Peter McCormick and more. We each had a bedroom, mine was ground floor front, and we shared the large basement kitchen/dining space. A magnificent L-shaped reception room on the first floor was kept clear for parties, of which there were many. The spaces were generous, and we enjoyed doing them up. I made diaphanous organza curtains printed in a swirling Art Nouveau pattern from Liberty, as well as an outsize Japanese lantern ceiling light. I also had a girlfriend, Alice. She and her brother Robert were striking out on their own in

³³ The site later became the hideous Royal Lancaster Hotel opened in 1967, designed by Richard Siefert. During the 1960s the government gave £1000/room subsidies to stimulate hotel construction in London.

London. Alice was beautiful and romantic, and I was really in love with her. She enjoyed our London group and our London youth fashion milieu.

At the weekends John Reynolds and I would go over with Tony Armstrong and Peter Britton to John and Sally Jesse's Notting Hill mews house taking wine for pot-luck supper to play a game of poker. I seem to remember that John Laflin was also often there. We played for money, although we were not very skilful. It was amusing.

1961 was my second year at the Poly and the project work was getting more serious. I was incubating my love of Italian modern architecture, while my classmates were more enamoured of the work of Louis Kahn and LeCorbusier. It was the first year of *Archigram* coming together as a group including Peter Cook, David Greene, Mike Webb, Ron Herron, Warren Chalk and Dennis Crompton. Cook, Greene and Webb met and collaborated on the first *Archigram* magazine, later inviting Herron, Chalk and Crompton to join them, and the magazine name stuck to them as a group. Mike Webb was at the Poly, two or three years ahead of me, and his 1962 'sin city' project for Leicester Square was inspiring. It was extravagant in scope and imagination, and beautifully drawn. Earlier he had done projects in a style later described as 'Bowellism', in part to shock the Poly staff who were mostly rather conventional Corbusian modernists. His impertinence was rewarded with a failing grade in his final year, despite the widespread fame of his project. This contrariness inspired my own later ventures into Italian-style *Continuitá* projects in my third and fourth years.



Mike Webb's 'Sin City' thesis project of 1962

The *Archigram* protagonists were older than me by 3-5 years, but they were exciting, demonstrating that with initiative and talent you could get noticed,

and it was OK to have radical ideas outside the mainstream. In the end I got to know them all through the Architectural Association and through teaching at the AA after I had been to America.

To keep our feet on the ground we were obliged to make a detailed measured drawing of a historic building. I chose Inigo Jones' Queen's House at Greenwich and enjoyed my visits to that wonderful monument, amused to find pencilled notes and dimensions on the stonework put there by my predecessors.

A generational divide in our cohort was defined by military National Service that ended gradually from 1957. It was decided that those born on or after 1 October 1939 would not be required, including most of the Archigram group. In November 1960 the last men entered service, as call-ups formally ended on 31 December 1960, and the last National Servicemen left the armed forces in May 1963 (*Wikipedia*).

In the 1961 summer holidays I remember being in Claviers, helping with the lavender and the bees, and bicycling down to the coast to swim. Norah was marvellously insouciant about these long rides when I occasionally returned the following day. I think it was also the summer when François took Norah and me a couple of times to the Aix festival to hear Mozart operas. I even remember Teresa Berganza as Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*, reprising her debut role of 1957. We'd leave Claire with Jeanine and set out in the afternoon in the 2CV, arriving just in time for an early supper at the *Deux Garçons* on the Cours Mirabeau, eating on the terrace beneath the magnificent plane trees, before walking over to the beautiful open-air theatre. For a young Englishman it was completely magical. But I think 1961 was also the year in which François began to get early premonitions of the multiple sclerosis that would later kill him at the age of 68.

To supplement my income, I joined a team of graphic artists organised by a friend to paint large factory process charts on mylar, applying colour to the reverse. It was exacting and tiring, but it paid well and allowed me to take a few holidays. But then, amid this intense year, disaster struck. I behaved very badly towards Alice, in an unforgiveable way. She went back to live in Cornwall Gardens, where she was comforted by Nick Pollock, who promptly married her. They were to have three children in quick succession. Later, in 1964 she opened her shop 'Quorum' in Radnor Walk off the King's Road with the fizzy Royal College fabric designer Celia Birtwell who married Ossie Clark, another designer for Alice's shop.³⁴

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Pollock



Celia Birtwell by David Hockney

At some time in 1962, I met Jenny Fussell, a sociology student at the Poly, probably at the Flamingo All Nighter club in Wardour Street. Jenny lived at home in Kentish Town with her parents, who were conventional and reserved, but she liked the club scene and we started going out, to the relatively staid Cy Laurie's in Ham Yard, Soho and to the much funkier Flamingo, on Wardour Street, which was a serious blues and R&B venue. The house band *The Blue Flames* was led by the organist and singer Georgie Fame, a specialist in the wry music of Mose Allison (*Parchman Farm*, etc) as well as King Pleasure and Ray Charles. Visiting musicians such as John Lee Hooker and Stevie Wonder used to drop in to play, as well as good British bluesmen like Zoot Money, Eric Clapton and Alexis Korner. The music was first rate. On weeknights when there was often no band you could sometimes dance to Count Suckle and his Sound System, insanely pulsing ska music from Jamaica.³⁵

I introduced Jenny to my Stanhope Terrace friends, and she became very interested in the fashion dimension. David Cripps took beautiful photos of Jenny. David was courting Janice Wainwright who was working for Simon Massey. But then Ron Traeger photographed Jenny in some Tuffin and Foale dresses that he showed to Vogue, probably to Marit Allen, and that resulted in a six-page shoot for Vogue. We had become friendly with his other muse, the first super model, Twiggy and her manager Justin de Villeneuve, and this may have led Jenny to sign up with Lucie Clayton's new modelling agency even while continuing with her Poly work. She started to get paying work as a

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Flamingo_Club

model that developed into a successful career. She became one of Vidal Sassoon's favourite models, the muse for his Grecian Goddess look in 1967.



Despite the traumatic upheavals of the year, I managed to complete the Part 1 exams and even won two prizes. One, a travelling scholarship from the Worshipful Company of Carpenters would allow me to spend part of the summer in Aix-en-Provence that had captivated me earlier on my opera visits with François and Norah. I also won an award from a wallpaper manufacturer, the Shand Kydd Prize, for 'outstanding work', getting nominated for an Anglo-American student exchange with University Schools of Architecture in the U.S.A. I chose the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, home to architects Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi, with excellent jazz, and only two hours from New York by coach. I would go in the summer vacation of 1964.

In 1963 the lease at Stanhope Terrace came to an end and we hunted for another end of lease property. For a while I rented an old stable building in St Michael's Street, Paddington, that was pretty unhealthy. But then we managed to find a flat at 27, Lexham Gardens off the Cromwell Road, again with the tail end of a lease that would not be too expensive. It was on the fifth floor without a lift, but it had a good outlook on two sides. Apart from me the initial group included fellow architecture students Tim Wylie and Andy Wright, plus John Reynolds from Cornwell Gardens, Peter McCormick, an Irish friend working in computers for J. Lyons, and maybe another student, Michael Collins. We each had a room, but we ate in the communal kitchen; there was only one bathroom.

We got on well, our relationships cemented by intersections of beat literature, jazz, fashion and girlfriends. A flat on the first floor was rented by Giorgio Gomelsky, manager of a noisy British R&B band the *Yardbirds* with their guitarist Jeff Beck and occasionally Eric Clapton.³⁶ Giorgio was a cosmopolitan adventurer from Tiflis, Georgia who ran the Crawdaddy Club and who knew just about every R&B artist in Britain plus American musicians he'd pair up with them. The most notable for us was Sonny Boy Williamson who stayed with Giorgio when in London which was frequent. He used to come up to our flat for a joint or just to hang out and listen to records when he was bored during the day. He'd often pull out his harmonica and play along. He was a funny and charming old bluesman whom we held in some awe. One day he got into trouble by singeing a chicken he'd been plucking in Giorgio's bathtub, causing the smoke alarms to go off.

But I was distracted by the need to work hard in my third year, that was due to culminate in the RIBA Part1 exam. The year started with a few quick projects – a chapel in corrugated metal and one or two others – but then the work became more challenging and included a full set of working drawings of one's main design project. The project set was for a pub on the river at Greenwich, where I developed a shamelessly Neo-Liberty design drawn up in beautiful watercolours on Whatman paper. The working drawings were done in ink on drafting linen. Although the aesthetic of the design troubled the teaching staff, the technical skill of the working drawings made it hard for them to criticise. I was partly inspired by the work of Paul Power, a fellow student much taken with mediaeval and esoteric design (Rudolf Steiner was a big influence). John Spence, Sir Basil's son, was doing work in a similar vein. We were much inspired by the Italian work viciously disparaged by Reyner

³⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgio_Gomelsky

Banham in a famous 1959 article.³⁷ We even edited a magazine *Polygon*, to propagate our heresies, managing to attract contributions from Ernesto Rogers and Bruno Zevi!³⁸

My summer in Aix made a big impression. I went there without Jenny from Clavières on a second-hand Mobyette, with my Sennelier drawing books and clothes on the pillion. I was able to stay in university lodgings very cheaply, and to eat with kids doing a summer college programme. My days were spent getting to know all the fabulous 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings in the compact centre of town, the markets and mossy fountains, and the amazing sculpture and ironwork balconies. I made dozens of drawings. Sometimes I ventured out of town on the Mobyette, to the abbey of Sénanque, to Picasso's marvellous Vauvenargues chateau. It was an immersive month's experience and it taught me a great deal about what makes successful architecture.

Back in Clavières, Norah was bringing Les Ginestières to perfection and plenty of friends were coming to stay, both French and English. Nearby was the Chateau de Méaulx which had belonged to Mlle Bouillé-Karr, a niece of the well-known Provençal critic and novelist Alphonse Karr.³⁹ She lived in solitary splendour with a house full of misfits she had befriended, and we were always welcome for an aperitif on the terrace. The chateau had a magnificent *bassin* in which I loved to swim, full of little snakes and frogs. But, by now François was showing symptoms of multiple sclerosis and was going to St Anne hospital in Toulon for tests and early therapies. He would feel wobbly on his legs and would tire easily. It was worrying, but he remained in good spirits, writing film scripts and working part-time for the local notary in Bargemon. There he got to hear of probate sales on pieces of land near the Ginestières, auctioned "*a la bougie*", whereby bidders had to arrive before a candle went out. They never did, and he was able to buy up quite a few parcels for very little, some of which he later used to build houses for Norah and himself, when the stairs at Les Ginestières became too difficult for him.

Eventually Mlle Bouillé-Karr died and the chateau was bought by film director Albert Lamorisse, who with his family became great friends of Norah and François. In the late 1950s Lamorisse had made *Le Ballon Rouge*, and *Crin-Blanc*, two films that enchanted film goers of all ages at the time.⁴⁰

³⁷ Reyner Banham, "Neoliberty, the Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture", *Architectural Review*, Vol 125, No 747, April 1959. Banham's allegiance to 'bauhaus modernism' historiography blinded him to the subtleties of the new Italian architecture.

³⁸ <https://westminster-atom.arkivum.net/index.php/arc-3-4>

³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Alphonse_Karr

⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Lamorisse

In Paris on the way home I was introduced to friends of François, a writer Maurice Pons, and the theatre producer Peter Brook. They wanted to translate John Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* into French for a Paris production. It is a strange vaguely anti-military play. They asked if I would go and work on the translation with Maurice at the Moulin d'Andé in Normandy. This was a sort of rural art foundation run by Suzanne Lipinska, which had become popular with *nouvelle vague* directors – François Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* was shot there in 1962, for example. We had a very agreeable time working on the translation, but it was tough finding French equivalents for nineteenth century English military slang. The play was eventually put on in Paris but did not much better than it had at the Royal Court.

In London I was to spend a year 'out', that is working in an office to gain experience of the real world, before returning for the final two years. John Spence helped me get a job at Basil Spence's office on Fitzroy Square, where I joined a team working on the newly established Exeter University, specifically the physics building. My task was to ensure the proper integration of the mechanical and electrical services in the building, and that meant calculating shaft sizes and ceiling spaces. It was interesting; a world unknown to me before. I enjoyed working with the engineers particularly. This involvement with the practicalities of how buildings are really put together lent perspective to my own design efforts. It very much sowed the seeds of my future interest in methods of construction.

That winter in London Felicity introduced me to Brion Gysin, a painter and beat poet, her great friend and soul brother, as she claimed, who lived partly in Tangier.⁴¹ I was captivated. I was already keen on the beats, Kenneth Patchen, Ferlinghetti, Corso and Ginsberg. They were common currency in the London small bookshops and magazines. In the 1963 spring break I was in Paris and went to see Brion who was staying in Madame Rachou's seedy little hotel in rue Git-le-Coeur in the 6th Arrondissement behind place St Michel with his lover Ian Sommerville, a brilliant Cambridge mathematician and programmer.⁴² They were best friends with William Burroughs, also living in the hotel at that time, although weak from a British apomorphine cure for his heroin addiction, and struggling with the Grove Press in America over the American edition of *Naked Lunch* that had just come out. Brion was experimenting with a sort of semi-automatic writing system originated by Burroughs that involved the slicing up of texts and their re-arrangement to produce unexpected meanings. Ian had made a 'dream machine' with Brion, a perforated card drum that revolved on a turntable with light playing through

⁴¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brion_Gysin

⁴² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_Hotel

slots in the rim; when stared at intently alpha rhythms in the brain would become stimulated producing a strange dream state. A lot of pot was smoked, too. Although I was staying in Denise's studio, I was spending all my time at the Beat hotel, thrilled by the dopey ambiance and the experimental work.

After the year out experience my fourth year at the Poly in 1964 was relatively uneventful. There was a strong emphasis on technical work and a sense of preparation for professional life. Projects required some technical dimension, be it acoustic design or lighting. John Spence, a year ahead of me, was working on his diploma project, flats for the new British embassy in Rome being designed by his father. The plan was that as soon as I graduated the following year I could go and help John in Rome with his important commission. Sadly, that did not happen. But I felt the need to supplement my income and I had met James Gowan when he came as an outside reviewer of our Part 1 work. He was just going through the breakup of his practice with James Stirling in the wake of their great success, the Leicester University Engineering building. In fact, my first work for James was on details of external works for that building. James Gowan lived with his family in a house on Gloucester Road, and the office occupied the lower floors. He was a soft-spoken very witty Scot with a beautiful architectural sensibility. He was completely different from his ex-partner Stirling, rambunctious, even outrageous, yet a very original mind. My first work was detailing construction of flats for the Greater London Council at Trafalgar Road, Greenwich. James had designed an expressionistic and stylised low-rise red-brick project, that was nevertheless very well planned.

The next project James asked me to work on was a house in Hampstead for Chaim Schreiber, a furniture manufacturer who had made a fortune using moulded plywood to make storage units. The design was forbiddingly modern in sombre blue bricks, but with very elegant interior spaces and lots of built-in moulded plywood storage. I worked particularly on the built-in storage and on an underground circular swimming pool with a glass domed roof, a fascinating exercise in complex geometries and tilework. I met the Schreibers a few times and was quite taken with this style of luxury patronage. James seemed unmoved by the wealth on display and just kept emphasising the need for sound detailing and modernist principles.



The underground pool at the Schreiber House

That summer Brion Gysin had suggested I come down to Tangier where he and Felicity would be. I went first to Claviers, where François' health was clearly deteriorating. He spent the summer at Lamalou les Bains, a mineral spa with a reputation for neuralgic diseases while Norah stayed mostly at home. They had enrolled Claire in a smart school in Cannes, Lochabair, and had bought a nice flat in block called the Michel Ange, but sadly Claire didn't much like the school and spent only one year there.

I took a bus along the coast to Barcelona, a train to Madrid and on to Algeciras riding on the open ends of the carriages across the endless plains of La Mancha, feeling like Don Quixote. In Tangier I stayed with Felicity in a white painted traditional courtyard house, spending my time exploring the city and its souks, drinking endless mint tea, and dining out with Brion and Felicity at a restaurant he had opened several years before. After dinner we would go and hear Berber music played by the Master Musicians of Jajouka from the Rif mountains who had been 'adopted' by Brion. Their music was extraordinary, very skilful, with vivid complex rhythms and long eerie tonal riffs that stuck in your mind.⁴³ I had met two sweet old French ladies who ran the *Librairie des Colonnes* in Tangier, a real cultural hot spot. They took a shine to me and helped organise a trip to the Rif mountains. It was quite magical, high up on snowy barren slopes with distant views of the Mediterranean, playing my flugelhorn in the open air. Marijuana is the cash crop there, of a very high quality, and I was planning to bring some home

⁴³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Master_Musicians_of_Jajouka_led_by_Bachir_Attar

before my stupidity was thankfully pointed out to me. I would certainly have been betrayed to the police for a fee.

Once back in Tangier Brion organised a trip to visit Paul and Jane Bowles who lived just outside town, facing the Atlantic. Paul was a musician before he was a writer and had originally introduced Brion to the musicians of Jajouka in 1951.⁴⁴ Jane was unwell, having suffered a stroke some years before, but Paul was hospitable and interested in my trip to the Rif. I had read *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down*, and I admired his writing, seeing him as a proto-beat. Indeed, he was friendly with Burroughs, Corso, and the rest as well as with Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote and Gore Vidal. He was especially close with Brion. They were both, I suppose, Tangerine aristocracy.

From Tangier I planned a trip to Marrakesh by bus, via Rabat and Casablanca. Denise had taught art in Rabat for a while, and I was curious to see the city. The bus ride across the desert to Marrakesh was arid yet magical, rolling into town with the windows down at nightfall. I stayed in a cheap hotel that Brion had recommended, directly overlooking the huge plaza of Jemaa el-Fnaa, throbbing with life late into the night. Despite the bedbugs, the hotel was fine, with a rooftop terrace from which to admire the spectacle of the city.⁴⁵ During the day I explored the cafés, the endless alleys of the souks and the beautiful Menara and Majorelle gardens. At last, I felt as if I were actually in Africa.

Back in London Jenny and I met Chris and Jan Finch. Jan was making and selling pretty mini-dresses and Chris, originally from Guernsey, had come out of Chelsea School of Art to start writing about contemporary pop art in *Art International*, and to write catalogue texts for London galleries. A little later he became a regular contributor to Mario Amaya's *Art and Artists*, which was the leading contemporary art magazine at the time – certainly the liveliest. Through Chris I met Eduardo Paolozzi and an Iranian art student Tony Shafrazi who was at the Royal College. Chris played the double bass, loved jazz and was someone I felt close to. He was also keen on beat literature; he knew a lot about the world I had been sampling in Paris and Tangier. One day Bill Burroughs had come to Stanhope Terrace just before we were due to leave it, with Antony Balch whom I knew from the King's Road. Antony wanted to make a film that could dramatize Brion and William's cut-up techniques and the psychological disturbances of Ian's dream machine. They thought our L-shaped living room would make a perfect set. *Towers Open Fire* with voice over narration by Bill was the nine-minute result that can now be seen on YouTube.

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Bowles

⁴⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jemaa_el-Fnaa

In early 1964, Alice's shop 'Quorum' opened with Celia Birtwell. I think Jenny came with me down to Claviers for the Easter holidays. François and Norah were hospitable but there was no strong spark of affection towards Jenny. François was clearly deteriorating, attacks alternating with remissions in unpredictable ways, and increasing doses of cortisone. The stress on Norah was beginning to affect her health. She was relieved when he went to the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris for quite a while, to be treated by Professors Castaignes and Chain. Norah went to England in the autumn, staying with her friend Lorna near Stratford on Avon. Claire was enrolled for a term at Millfield, a famous progressive school where she did a lot of riding, and I went to visit them in Chipping Camden; the following year she went back to the village school in Claviers where she was much happier.

In London I was doing quite a lot of graphic design work, scent bottles and packaging for Tony Armstrong, a graphic style and packaging for Norah's preparations, made up by Creighton Laboratories and sold in Fortnum and Mason, and a fascia design for John Jesse's first shop in Kensington Church Street. John had been dealing in decorative art from his stall in Portobello, but the time had come for a more permanent installation. Every penny had gone into acquiring the lease, so we had to do the fascia in simple painted letters, but it did look good.

I was preparing for my trip to Philadelphia. I had received an introduction to the offices of Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larsen (H2L2), a firm founded by the great classicist and professor at Penn, Paul Cret.⁴⁶ They had agreed to host my summer work exchange. I was keen to make a photographic record of my travels and I bought a Canon Dial 35 half-frame camera, introduced in 1963. This would allow twice as many exposures on each roll of 35mm film. It was powered by a clockwork motor in the handle. I thought it too cool for words.

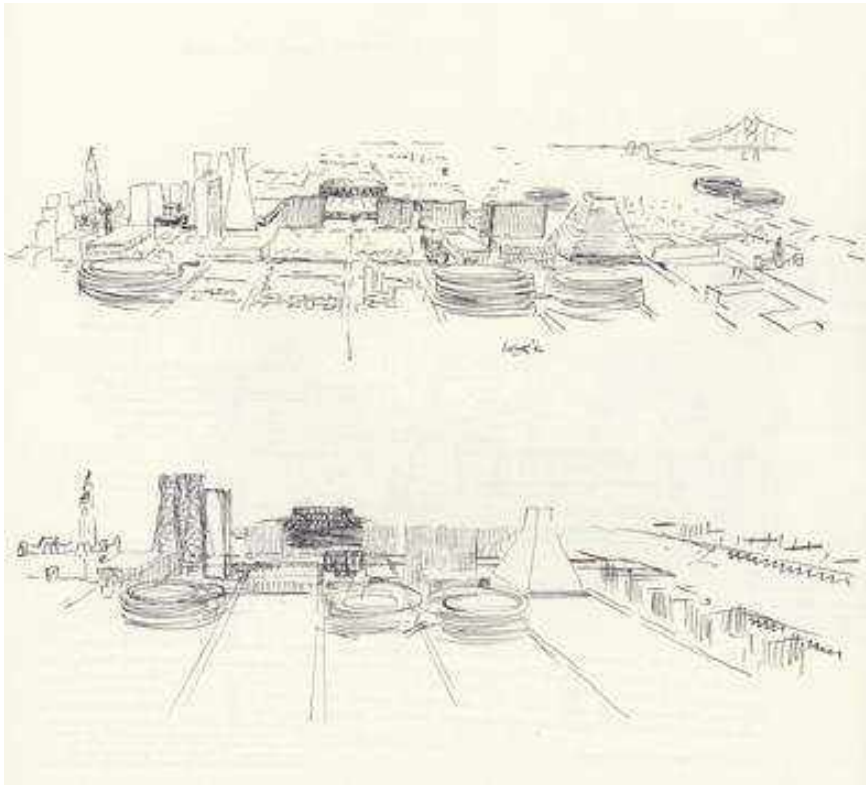
⁴⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H2L2>



Canon Dial 35 half-frame camera with motor drive.

A great benefit of the exchange was that it included the legendary *Greyhound* \$99 unlimited bus ticket. Arriving in Philadelphia I found a cheap boarding house near Rittenhouse Square close to the centre of town and just a short walk from the office. The excitement and the strangeness of America were palpable. H2L2's offices were on an upper floor of a venerable old skyscraper. Just rising in the elaborate bronze elevator was thrilling. I received a friendly welcome and was put to work on the design of a new library building for Haverford, a quaker college northwest of Philadelphia. My soft pencil perspectives were appreciated. Later I was let loose on a competition entry for a fountain on the Parkway. I adored the ordinary aspects of American city life – cheap copious breakfasts with endless coffee and iced water, great local newspapers, hamburgers. The firm was quite staid in its outlook, but the younger members told me about the offices of Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi, and they set my itineraries for exploring Philadelphia. I was awed by Howe and Lascaze's 1932 PSFS building on Market Street; I adored Frank Furness' Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and his library for Penn; his muscular and original style appealed to my love for the quirky and unusual. I had yet to read Pevsner's *The Englishness of English Art* that would explain this predilection. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, set on a hill at the end of the long diagonal Parkway that challenged the order of William Penn's rectilinear city plan, was an eye opener, home to Cezanne's *Baigneuses*, Thomas Eakins, great local works and tons of great cubism, notably Juan Gris.

Philadelphia was undergoing an intense period of city planning under Ed Bacon, the charismatic planner and theorist who appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine during my visit. His work inspired that of Louis Kahn and when colleagues arranged for me to visit Kahn's office the walls were covered with plans for a giant downtown redevelopment known as Market Street East, that would re-generate a large swath of seedy and tired buildings near city hall.



Louis Kahn sketches for Market Street East

The scheme would include the rebuilding of rail and coach terminals, much retail space and huge amounts of office space. I knew I had found the subject for my final year project at the Poly. I spent time in the city's planning office and garnered all the data about the project that I could, as well as plans and maps, transportation information and site photos.

I invited myself to visit Robert Venturi's office, explaining that I was on a summer exchange from London. He generously took me to visit the recently completed house designed for his mother Vanna, a modest yet powerful expression of his ideas about the value of the ordinary. I loved the house and the sensibility of its architect. It was truly inspiring for me.



Vanna Venturi house, Philadelphia

At the weekends I would board a *Greyhound* bus to New York, which was yet another dimension of wonderful Americanness. The sheer scale and hugeness of the city was intoxicating, with far more to discover than I could hope to achieve in a few weekends. Of course, I visited the great skyscrapers, the Met, MOMA, the Frick, etc. but of an evening I was in the jazz clubs, nursing long Tom Collins cocktails for hours on end. There was no admission charge then, but a two-drink minimum. My favourite was the Half Note on Hudson Street where I heard John Coltrane and Charlie Mingus, but above all Lee Konitz and Lennie Tristano. I was completely captivated by those two with their cool fluid music. Tristano often continued playing between sets, doodling his elaborations of JS Bach lines. Whenever I missed the last bus back to Philadelphia I walked up to Central Park and slept on a bench, not something one would do today. John Jesse had given me an introduction to Lillian Nassau, the doyenne of antique dealers selling *Art Nouveau*, and I bought a Tiffany desk set from her. John was then supplying her with Tiffany lamps sourced in Europe for her shop on Third Avenue. In Philadelphia, there was great jazz on South Broad Street. The 'Clef' had a horseshoe shaped bar with the band elevated in the middle. It was famous as a try-out place for bands later to appear in New York clubs. I particularly remember Roland Kirk and his band with the wonderful pianist, Horace Parlan. I got talking to Kirk during an interval; being blind he was sensitive to my English accent and tickled to learn I was from London, where he had been very well received. His multi-sax blowing style was inspirational and very moving, with its slave-chant and blues colours. I would walk home at two in the morning on a cloud.

When I wasn't going to New York I was exploring easily reached modern architecture as far as New Haven, Saarinen's Morse College and Rudolph's Yale School of Architecture, not to mention Kahn's Richards laboratories and Bryn Mawr colleges. At the end of my stay, I was allowed two weeks travelling time before returning for my final year. Understandably, I made a beeline for Chicago where I could see all the great turn of the century work of Sullivan and Wright, Burnham and Root, Holabird and Roche, not to mention the newer work of Mies van der Rohe at IIT and on the lakeshore. The bus trip was gruelling, but Chicago was easy to navigate on an excellent local bus service. I visited blues clubs and music shops on the South Side and toured the famous suburbs like Oak Park, marvelling at Frank Lloyd Wight's early houses, some of which were then in obvious disrepair. I even went by bus up to Racine to admire the Johnson's Wax headquarters and other lakeside buildings, before returning to New York to make my transatlantic connection. My overall experience of America was amazing; I returned feeling energized and able to confront any challenge with my own version of American initiative and enthusiasm. It was all so different from the post-war pessimism and

poverty of thought that set the tone of London, and Britain generally. I suppose I was inspired.

In my final year at the Poly my tutor was Neave Brown, a young American born architect working for Camden on housing.⁴⁷ He was inspiring and supportive of my Philadelphia project. Another tutor was Richard Rogers, fresh from his Fulbright Fellowship at Yale.⁴⁸ I was quick to point out my admiration for his cousin Ernesto Rogers of BBPR in Milan, and the editor of *Casabella Continuitá*, although Richard himself was a more ‘traditional’ modernist. There were plenty of reviews and group ‘crits’ of my project’s progress, with giant unwieldy drawings and crude models, but generally things went well. Jenny’s modelling career was taking off and she started to make money, even as our ‘fashion’ friends were making their mark, either in London shops or increasingly through tie-ups with American shops and distributors, hungry for English ‘youthquake’ fashion since the Beatles smash hit US tour of the year before. Barbara Hulaniki’s *Biba* opened in September, and there was a rash of new fashion boutiques all over London, not least John Stephens men’s wear on Carnaby Street in Soho. The magazines *Nova* and *Honey* soon appeared to popularise fashion that until then had appeared mostly in the more up-market *Vogue* and *Queen*. Tony Armstrong’s girlfriend, Prudence Pratt,⁴⁹ was very successful as a model, as was Chester Jones’s Sandy Moss, who worked for *Paraphernalia*’s Betsy Johnson and often went to New York. By then Tony had a shop on Walton Street near South Kensington. Chester’s modelling continued to prosper, but when he graduated from the Poly, he went to work for Chapman Taylor architects. Bobby Chapman had married Virginia, the younger daughter of Mollie and Clare Robinson, who had looked after me so well while I was at Charterhouse. Bobby and Virginia frequently visited Les Ginestières, sometimes with Mollie and Clare, and one of Chester’s first assignments was to design a small house for them adjacent to the Ginestières.

I worked hard on my project, talking to consulting engineers and anyone else who would listen. I produced massive drawings on mylar, some attractive models and a thick written report explaining the logic of my scheme. All of which produced a good result. Years later when I was trying to secure evidence of my record at the Poly, the school archivist sent me a contemporary note by head of school John Walkden, the one who had liked my chicken drawings five years earlier:

⁴⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neave_Brown

⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Rogers

⁴⁹ Prudence later married lawyer Stephen Michell, and they lived close to Jenny and I in Highgate. Prudence was tragically killed in the Lockerbie plane crash disaster, for the victims of which Stephen acted as class action lawyer.

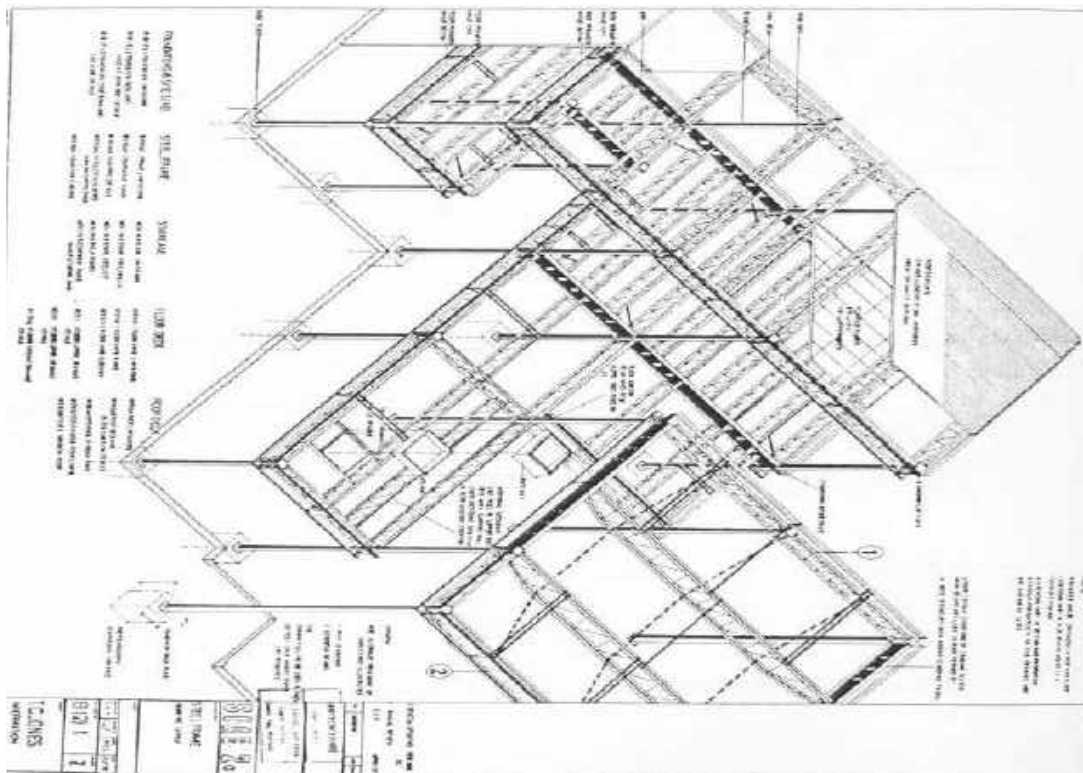
“For his diploma project, after a considerable amount of fact-finding on the spot, he chose the development of a transport centre for the city of Philadelphia, a scheme that has been submitted as the best pass of the year to the Royal Institute of British Architects. This scheme showed a remarkable intellectual grasp of an intensely complicated architectural problem, and he has been given a Diploma with Distinction, the highest award the school can bestow.”

Indeed, the R.I.B.A awarded me £100 and a silver medal as one of the three best students in the country in 1965. After a holiday in Claviers with Jenny I had to think about earning a living. Many of my contemporaries were going into local authority architect departments or central government. It was a time when nearly 50% of architects worked in the public sector. The Greater London Council or Camden were favourites. But I was interested in industrialised ‘system building’, that is buildings assembled from systems of standard parts, such as the schools of Hertfordshire County Council built in the CLASP system. I had been as impressed as the Italians in 1960 with a Nottingham primary school erected in the grounds of the Milan Triennale, that had been awarded a gold medal. It showed how modern methods could result in very sympathetic architecture.



1960. The prize-winning CLASP school at the Milan Triennale. Trevor Prosser and Dan Lacey, Job architects for Nottingham County Council (*Publifoto Milan*)

Andy Wright, one of the original denizens of Cornwall Gardens had lined up a job working for Max Gray and his partner John Beresford in Covent Garden. Max had worked for years inside Hertfordshire County Council and now depended heavily on them for school commissions as a private architect. I went to see the partners in the top floor of a handsome old building on Bedford Street that also housed the offices of *The Lady* magazine, and they offered me a job right away.



Isometric schematic of the SEAC Mark 2 steel framed system used at Max Gray and Partners.

The great thing about working for Max Gray was that he just let you get on with it. He was avuncular and encouraging and had a steady supply of commissions that were to be built using the SEAC system of component construction, for which we had copious documentation in the office. I think I started with a simple primary school for Bishops Stortford. Later I graduated to a three-story science block for Watford Boys Grammar School among several other projects. Every now and then we'd go up to Hertford County Council offices for meetings, where Max was treated like visiting royalty, having been active in the first system-built schools while working for the county. Not only would we produce the designs and working drawings, but we got to visit the sites and to supervise the work of the contractors. I quickly gained well-rounded experience of architectural practice. After work I would sometimes walk up to the Architectural Association (AA) on Bedford Square where I had friends in the Archigram group like Dennis Crompton and Peter Cook, and I was introduced to some of the leading lights of the school like Cedric Price and Roy Landau. The AA was very convivial, with a bar and frequent dances and lectures.

I also found time for some extra-curricular activity. Thomas Neurath, a fellow Carthusian and the heir apparent at Thames and Hudson, was planning the uniform English edition of Willi Boesiger's complete works of Le Corbusier,

and he asked me to provide a translation of the text for Volume IV, covering 1938-46. In print at last!



Andrew and Jenny photographed by Terence Donovan at the wedding party of Peter Britton and Veronica Marsh in 1966.

6. Harkness Fellowship

In late 1966 an announcement appeared on the AA noticeboard inviting application for Harkness Fellowships. This was a two year all expenses paid opportunity in America, open to recent graduates in all disciplines. It was analogous to the famous Fulbright fellowships for Americans wishing to come to Europe.⁵⁰ I did not think much about it, but Andy Wright encouraged me to apply. All that was required was the completion of a long questionnaire and a statement of what one hoped to achieve through the fellowship. Now, in 1965 *Architectural Design* had published a completely fascinating article on school construction in California known as SCSD.⁵¹ This article had a profound effect on me. The Author, Christopher Arnold and his partner Ezra Ehrenkrantz were doing everything that I felt was missing in the SEAC and CLASP systems. Instead of county architects designing systems and instructing industry to make them, SCSD was about telling industry what was needed in terms of performance and expecting industry to respond with design approaches. The job of the co-ordinating architects was just to ensure proper compatibility between the parts. This very much seemed to me the better way to go about it.

So, I filled in the form and put together a statement that I hoped might attract the selection panel. I wanted to go to the University of California to study with Ehrenkrantz who was teaching there, and to visit other academics at MIT and Harvard. I sent off my application and forgot about it. But a couple of months later I was contacted by the London office of the Fellowship and was invited to an interview. All I now remember was a long shiny conference table at the English-Speaking Union with about fifteen distinguished academics and professionals spread along the far side, including Lord Holford for planning and architecture, Eric Ashby for the scientists and Bryan Robertson for the artists, plus assorted worthies. The candidate sat in the middle of the near side, unable to keep an eye on all of them. The questioning was friendly but astute, and one had plenty of time to make a fool of oneself. I was nervous but I talked about the general issues of school building and how I was an admirer of the approach being tried in California and could learn from it.

Shortly after the interview I was invited to meet Martha English at the English-Speaking Union, who informed me that I was to be awarded a fellowship. I could hardly believe it. She explained that it would not be possible for me to free wheel around half a dozen universities where there were scholars I wanted to meet; I had to choose one and to enrol for a higher degree there. That way

⁵⁰ <https://www.harknessfellows.org.uk>

⁵¹ Arnold, Christopher 1965 'SCSD Project USA: School Construction Systems Development' *Architectural Design* May, pp. 324-335.

Harkness could keep an eye on me. Jenny and my friends were happy, but we had a lot to sort out before our departure in September. First there was the issue of marital status. The fellowship paid a married allowance of \$150 a month on top of the generous stipend of about \$600. There was a books allowance, travel and university tuition were paid for, and after a few months one would be given a new car to help getting about. We decided to get married before leaving and Eduardo Paolozzi gave us a copy of his *Moonstrips Empire News* collection of prints for a wedding gift.⁵²

In the spring of 1967, my grandfather Krot died peacefully, leaving Olga a widow in their flat at Watchfield Court in Chiswick, although she was close to many friends there. Leaving for America in September I would miss my professional practice exam, and thus would not officially become an architect recognised in law. But this lacuna never caused a problem for me in my professional career.

In the summer we had moved to a first floor flat at 94 Clifton Hill in Maida Vale, next to a pub. Jenny quickly got a sweet little cat, Inez, and we decorated the place as best we could, including a tiny kitchen in white mosaic. The flat upstairs was rented by Joe Harriott, a Jamaican jazz musician pioneer of Free Jazz whom I much admired. He, his trumpet player Shake Keane, bassist Coleridge Goode, pianist Pat Smythe and drummer Phil Seaman were phenomenally gifted musicians, and I often went to hear them. We became friendly with Joe when he finally accepted that we really did love his music.⁵³ For the wedding Tony Armstrong set about making a magnificent outfit for Jenny in an astonishing orange and gold French brocade. It had a culotte skirt and a jacket. The wedding took place on September 1, at Marylebone Town Hall on the Marylebone Road. Chris Finch was best man, and the photos were taken by David Cripps (we never saw them). A wedding lunch party was held at Manzi's off Leicester Square, our favourite restaurant, for about thirty people.



⁵² <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/paolozzi-moonstrips-empire-news-65451/8>

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Harriott

Both Norah and Leo came, but by themselves, plus the core of our London friends and Jenny's parents. We had arranged to let Tony Armstrong take over our flat (and Inez), and on September 7 we boarded the venerable Queen Elizabeth at Southampton bound for New York. On the trip we met other Harkness fellows including Jessica and Frank Duffy an architect who had been at the AA, Andrée and Colin Blakemore a neurobiologist, Brett Whiteley an Australian painter who was going to stay in New York. There were others besides. First, though, the ship stopped in Le Havre, where we were met by Peter Britton and his sister Jocelyn, who were touring in Northern France.⁵⁴



The Queen Elizabeth approaching New York's Manhattan piers.

Five days later, once the ship had eased into its berth at the edge of Manhattan in the early morning, we disembarked to be whisked to a good midtown hotel. Later we went to Harkness House, a fine Fifth Avenue mansion where we were met by Martha English and other Harkness grandees including Gorley Putt, the doyen of the fellowships, before being taken to the Rainbow Room at the Rockefeller Center for a dinner. The spectacle of twinkling Manhattan from the viewing balcony on a balmy evening was perfectly magical. But we were also coming to an America on the verge of tragic unrest. The Vietnam war was raging, but with strong resistance among the young who understandably feared conscription. In the summer of 1967 President Lyndon B. Johnson had already set up the Kerner Commission to examine the nearly two dozen recent black uprisings in cities across the country, most notably in Newark and Detroit.⁵⁵

Before leaving New York Jenny and I went down to the Chelsea Hotel, a famous artist's hang out where Brett Whiteley was planning to live, and where

⁵⁴ Jocelyn had been married to the brilliant cartoonist Timothy Birdsall who died tragically young of leukaemia in 1963.

⁵⁵ Jelani Cobb, "A Warning Ignored", *New York Review of Books*, August 19, 2021.

Pat and Tony Donaldson (another Harkness fellow and artist) had stayed *en route* to Los Angeles the year before. Pat, a theatre designer, had been a denizen of the Cornwall Gardens crowd, and Tony had been a year ahead of me at Charterhouse, before pursuing a successful student career at the Slade after starting out at Regent Street Polytechnic.

We had been offered the chance to fly to our destinations, but the experience of the liner followed by a rail crossing of America was the preferred option. We took the Twentieth Century Limited from Grand Central to Chicago's LaSalle Street Station, just in time because the service ended in December that year. It was a magnificently luxurious train, complete with negro porters and sumptuous dining car. In Chicago we changed to Union Station to catch the California Zephyr to Richmond, near our destination, Berkeley.



The California Zephyr in 1970

The Zephyr was an even more amazing experience than the Twentieth Century, taking us over the Mississippi and across Iowa and Nebraska to climb up to Denver by the end of the first day. The next day it crossed Colorado, Utah and Nevada where the mountain and desert scenery is simply magnificent, before entering California at Truckee and dropping down across the state to arrive at Richmond on the San Francisco Bay. Once in Berkeley we were put up in International House North of the campus. The UC Berkeley cohort of Harkness Fellows was large enough to merit a welcoming dinner presided by a Harkness administrator from New York. Frank Duffy and I were the only architects from the UK, but there were plenty of physicists, biologists, law students, anthropologists and sociologists. There were also fellows from Europe and from Australasia. The eclecticism of the Fellowship was its greatest strength.

The next few days were a blizzard of activity, finding an apartment and enrolling in the master's program at the College of Environmental Design housed in Wurster Hall, a brutalist concrete building recently designed by

Joseph Esherick and Vernon DeMars.⁵⁶ The campus of the University was an eye-opener, a beautifully maintained landscape punctuated by very disparate buildings all arranged around a soaring campanile, Sather Tower, of 1915. The main entrance to the campus opposite one of Berkeley's main thoroughfares, Telegraph Avenue, consisted of a plaza, soon to become the scene of fierce confrontations between Black Panthers, students and police, framed by Sproul Hall the classical main administration building, and the modern student union building. The Free-Speech Movement was in full swing.

Enrolment in the college allowed me to meet other Harkness fellows like Sepp Frank from Austria, another architect. We were expected to sign up for 30 credits of tuition, a couple of optional courses and a dissertation, all to be accomplished in a year. We made appointments to see the professors in their little plywood lined offices on the second floor. I chose Ezra Ehrenkrantz, the progenitor of the SCSD school building system I had admired so much in England; his course given from 8-10 two mornings a week was intense but allowed him to get back to his office in San Francisco to do a day's work. I also chose Christopher Alexander, whose book *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* had appeared in 1964 seeming to promise a methodological revolution in approaches to design.⁵⁷ There was at the time a wide interest in bringing systematic thought to unruly human activities like architectural design. So, the third course I chose was that of Hörst Rittel's offering an objective evaluation of contending approaches to design issues. Rittel had recently arrived from the Ulm School of Design where he had been Professor of Design Methodology, and he was highly regarded as a thinker.⁵⁸ The workload was demanding, in terms of academic expectations and sheer scholarship. I had come from a basically vocational educational background with very little academic content, and it was a real challenge to keep up. Writing coherent essays was particularly difficult. But the content of the courses was exhilarating, and I found it all very exciting.

Jenny and I found a ground floor flat on Warring Street close to the campus, in a building owned by a Mrs Stockslager, who also lived in the building. In the garage was a gleaming dark green Pontiac Chieftain with a Red Indian hood ornament. Mrs Stockslager only used the car to go to church and we fantasised about buying it from her. We quickly furnished the flat with beds and sofas from Goodwill stores, and with a *batterie de cuisine* bought mostly from the 5 and 10 cent store on Telegraph Avenue.⁵⁹ We were astonished to find traditional cast iron skillets for only a few dollars, and everything else

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UC_Berkeley_College_of_Environmental_Design

⁵⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notes_on_the_Synthesis_of_Form

⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horst_Rittel

⁵⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telegraph_Avenue

was of quite good quality and exceptional value, mostly made in the US. We started getting into the swing of local life, taking a bus to a “Renaissance Faire” put on in Marin County by local radio station KPFA, where we also visited the giant redwoods of Muir Woods and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin County Civic Center.

That autumn I was totally absorbed with the coursework, taking on board a huge amount of knowledge, most of it completely new to me. There were also faculty members giving lectures, like Richard Meier a brilliant systems thinker and planner, and C. West Churchman, a philosopher in the Business School and friend of Hörst Rittel’s who had been a founding father of operational research and who was greatly interested in decision making processes. His book *Challenge to Reason* had just appeared to rattle the certainties of some of the systems enthusiasts.⁶⁰ Ezra Ehrenkrantz’s course emphasised the evolutionary nature of construction technology and explained the underlying logic of the SCSD system of school construction. Ezra was an engaging and persuasive lecturer, and I was very enthusiastic about his messages of how to stimulate improvement in the construction industry. Chris Alexander’s popular course explained his problem analysis approach to architecture, parsing the thinking underlying his *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. Chris was charming and skilled at seducing young minds, turning them towards the new work he was doing on *The Pattern Language*. Jenny managed to get a work permit and started working for I.Magnin’s and Macy’s, modelling for catalogues. She signed up with the Grimmé agency who were not quite ready for her Vidal Grecian short hair, calling her ‘little orphan Annie’. We went to a lot to local music venues like the Winterland in San Francisco, which had large scale rock concerts, and Eli’s Mile High club in Oakland which was strictly blues. The black music radio station KDIA had brilliant DJs, and we eventually bought an amazing vertical record player.



⁶⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C. West Churchman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._West_Churchman)

In November Richard Nixon was elected president, defeating Hubert Humphrey by a very narrow margin. During that first term Eduardo Paolozzi came to Berkeley to teach and stay with his friend Ron Kitaj, an older American painter who had been teaching at the Royal College in London and was now at UC Berkeley, and who was very influential among rising British pop artists. I explained my systems work to them, and Eduardo suggested we get together in LA after Christmas to visit McDonnell Douglas in Long Beach, working on new technologies that interested him for his sculpture.

Also, in November Chester Jones' brother Bobby came to town with his lovely girlfriend Emily. We made some trips with them down to Big Sur and Monterey. Then, at a party with Chris Alexander, Chris made a pass at Emily, and she seems to have been flattered. They ended up travelling around with Chris quite a lot. In any event I cannot recall the outcome. Bobby eventually married Emily on their return to the UK.

Over the Christmas holidays we went down to LA to stay with the Donaldsons in the quite rough area of Echo Park where they had a sweet house. When we arrived Tony's mother and stepfather were there, but they soon returned to England. We were quickly introduced to Tony's local artist friends, Bob Graham with whom he was making a film, Joe Goode, Ed Ruscha, each of whom was doing very interesting work. I was particularly taken with Ed's small books of photos of LA life, whether parking lots, gas stations or swimming pools, not to mention some majestic canvases.



Ed Ruscha, LA County Museum on Fire, oil on canvas, 1965-68.

They showed their work at Nick Wilder's gallery on La Cienega Boulevard, a happening place. After Christmas we went down to Balboa, Newport Beach, for the opening of a joint show by Joe Goode and Bob Graham. Bob insisted on coming in our car because he didn't want to get lost in Orange County on his own (Bob was born in Mexico).⁶¹ Later, in 1984, he became nationally

⁶¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Graham_\(sculptor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Graham_(sculptor))

famous for his sculptural work for the LA Summer Olympics and in 1990 he married actress Anjelica Huston. We also managed to get to Disneyland, which we found disappointing and wearily commercial. Much more to my taste in Long Beach was the Lions Drag Strip, scene of fantastic drag races and custom car shows. The ear-splitting noise in the night time and the beauty of the exotic cars was spellbinding.

We returned to Berkeley via Death Valley and Zabriskie Point, later the setting of Michelangelo Antonioni's 1970 film. The geology and the scenery were unlike anything we'd seen before. Later, going up the Sierra Nevada via Owens Valley, Mono and Lake Tahoe seemed almost tame, even though remarkable in a gentler, alpine way.



Zabriskie Point, California

In late January we returned to LA with Paolozzi to visit McDonnell Douglas. He was particularly interested in the chemical milling of tungsten which we saw in a huge hangar building, demonstrated by an enormous black engineer, who was very entertaining about the process. The tungsten shapes are coated in latex with cut-outs where the metal is eaten away by acid in a controlled process. We were also shown elaborate numerically controlled machine tools, instructed in whole sequences of tasks by computer using punched tape. Getting back to Berkeley, Frank Duffy and I signed up for Chris Alexander's heavy-duty (six hours a week) seminar on his new enthusiasm, a *Pattern Language*, memorised patterns of the physical environment that can be modified and updated with new information to provide design prescriptions. The memory was to be created in LISP, a new computer language. Most sessions took place in Chris's pleasant woody house up in the Berkeley Hills.

Ezra Ehrenkrantz asked me to become his teaching assistant for the spring term, which was flattering. I went several times to visit his office on Broadway in San Francisco, and to meet his English partner, Chris Arnold. They had several systems development projects for the University of California, the Veteran's Administration and other governmental organisations.

For recreation Jenny and I went to the National Custom Car Show at the Oakland Auditorium where exotically painted funny cars, low riders and dragsters were on show. The paint jobs were extraordinary, taken to extremes of finish and colour. We also went to Winterland to hear Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, which was a very special experience, featuring the Motown orchestra up from LA. Albert King, a wonderful 'living legend' bluesman was the warm-up act. I took photographs that I still have fifty-five years later.

By March I was having problems with Chris Alexander. I felt his *Pattern Language* and his whole approach to organising data about the environment was becoming too much a matter of belief rather than of evidence. Disagreement was becoming impossible, so I left the seminar, even though Frank Duffy stayed to the end.⁶² It was becoming clear to me that despite choosing my three main tutors for my dissertation committee, they would not be able to see eye to eye on the directions I should take; the solution was to postpone the completion of the dissertation until later in my fellowship and to concentrate on getting the most useful experience with Ehrenkrantz.

At first, in April, this meant going to work for Ezra's firm, *Building Systems Development (BSD)*, but in Oakland at the headquarters of Kaiser Engineers rather than in the nice, relaxed office in San Francisco. At the beginning of the year Martin Luther King had been very publicly planning a Poor People's Campaign, to protest the lack of governmental action in the wake of increasing urban unrest. Suddenly everything changed with his assassination on April 4 in Memphis. There was now real urgency in the work of the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Kerner Commission report was imminent, and it was already known that a large part of the blame for urban rioting was to be attributed to inadequate housing.⁶³ BSD had teamed with Kaiser to respond to HUD's In-Cities Experimental Housing Program. I worked on our proposal to HUD that identified and measured constraints within cities inhibiting the production of lower-income housing. My experience of UK conditions was an asset to the team; at the time there was admiration in America for the work of the British Building Research Station and National Building Agency about which I knew something. I prepared a

⁶² In 1979 I reviewed *Pattern Language* for *Architectural Design*: https://www.academia.edu/48747462/A_Pattern_Language

⁶³ <https://www.huduser.gov/hud50th/HUD-Historical-Investigation-Report.pdf>

section on space standards and model plans. Our proposal was one of three chosen by HUD among nineteen submissions. During the proposal writing I worked closely with members of our team including construction managers from Turner Construction, the brilliant Anthony Downs of the radical Real Estate Research Corporation, and OSTI (Organisation for Social and Technical Innovation), a Boston-based social research firm headed by the polymath Donald Schon, later famous in Britain for his 1970 Reith Lectures.⁶⁴ It was an exciting experience for a young architect.

But I did not get to undertake the work we had been awarded; that was left to the BSD staff in the San Francisco office. Ezra had other plans for me. He wanted me to help set up an office for BSD in Washington DC with Ralph Iredale, an Englishman who had been part of Donald Gibson's famous research group at the UK Ministry of Housing and Local Government, where he had helped develop the NENK system of construction, a complicated erector set of steel space-frame construction. Gibson had known Ezra while he had been at the Building Research Station as a Fulbright scholar, working on ideas of modular co-ordination. The new Washington office would be working on a major project for the US Post Office Department, and I needed to be in Washington on July 12 to start work. This was an exciting opportunity, but it would not sit easily with the Harkness, and I needed to discuss it with them, and to seek an extension to the fellowship that would give me time to finish my dissertation for Berkeley. That meant a meeting in New York.

Fortunately, we had recently taken delivery of a new Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon, after an earlier false start with cars. It was huge and could take a double mattress in the back with room to spare for luggage and a Coleman stove. It was time to go exploring America on our way to New York and Washington.



Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon, 1967.

⁶⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Schön

This first odyssey took three weeks. We went via Las Vegas to Mount Zion National Park in Utah, with outstanding mountain scenery. Then we went North to Bryce Canyon, incredible sandstone skyscrapers worn by wind into softened layered stacks. We camped in the Chevy at remote sites that nevertheless had good sturdy iron barbecues, tables and benches. After Bryce we moved up to the Grand Tetons, a magnificent North-South range of the Rocky Mountains, and a national park. It was exciting and romantic. We then went on to Yellowstone with its fantastic geysers, bison and other wildlife, still mountainous but more open. Then we crossed the Bad Lands of South Dakota, endless rolling pasture and almost desert-like topography. I honestly cannot remember the rest of our itinerary, except it certainly involved stopping in Minneapolis to see Chris Finch, who was then working at the Walker Art Centre. One way or another we arrived in New York, and I went to see Martha English at Harkness House. She made it clear that the fellowship frowned on fellows doing ‘work’, as I had been with Ezra, but I argued that sometimes advanced and interesting developments happen outside the academy, and that’s why I was interested in continuing to work with Ezra in Washington. I also made the point that whenever fellows who were artists had gallery shows or gave performances during their fellowships, Harkness was only too pleased to go along and support them.

In the end Martha agreed that though I would not receive my grant so long as I worked with Ezra, I could keep other benefits, like the car. When I left BSD, I was allowed a paid four-month extension to my fellowship that would give me time to complete my dissertation while living in New York. This was an excellent outcome, and we headed off to Washington in high spirits. Ralph Iredale, Ezra’s lead man in the establishment of a Washington office, had rented a house on one of the smart streets near Georgetown University, where we could stay until we found a flat. Also there was David Sheppard, a New Zealander who had worked in the San Francisco office and his fellow Penn graduate Bill Adams, John Gosling, another Brit who had been working with Chris Arnold on housing for the US Navy, Larry Dodge, a thoughtful tennis-playing architect and Joel Goodman a recent graduate from MIT who was keen on building systems.⁶⁵ Ralph had found an office right at the bottom of Wisconsin Avenue, the main thoroughfare of Georgetown, separated from the Potomac River only by the Whitehurst elevated freeway, a very basic steel road structure. The building at 1000 Wisconsin was a pretty brick warehouse where we had the top floor, open space with handsome wooden structural

⁶⁵ Joel later went to India to work on Auroville, the mystical commune at Pondicherry, based on the thinking of Paolo Soleri where he developed solar heating technologies that he still promotes from his home in Wisconsin <https://joelgoodman.wordpress.com/about/>. See also Akash Kapur, (2021), *Better to Have Gone: Auroville – Love, Death and the Quest for Utopia*, Scribner.

timbers. Jenny and I soon found a fine little flat to rent on Thomas Jefferson Street, a few blocks from the office. The weather in Washington was unbearably hot and clammy so we went to Sears and bought a through window air conditioner for \$90 in the sale, right away. The flat was charming, and we managed to pick up nice junk furniture in the Goodwill store.

The project for the US Post Office Department was exciting for me. They were adding 10 million square feet of space a year, but their design thinking and assumptions about mail handling machinery were stuck in the past and were driven more by real estate industry norms rather than the highly specialised requirements for efficient mail sorting. The best part was getting out to meet crusty old sorting office managers around the country, who were ready to let Washington have a piece of their mind. The sorting offices themselves were astounding; mail was brought in at the highest level and proceeded through the machinery of the plant by gravity on ramps and belts. Optical character recognition and computers were just coming in. The project showed that by changing assumptions and challenging habits, radical improvements can be made in everyday practice. By separating the machinery from the people, better working conditions were created and buildings could be built using ordinary technology. The client was happy and so were we, but then the administration changed, and our programme disappeared, although professionals in the Department picked up most of what we had proposed.

Ralph Iredale had wanted me to go to LA to help the Post Office build a large prototype building incorporating our thinking, but I was anxious about sticking to the plan mapped out with the Harkness people. In general, we found life in Washington deadly dull, leavened only by weekend trips to New York, and visits to the excellent Cuban restaurants near Dupont Circle. Once, returning at night from New York, I managed to crash the car into a tree, which was scary although we were not hurt, and we soon had a replacement car. In February there was the 31st US Biennial of Contemporary American Art at the Corcoran Gallery and Chris Finch came down from New York with Chuck Close. Jenny spent some time in New York working for the photographer Bert Stern in his gallery/shop on First Avenue.⁶⁶ And I used my idle time to start writing articles, first for Chris Finch in his capacity as editor of *Design Quarterly*, a well thought of publication put out by the Walker in Minneapolis. I wrote a piece 'Form Follows Fiction' trying to make sense of some of what I'd learned at Berkeley, speculating on advanced means of production.⁶⁷ I had also remained in touch with Robin Middleton and Peter Murray in London, both working for Monica Pigeon, editor of the monthly *Architectural Design*, then the coolest architectural publication. Frank Duffy and I offered a short

⁶⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bert_Stern

⁶⁷ https://www.academia.edu/30737281/Form_Follows_Fiction

article about our Berkeley experience – ‘Truth in the Golden State’ – that appeared in the September edition. I had also been asked by guest editor Roy Landau, a progressive teacher at the AA, to prepare an article on the possible impact of advanced production technology on architecture – ‘Cybermation: A Useful Dream’ – for the same issue. This article drew on my Berkeley studies, but also on the exciting numerical control technology I had seen at McDonnell Douglas.

Waiting for the next big thing to hit the office I met Gary Stonebraker who had worked with Ezra on an amazing study for the US National Bureau of Standards – *The Impact of Social and Technical Change on Building*, published in 1967. It was a brilliant philosophical allegory charting the ways in which social and technical change have affected the way society approaches construction over the ages, from copying of successful types of building to today’s explicit prediction embodied in construction documents. It was a tour de force of thinking about building, and it has influenced my own ideas ever since. Gary was preparing a follow up work for NBS, and we discussed how some of BSD’s current projects illustrated the issues he raised in the earlier book.

Although we’d planned a Florida trip at the end of my Washington job, a small studio came free in New York for \$120/month, so we moved North in early 1969. The studio was pitiful, but it was a holding situation until we could inherit a two-room apartment on the upper West Side from friends who were moving on. Chris Finch was quite often in town for the Walker Art Center, and through him we met Michael Findlay and his beautiful wife Alex. Michael worked for Richard Feigen, one of the more progressive uptown galleries, showing Rosenquist, Oldenburg and others.⁶⁸ We began to meet arty types of various sorts with Michael and Alex, who were also friendly with Tony Shafrazi whom we knew from London, and who had moved to New York. Ray Johnson, one of Feigen’s artists, was also friendly.⁶⁹ There were lots of parties, and dope was smoked. We often went to Max’s Kansas City for dinner, a favourite spot for Chris’s friend the sculptor John Chamberlain, and a hang-out for all sorts of show-offs; and of course, we went to the Village jazz clubs.⁷⁰ I was doing the paperwork for my fellowship extension and preparing to work on my dissertation for Berkeley.

Richard Feigen had a downtown building at 141 Greene Street, in SOHO which then just stood for ‘South of Houston’. The building was used to store pictures, but it had some living space, at the time occupied by Gerald Laing, a

⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_L._Feigen

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Johnson

⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max%27s_Kansas_City

British pop artist going through a divorce, before re-marrying a redoubtable lady, Galina Golikova, and moving to Kinkell Castle on the Black Isle in Ross and Cromarty, as a lifetime project (he died there in 2011). Michael Findlay organised for us to move into the generous space at its decidedly funky address, and for a modest rent. We had hardly any furniture and slept on a mattress on the floor – the mice ran around us. Jenny adopted a marmalade kitten on the street, and he soon took care of the mice. Strangely for New York there were few cockroaches, probably because there were very few people living in the area. On the street there were large rats, but they didn't seem to come inside the buildings. We loved living in Soho; there were great delicatessens and Italian shops for everything; at the time there were one or two galleries, but no smart merchandise shops or boutiques, and no weekend gawkers. You could buy fresh lobsters on Houston Street and keep them in the fridge until you cooked them. Greene Street was also not far from Washington Square, scene of political rallies. There did not seem to be much street crime in the area, although one day a kid walked into the flat and stole Jenny's Bolex Super 8 camera off a table – probably just a junkie. I managed to equip myself with an IBM electric golf-ball typewriter, and I set to work on the dissertation. It was rather pretentiously titled *A Teratological Look at Design*, an attempt to imagine the future of architecture in the light of recent developments in production technology. If I'm honest it was pretty hopeless. Overwrought and clumsily argued, it reached no useful conclusions. The idea of writing it away from my ideologically opposed tutors in Berkeley was a mistake. They could have prevented my indulgences and kept me on a more useful path. Nevertheless, when I finally managed to present the result of my labours to my committee, they were complimentary and prepared to suggest that it was a work of originality and merit. At least enough for them to grant me a master's degree. That was a relief. While I scribbled away Jenny had a part-time job with Alex Findlay in a smart uptown fashion shop.

In early June Jenny and I went down to Raleigh North Carolina, where I attended the Design Methods Group conference. It was a turning point in the academic enthusiasm for formal design methods and much was being questioned. My tutors, Alexander and Rittel, were questioning the practical usefulness of formal methods, and the whole field was very much up in the air.⁷¹ Harkness confirmed the four-month unpaid extension to my fellowship, so we planned to be in Berkeley by August.

Also, in June Bobby Kennedy was assassinated, then in July we watched the Apollo 11 moonwalk on our little TV; both were certainly moving events, but they were just salient points in a general tapestry of war, rioting, marching and

⁷¹ https://monoskop.org/images/6/66/Cross_Nigel_1993_A_History_of_Design_Methodology.pdf

political upheaval. Our earlier Berkeley exposure to the politics of Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis and the Black Panthers had certainly sensitised us to the race wars. America seemed to be tearing itself apart in so many ways. It was almost refreshing to get visits from English friends, and John Laflin came with Moya Bowler in July. In early August we made our way back across the country in our fifth Chevrolet Bel Air, calling in on Chris Finch in Minneapolis on the way. Chris was getting weary of the provincial art patronage scene, however well endowed, and planning to move permanently to New York in the following year.

Back in Berkeley, I polished up my dissertation and submitted it. I then started spending time in the BSD office in San Francisco. Ezra was warming up for a new HUD initiative – Operation Breakthrough – aimed at unlocking the creative potential of the military industrial complex to address the country's desperate housing needs, that had been highlighted by the terrible rioting across the country. Breakthrough was an initiative of Secretary George Romney; it aimed to fund the development of promising systems that might be mass-produced; it would break down organisational barriers to innovation; and it would aggregate housing demand to ensure a market for Breakthrough systems. It would thus capture the productive force of industry at a time when military work was diminishing with Nixon's policy of 'Vietnamisation' of the war in Vietnam. BSD's success in earlier HUD programs made it an attractive partner for the military contractors and Ezra was approached by Aerojet General and TRW, who were researching a house building technology based on fiberglass and paper honeycomb core that they called Fibershell. The original concept was to wind fiberglass roving onto giant revolving forms (mandrels) to make room-sized modules. Ezra asked me to join the proposal writing team and several of us, including Larry and John from Washington, went down to TRW in Long Beach to work in a large windowless proposal-writing facility with brightly lit cubicle workstations and gigantic 'war-rooms' where ideas could be argued out in groups with flipcharts and plans held on the steel partitions with magnets. It was remarkably intense, but quite thrilling for us to be working with some very brainy engineers more used to developing rockets and missiles. We'd all seen Stanley Kubrik's *Dr Strangelove* satire on the military, and the parallels were strong.

I can go no further in my story without mentioning Richard Bender, who became a lifelong friend. He was a Harvard educated architect who had been teaching at Cooper Union in New York. Gerald McCue, then chair of UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, had succeeded the architect Charles Moore who, although he had attracted some wonderful teaching staff including Ezra, Chris Alexander, Horst Rittel and others, was not a strong manager, and the school was getting big and unwieldy; it needed firm and

imaginative management. McCue invited Dick to become chair of architecture, where he did a terrific job in a sympathetic way that kept the unruly faculty mostly on side. He and his wife Sue brought a strong whiff of East Coast sophistication to laid back Berkeley. He was particularly impressed with Ezra's bold initiatives to reshape America's building industry, and he'd experienced the National Commission on Urban Problems and Mayor Lindsay's housing task force, making him a strong ally for Ezra in gaining the attention of HUD and other government organisations such as the Institute for Applied Technology at the National Bureau of Standards, then headed by Donald Schon who had supported our earlier efforts for HUD. Dick became a valuable adviser to BSD throughout the Operation Breakthrough program.⁷²

Dick strongly supported a second Operation Breakthrough proposal from BSD, for the Go-Con concrete panel system from the Building Research Station (later to become the Building Research Establishment, or BRE) in England where it had been developed over seven years. This was a huge 5000T hydraulic press for making concrete panels at a rapid rate, using infinitely adjustable edge moulds that promised a rich variety of output. By squeezing the water out of concrete, a freshly formed panel could be moved to a curing platform immediately using a vacuum pad, giving a press cycle time of four minutes. At that time the most sophisticated vertical battery moulds required about twelve hours of curing before panels could be moved. So, the promise of Go-Con was tremendous. Ezra, who had spent time at the BRE when on his Fulbright fellowship, was keen on the technology, and thought I might be able to work on its development in England on my return from the US. And that was what happened, a little later in my story. John Gosling and I put together the proposal to HUD using materials sent over by the BRE. We were excited about Go-Con, seeing it as a production tool responsive to changing needs, that raised the level of automaticity in a relatively unsophisticated branch of industry. It overcame many of the shortcomings of present concrete technology, that had led to monotonous slabby buildings with poor construction detailing. The Ronan Point disaster of 1968 was fresh in people's minds.

The excitement of the proposal-writing for Operation Breakthrough slightly eclipsed preparations for our tour of the Southwest. Harkness fellows were obliged to spend some time travelling around and we'd saved that until last before our return to England. We started in the Hopi and Navajo reservation areas in Northern Arizona, visiting Walpi and other Hopi settlements.

⁷² Dick's only full-length book *A Crack in the Rear View Mirror*, written with Forrest Wilson, (van Nostrand, NY, 1973) unpicks the Operation Breakthrough program in a perceptive way, analysing various attempts at industrialised housing.



Ansel Adams, Walpi in 1941.

The experience was breath-taking. The sophistication of the Indians at the Havasupai and Hualapai reservations, their way of life, at once tragic and timeless and their friendliness to visitors was humbling. We foolishly wanted to see the Grand Canyon avoiding tourists, which meant going round the South rim on dirt roads – huge mistake, although nightfall on the edge of the canyon was memorable. The next day we had to flag down a local to get towed into Flagstaff, so the steering could be repaired. But we recovered and went on to Mesa Verde and Canyon de Chelly, both awesome, before heading to Albuquerque from where we went North to Santa Fe and Taos. Camping in the back of the car above Santa Fe we had our first night of snow, so it was time to head south again. We crossed the endless savannahs of Texas to Dallas, before dropping down to Houston where an architect friend from Berkeley, Tom Burke, lived. Houston was then famous for its refusal to plan as a city, and we were duly amazed by its deference to the automobile. We wanted to see the Gulf of Mexico and Tom had recommended a visit to Galveston, the once fabulously wealthy gulf port for Texas. It was indeed a museum of extravagant 19C architecture. After Galveston we must have come inland a bit to see charmingly Spanish San Antonio and the Alamo, before returning to the coast, because I have a vivid memory of driving for ever along the 300-mile-long sandy beach of Padre Island near Corpus Christi. Eventually we got to Del Rio on the Rio Grande which was our jumping off point for Big Bend National Park, nestled in a huge bend in the river, and with no through roads. We felt as if we were the only people there. It was magically wild and beautiful with incredible cactus and starry nights. We were visited by a family of skunks as we prepared dinner at a picnic table; their young are simply adorable.



Big Bend National Park

Coming out of the park we headed West towards El Paso, going through Marfa, although this was well before Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation, set up there in 1986, to show his work. After all the wonders we had seen, El Paso seemed nothing much and we made our way back to the Bay Area via Phoenix and Las Vegas, stopping in Yosemite on the way. The beautiful, volcanic, deep circular Mono Lake made a big impression.

We had managed to pick up a couple of cancellations on a P&O ship leaving Long Beach on November 15, returning to Southampton by way of Acapulco, Panama, Curaçao, Barbados and Lisbon. Somehow, we managed to get our possessions packed up and onto the ship. It was less luxurious than the Queen Elizabeth, but the excitement of getting a day ashore at each stop was a compensation. Passing the Panama Canal remains a great life experience, and Colón on the Caribbean side was magical. Sadly, in Curaçao, a strange treeless island with pretty Dutch architecture, a fuel pipe leaked into the luggage hold and ruined quite a lot of my books. We spent a few days on the deck sorting out the less damaged. Curiously, the insurance adjuster in London claimed that since the books had been read, they must have no value! Barbados, made up for this misfortune and we took a bus to the windward (Atlantic) side of the island to romp in the surf; it is a jolly place full of people sweet as sugar, despite their horrific history. In Lisbon we went to see my great uncle Boris, Olga's brother, who lived in the smart suburb of Cascais in comfortable retirement from a business life in Brazil. We were back in Europe, and on December 9th back in England.

7. Building Systems Development (UK) Ltd

The day before our ship docked Ezra had arrived in London to talk to the Building Research Station about Go-Con and to meet their commercial partner Mr Fischbein. Although HUD had yet to pronounce on our proposal, Ezra felt sufficiently confident to let me set up an office for BSD from where we would support the Go-Con development work, while I hunted around for other work to make the office grow.

Jenny and I moved back into Clifton Hill, that had been occupied by Tony Armstrong during our time in America. We began rekindling friendships after two and a half years away. We spent time with Nick and Lavinia Grimshaw and Terry and Sue Farrell. Terry had been a Harkness fellow at Penn a couple of years before me. Farrell and Grimshaw had become thought leaders among young architects and had just done a remarkable tower of pod bathrooms to upgrade a student residence in Paddington. They were now working on a residential tower of 40 flats in Park Road, at the edge of Regent's Park. It was one of the first co-ownership buildings in London in the wake of housing association legislation. We could sign up to have one of the two-bedroom flats, on the fourth floor. We immediately bought a share in the Mercury Housing Association and waited eagerly for completion which came in June 1970. The design was simple yet radical for London, with large rooms, relaxed planning and views over Regent's Park. We were thrilled at the prospect.



While we'd been in America, François had deteriorated considerably, and Norah had become seriously depressed. He could no longer live comfortably in the Ginestières. He now spent most of his time in a room at the Invalides in Paris, while Norah rented a flat on avenue Duquesne in the 7th nearby.

Through Françoise Gilot, who had married Brigitte Marq's brother Luc Simon following her marriage to Picasso, François was introduced to Jonas Salk the inventor of the polio vaccine. Unfortunately his illness was too advanced for new therapies to have any effect.

I think 1970 was the last year that we went to the Ginestières, in the spring. Norah then sold the house to a trucking firm owner from New Jersey, and his German wife, to have the money to build a small house for herself and a larger separate one nearby for François. She sold her fine French furniture from London to greedy dealers from Cannes, preparing to downsize. I made plans for both the houses – François' had three bedrooms and needed to be fully accessible. Fortunately, just before the foundations were dug for François' house Norah realised that if they wanted a swimming pool the hole had to be dug before the foundations were laid, to give access for the digger. Next to the swimming pool was a small *cabanon* that became Claire's own house. We were fortunate that a really gifted stonemason, Francesco, had recently come with his son from Spain and was ready to build the new houses. In anticipation, Norah had been buying windows, shutters and doors in architectural salvage sites in Nice and Cannes. This was a smart strategy; not only were they better made than modern joinery, they were also more beautiful and less expensive. I introduced Francesco to the idea of cavity construction of the outer walls, so the houses would be cool in summer and warm in winter. Norah sourced beautiful floor and roof tiles and bathroom fittings. Both houses turned out well. Fifty years on they feel as if they've always been there, which is as construction should be in the country.



Norah's little house in May 2022 after redecoration

At the Building Research Station, the Go-Con work was being managed in the Mechanical Engineering Division led by Joseph Eden, a noted metrologist. He was a wonderful man, gentle, tolerant and immensely knowledgeable. The ambience at the BRE was of a scientific community deeply engaged in public service, grappling with the perennial problems of construction, strength of materials, decay and moisture. Working for Eden were two bright engineers, Kay Seymour-Walker and Mick Malet. Together we worked on a prototype building to be made with panels from the Go-Con press and to be erected at the BRS. We also worked on panel jointing systems that could overcome the design weaknesses that had led to the Ronan Point disaster in 1968, and that were informed by Eden's insistence on a tolerance-based engineering approach to the assembly of panels, rather than the modular co-ordination approach then fashionable among architects. I witnessed the trials of the press, its triumphs and failures. I believe the mighty machine was actually owned by Charcon, a company that already made small pressed concrete products such as frost-proof paving slabs, but its commercial future was in the hands of Mr Fischbein. BRS had secured a development contract to advise Yugoslavia on the construction of a 5000-unit housing project known as *Novy Beograd*, or New Belgrade. The hope was that it could be built using Go-Con, but eventually the designs were developed using the BRS' own battery-cast system of concrete panels, albeit using a simple fool proof bolted jointing system we had developed to resist seismic forces. After Ezra's visit in December, we had decided to open a BSD office in London and to look for new work while I continued to work at BRS. I found a wonderful office space, the first-floor piano rehearsal rooms of the Bösendorfer showroom in the Wigmore Hall Building, that had been built in 1900 by T.E.Collcutt for Bechstein, two great big, beautiful rooms overlooking Wigmore Street. This was



rather more room than we could afford so I invited Frank Duffy and John Worthington to join me and help with the rent.⁷³ They were hoping to set up on their own, but for the time being were working for JFN, a New York space planning practice run by a charismatic architect, Doug Nicholson, who saw London as a gateway to the European market for office space planning, then in its infancy in Britain. Frank's earlier published work on office landscaping and his academic work at Berkeley and Princeton would underpin the effort. Meanwhile the office served as a landing pad for JFN staff flying in from New York and from European cities where they had international clients. We also met a few times with Stuart Lipton, a young developer fascinated by American office building practice who figures later in my story.

At the start of the 1970-71 academic year, I was invited to give a lecture series at the Architectural Association based on my Berkeley experiences by Roy Landau, who had commissioned my *Cybermation* article for AD, and Alvin Boyarsky, just appointed Chairman of the School. That was enjoyable and challenging, trying to convey Rittel's thinking and that of other Berkeley academics as well as the work of BSD, and I made many friends among the AA faculty.

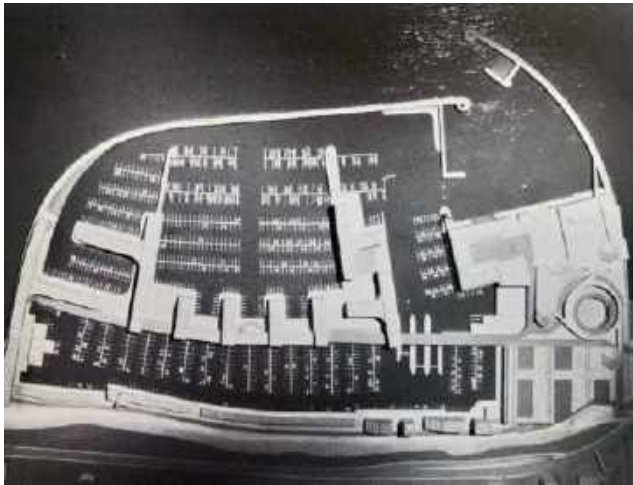
In the Spring of 1971, our office was joined by David Sheppard, with whom I had worked in Washington. We helped Frank and John with a technical evaluation of designs for a European International Education Center, for IBM World Trade. Then through Chris Finch I met Max Gordon, an architect and a keen collector of modern art with a stunning flat in Belgrave Square. Max later became famous in London as the architect for the Saatchis, Charles and Doris, fashionable gallery owners. Max was independently wealthy but had joined the Louis de Soissons Partnership. When I met him, he had just secured an astonishing commission to design the Brighton Marina, the brainchild of a local garage owner who had raised enough capital to get the project off the ground. Also working at Louis de Soissons were Jan Kaplicky and Eva Jiricna, two bright Czech architects who became friends and who were later to become famous.⁷⁴ Jan crops up again later in my memoir, in 1995.

Max invited BSD to become co-ordinators for the project, figuring out how to get the infrastructure of this huge project built using Danish marine engineering technology involving sea walls built up of giant circular caissons. We also had to provide programming and planning guidelines for shopping, exhibition space, hotels and about 1000 residential units. This was exciting

⁷³ Duffy and Worthington memoirs are available at <http://livesretold.org/>

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eva_Jiričná

work and allowed me to hire a couple more staff, including David Brindle and Chuck Norris, ex-colleagues from San Francisco, and Wendy Wainwright, Janice's younger sister, as secretary.



Model of Brighton Marina - 1970

In the summer Jenny and I went to Clavier for a holiday. We drove down with Nick and Lavinia Grimshaw in their Citroën DS; they dropped us off in Clavier and went on to a rental in Le Lavandou. Jenny was pregnant with Felix and wafted around in billowing long peasant dresses. Francois came to stay in his new house, while Norah stayed in her own house. Later in the year I returned to tutor architecture students at the Poly, now renamed The Polytechnic of Central London and home to the College of Architecture and Advanced Building Technology (CAABT), in its smart new buildings opened the same year on Marylebone Road. This was stimulating and I kept it up until 1973.

Felix was born on December 19 at Charing Cross Hospital, a healthy beautiful boy. I was at Jenny's bedside trying to remember what we'd learned in Lamaze classes we'd attended together. The birth was miraculous, of course, and I wandered around Covent Garden in a daze for a long time before going home. We'd moved into a house in Stanhope Gardens, Highgate, found by Jenny, a fine Edwardian semi-detached with a large garden for which we paid £12,500. Inflation was roaring and it was difficult to make ends meet. Edward Heath was prime minister.

In 1972 I continued to build a relationship with the Building Research Station and was rewarded with a contract to provide a nine-month study of the future of automation for building product manufacture, done in partnership with the Production Engineering Research Association. Partly through this work but also through Ezra I met Paul Denoel, managing director of Strafor+Hauserman in Strasbourg, at the time a subsidiary of E.F.Hauserman

who had made steel-faced partitions for the SCSD project. Paul was interested in the potential for his products in the residential market, particularly in the light of a growing interest across Europe in flexible planning of residential space. David Sheppard and Peter Town, who had joined us from Canterbury school of architecture, planned the research of European experiments in flexible housing in France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland. We enjoyed the travel and produced two long articles for *Architectural Design*, documenting what we'd seen and analysing the costs and practicality of different ideas.⁷⁵

We did a few odd jobs with Frank Duffy and John Worthington in that year, including appraisal of a new American Express HQ at Brighton. Then we were fortunate to meet Rifat Chaderji, an Iraqi architect of some repute who had seen a special issue of *Architectural Design* from November 1971 featuring the work of BSD, both in America and in London, that I had put together with help from Robin Middleton, then technical editor of the magazine. Rifat was interested in our Brighton Marina project, and he felt that our brand of problem definition and resource planning would suit a project his firm, Iraq Consult, were competing for, the Kuwait Parliament Complex.



Cover of November 1971 *Architectural Design*, featuring BSD, drawn by Adrian George. Ezra is seated centre.

⁷⁵ https://www.academia.edu/48065549/Housing_Flexibility
https://www.academia.edu/48065552/Housing_Flexibility_Adaptability

Accordingly, we produced a detailed construction plan for the project, although Rifat only managed to get second place in the competition. He was a charming man and brimming with ideas for his practice; we hit it off very well.

In 1973, with inflation still raging I managed to get more work from the Building Research Station, a study of the financial performance of 1400 building product manufacturers and, more interestingly, a study of 'Housing Assembly Design'. This was an outgrowth of Joseph Eden's belief that the architectural fashion for 'modular co-ordination', an attempt to reconcile design with construction using theoretical spatial grids, was deeply mistaken and ignorant of logical principles of assembly that were well-understood in mechanical engineering. It was clear that products to be assembled deviate in size and other properties, so any assembly method needs to accommodate deviations. This suggests an additive approach to assembly, with accumulated deviations engineered out through the design of jointing systems. We developed a bolted jointing system for the concrete panels produced on the Go-Con press, and it was eventually adopted for the *Novy Beograd* housing in Yugoslavia.

In late spring I went to Baghdad to work with Iraq Consult on a proposal for building up the construction industry in the Kurdish North of the country. This was an appeasement initiative by Saddam Hussein's government rather than a genuine political move, so nothing much came of it. I managed to visit Ctesiphon and the great mosque of Samarra, but it was mostly work, relieved only by balmy evenings in the excellent restaurants along the Tigris. Rifat's colleagues were hospitable and interesting to be with, and Rifat was keen for us to do more work together.

In August Jenny gave birth to Leo, our second son, a sweet baby. Life was no easier in London; Edward Heath struggled to control inflation, even as OPEC more than doubled oil prices. The IRA exploded bombs in London, and we didn't feel well off at all, although we were pleased with our house and garden in leafy Highgate, despite the double digit interest rate on our mortgage.

Also in 1973, we unsuccessfully entered an architectural design competition for Northampton County Hall, and I gave a lecture series at the Central London Poly on the "Possibilities and limitations of systematic design methods", as well as a paper on "The definition and quantification of automation" at the Building Research establishment.

In 1974, building off my Building Research Establishment experience I teamed up with sociologist and marketing guru Conrad Jameson to see if we

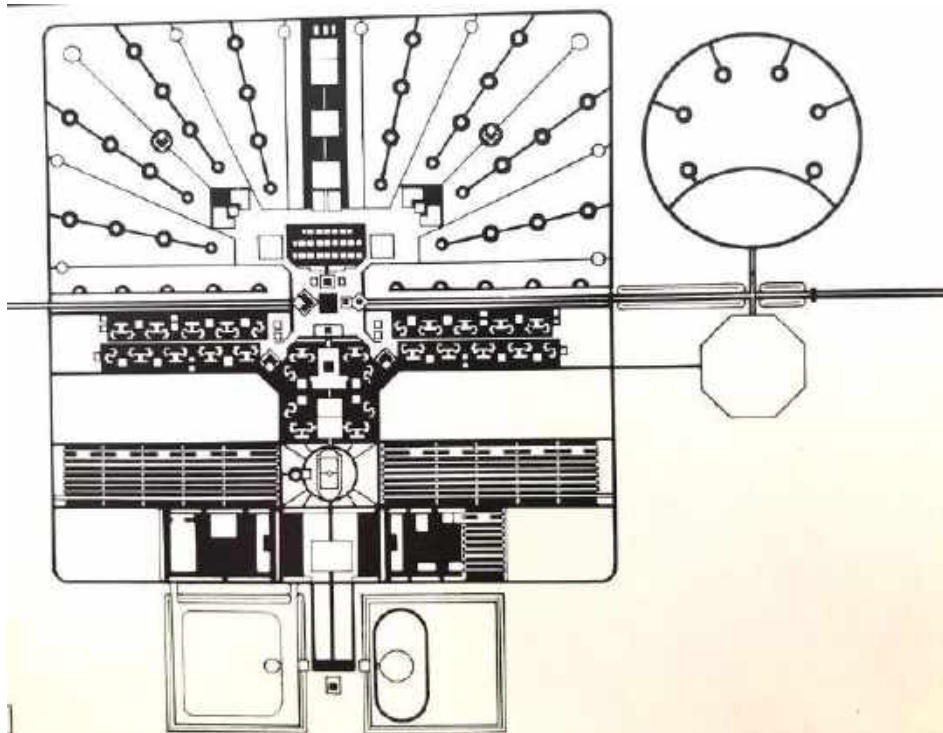
could use techniques of motivational research for industrial products used in construction. Jameson's critique of architectural culture appealed to me. We got a contract from William Mallinson, a leading wood products company, to conduct group research among architects and engineers. It was fascinating to discover psychological drivers of design thinking. This then led to work on *Stramit*, a compressed board made from re-cycled straw then used mainly for roof insulation, to see if it could branch into other products that would appeal to specifiers. For Charcon, the original investors in GoCon, we developed insulated cladding systems using glass-reinforced concrete, a new material being developed at BRS, building them a factory using the material.



Cover of Archigram 4 from 1974.

All this product development work was fun, but it wasn't construction, so I was pleased when Larry Dodge, an old BSD colleague called from Rome where he was working for Brown Daltas Associates, American architects designing a military project in Saudi Arabia managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. This turned out to be King Khaled Military City at Al Batin, about 450 miles north of Riyadh, near the Kuwaiti border. The scope and ideas about the city kept changing; it ended up being for about 70,000 people, but

because of the remote location, construction planning had to be done from scratch. Larry asked me to come and apply some BSD problem-seeking to the task. Spero Daltas, a Greek from Minnesota, lived in some style on Via Gregoriana at the top of the Spanish Steps. The office was more of a studio, staffed by nice young Americans and Greeks. Spero was involving the brilliant Boston based engineer Bill LeMessurier, also a friend of Ezra's, about concrete building systems for housing at the city. Working in Rome was most enjoyable with sorties to Livorno where the Corps HQ for Europe and the Middle East were based.



Diagrammatic plan of Al Batin Military City for a population of 70,000

I produced reports about the logistics of construction, how to get cement from the port of Dammam to Al Batin, where to store materials, building a pre-casting factory, housing for construction workers, how to deal with the heat. One thing struck me; the beautiful drawings produced for us in ink on mylar film by Greek production architects in Athens, hired by Spero. It was an impressive glimpse of the future globalisation of the design professions.

Later in the year I started teaching at the Architectural Association, invited by Roy Landau and Alvin Boyarsky. Together with Peter Town, we developed a course for fourth- and fifth-year students aimed at confronting them with real construction issues. We already felt that the AA studio system was resulting in rather esoteric fan clubs built around charismatic teachers like Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, perhaps at the expense of real environmental needs.



**AA
PROJECT
REVIEW
1974/75**

Diploma School Unit 3



ANSWERING THE NEED

Adaptable Housing

This is a half-unit about housing in general and design for home life in particular.

We know that present housing practices are organizations through which we get housing — produce an inferior product expensively. "The terms of tomorrow are built today," is by now a familiar slogan. We also know that there are other ways of getting housing, often produced and administered in terms of organization. These include self and mutual help building, co-operatives to build and/or manage housing, better housing associations, and many more.

To make such processes work depends on physical and cultural soil. Several units are offered in the Diploma School which work on the development of alternative housing processes.

Unit 3 deals more specifically with the product of the housing process — the house itself — as the context of this seminar. It attempts to answer the question: What is a house that could be the starting point for a new approach to housing in the future?

We are particularly concerned about that housing which is created collectively by the occupants or by the state.

How does the architect provide for tenants' self-determination and choice of lifestyle when what he considers his house is to be done for invisible walls, by using plans in advance, by site-by-site construction, by using the marketplace, by building bigger rooms, by providing better management or security?

How can you introduce the design approach that you think provides the occupant with the best deal?

Focusing and the reality of the end product.

Each student chose a project that had been tried in his own area, and where possible had been published at the time of its design and construction. Students had to read up on the background of the project and the architect's ideas, and then what it is to make some assessment of the reality of living in it. This was done by means of non-existent interviews with occupants and some people, photographs, surveys etc.

Short reports were prepared on each project, explaining discrepancies between the image and the reality, and also trying to give a glimpse of life in the project by means of photos and site plans with actual furniture layouts.

The students' reports were bound together into a little publication called "Some Housing" — among the projects:

Some Housing

Illustrated are London's Bethnal Green Shelter block, HRP's Fernville housing, Camden's Angrove Road estate, Hackney's Cam Acton Square, Tottenham's Howard Wood at Madras Road, Powell and Murray's Larches Street project at Gosport, and CPH at Vauxhall Park, Greenwich.

This programme was successful to the extent that it made the students very aware of the unfortunate consequences that design decisions made in good faith may entail. Also they were aware that in most of the examples they saw, the design context of the housing had its roots firmly in architectural dogmas and theories (like the New Urbanism) rather than something that could be described as a set of social relations for housing. They realized that a piece of land, a settlement of family size and a density requirement does not add up to a place to call home.

The next programme, therefore, required the students to think about social objectives for housing design. What should be a suitable setting for present and future home life? The thrust of the programme was to give the students a list of keywords (e.g. weathering, salt, refuse) for the dwelling unit and the groupings of units. We were seeking points of statements about what would reflect the core occupations of socially mixed people.

The demography of the students was remarkably varied. Most argued for a low greater degree of self-determination for the householder, whether in terms of managing his home environment or actually modifying it. A very strong emphasis was placed, too, on the need for a form of housing shell in which the mix of unit types and sizes may be altered even with a minimum risk of investment.

The purpose of this programme was to provide the students with a brief of their own devising, upon which to base the development of a concept for housing design that could be applied to perhaps differing site situations of their choice. The students endorsed the idea that it is only a relatively recent architectural idea that in some way the site should determine the basic form of housing, noting that successful traditional forms of European housing can be clearly seen in isolation from any particular parcel of land.

However, some students felt that they could only get at an acceptable design concept through trying to design for a specific site, where either users willing to try and define a design concept in isolation, content to define the context in terms of general needs (e.g. Central London, Rural Devon) and perhaps density.

By the end of the year all students had developed a housing design concept in response to their initial objectives and all but one or two have started their design-out on an actual site where the context would be appropriate.

Among theories to emerge in design concepts were:

- The jettisoning of the traditional terrace house with modifications to allow different mixes of unit types and/or different levels of amenity.
- The provision of services, even within the shell, with living space subdivisible in a number of ways to suit occupant's needs.
- The reorganization of existing systems to allow for a controlled expansion of internal layout or as a satisfactory means to be incorporated by occupants.

ADAPTABLE HOUSING



Richard Johnson studied at Keele Street 22/23 and on the site of Gosport, Bethnal Green. He worked on housing projects for the AA in the mid 1970s while working for the Government. He has been a member of the AA since 1978. He has worked on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s and on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s.



John Lane studied at the AA. He worked for the AA on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s and on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s.



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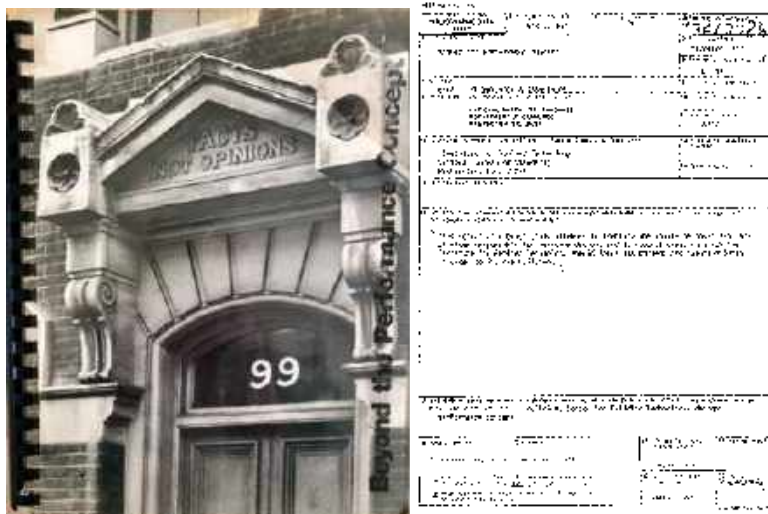
John Lane studied at the AA. He worked for the AA on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s and on projects for the AA in the mid 1970s.

End of year newsletter explaining our unit's work. Each student is featured inside.

1975 was marked for me by contrasting work experiences; on one hand I was becoming known as a construction consultant through my Building Research Station work, leading to commissions to write a guide to the government's 'Method of Building', an initiative of the Property Services Agency to rationalise construction. That was published in the *Architect's Journal*. I was also doing more work on glass-reinforced concrete component systems for Charcon in the Netherlands. But at the same time I was leading a team of architects and engineers preparing a British bid for a Baghdad University of Technology, with Rifat Chaderji's Iraq Consult, architects Sheppard Robson, and Arups. This was to be a huge new campus aimed at developing a home-grown Iraqi engineering elite. My Al Batin Saudi experience was extremely helpful. I enjoyed working with Dick Sheppard, particularly, in their relaxed Camden Town offices; he was sharp and amusing, a veteran of British

modernist wars, keen on construction technology, and an admirer of Ezra Ehrenkrantz. Our entry was one of the final three out of 93 submissions, losing eventually to Americans, Perkins and Will, in a 1976 runoff.

1975 was also the year in which Margaret Thatcher defeated Edward Heath to lead the Conservatives, and IRA outrages in London intensified. Inflation reached 24% and Jenny and I felt we were making no progress in our own lives, despite the delight of our two young boys. It began to get depressing; it even snowed in June, and I longed for some form of release. For me, at least, that came in the following year when Ezra asked me to work on a project at the US National Bureau of Standards in Washington DC. The aim was to study the objectives of and future for federally funded building research, a study done for the Center for Building Technology within the Institute for Applied Technology. Our team included Ezra's partner Chris Arnold, Nicholas Habraken of MIT, William Allen a friend of Ezra's who had been Chief Architect at the BRS⁷⁶, Bill Meyer of BSD and me. Our client liaison was Francis Ventre, an architect and scholar on the staff of the CBT, and his colleagues. It was exciting to be working with bright people at a lush government campus, with trips up to New York to meet with Ezra, whose office had expanded to there from San Francisco.



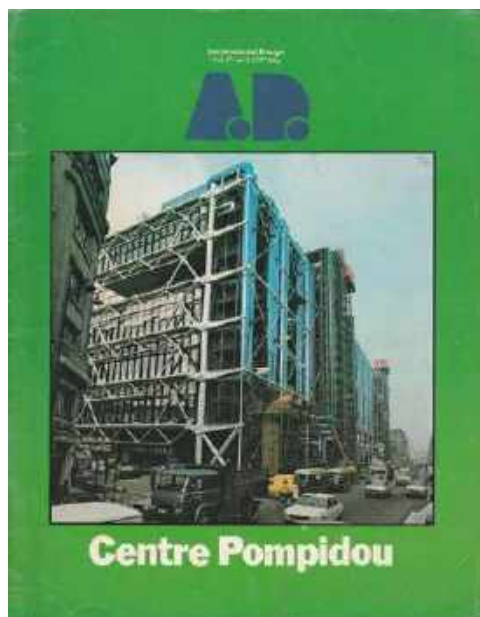
Cover of *Beyond the Performance Concept* – I used the door of Kirkaldy's Testing Works in Southwark of 1866 to symbolise the value of research.

We concluded that the government should indeed concern itself with construction research where that relates to the basic governmental mission of keeping people safe. Regulation needs to be underpinned by disinterested

⁷⁶ Bill Allen, who had been Chief Architect at the BRS and head of the AA, and who had strong ideas about science in architecture, had an architectural practice with John Bickerdike. He was a close friend of Ezra Ehrenkrantz. In 1974 I had helped them prepare contract documents for a livery stable in Normandy. An excellent article on Bill Allen: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/architectural-history/article/william-allen-and-the-scientific-outlook-in-architectural-education-193666/298FF1CA1290533AEFCAF8530DC50858>

scientific authority, as was the case in Britain with the BRS. Furthermore, the government should set the national agenda for research and steer it to stimulate good practice in industry. Construction comprises such a substantial element within the national economy, that it's essential to ensure its health. Our report 'Beyond the Performance Concept' was mostly written by me in New York after our data gathering in Washington. It was exciting to be staying in Greenwich Village with Chris and Linda Finch, and such a relief after the grinding life in London at the time. I had a brief flirtation with Stephanie Bartos, a brilliant young architect in the New York office, who was a pioneer in design for handicapped people.

Back in London I continued to teach our course at the AA. We continued to attract serious students wanting to make a difference in architecture. Later in the year Martin Spring and Haig Beck, now editors at *Architectural Design* under its new proprietor Andreas Papadakis, launched the idea of doing a profile on the yet to be completed Centre Pompidou. I was asked to explain the 'Process and Purposes' of the project, its genesis within French politics. Other contributors included Alan Colquhoun on the architecture, Dennis Crompton on the information technology, Ted Happold on the structure and members of the Rogers/Piano design team.⁷⁷ Together we went to Paris to tour the building and meet the architects and engineers. I made a special trip to see Jean Prouvé at his office in the Rue des Blancs Manteaux. As president of the competition jury, how had he dealt with President Pompidou, I wanted to know. He explained that he had singled out the Rogers/Piano scheme because it promised explicitly to be whatever you might want it to be, therefore suggested Prouvé, it must be the one you want. Prouvé was pretty cute.



⁷⁷ *Architectural Design*, February 1977

During 1977 Bill Allen invited me to work with him on forensic work investigating construction defects. This was becoming an increasing part of his work and he was attracted to the science of it and appalled by the ignorance and bad practice that led to defects. Probably our most fascinating case was The Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow, opened in 1972, designed by Baxter Clark and Paul and built by Costain, a major contractor. It was a tragic catalogue of errors that eventually led to replacement of the plumbing, the flooring and the windows over ten years.

My consolation was to visit Glasgow regularly and to meet Scottish people in all walks of life. I particularly enjoyed The Citizen's Theatre in the tough Gorbals district, a vibrant community playhouse putting on serious political theatre.



Citizen's Theatre interior during a recent refurbishment

My partner Peter Town and I also worked for Bill Allen on defective housing estates for Hackney Council, an East London borough, becoming an ally of Tony Shoults, their fiery Director of Housing. The Smalley Road Estate, in particular, became a *cause célèbre* because it had been designed, built and approved by Hackney employees. We were aligned with Shoults against complacent architects, dishonest builders and incompetent building control officers, although we were later fired because our proposed remedies were thought 'too expensive'.

We no longer needed the offices in Wigmore Street, and for a time we moved in with Frank Duffy and John Worthington to a nearby office on Wimpole Street. But with the prospect of more work with Iraq Consult, we moved to a large luminous loft in Kendall Mews, just behind Baker Street. I needed more staff and somehow Ernie Lowinger whom I knew as a friend in Highgate, said he'd like to come. He was fed up working for Haringey Council, and he became a strong member of the team, bringing in another valuable architect, Peter Koffer.

One day early in 1978 Rifat Chaderji called excitedly to say he had won a competition to design the National Theatre for Abu Dhabi.⁷⁸ The jury had loved the scheme drawn up by Rifat's firm Iraq Consult, but they wanted changes and could we help. There had been prize money so he would be able to pay us. We spent several months on the project, re-shaping the 2000 seat auditorium and the front of house, and developing decorative motifs for tile and plasterwork. I even enlisted Chester Jones to help with the massive task of the theatre interiors. Rifat had a Pakistani engineer partner in Abu Dhabi who helped with the engineering co-ordination, and I visited to see the site and meet the Culture Ministry client. I did not care at all for Abu Dhabi or Dubai, with stifling heat, strict rules for foreigners, and very raw commercialism.

But as the year progressed Rifat became harder to reach, until we learned from his wife, Balqees that the Ba'ath Party's Saddam Hussein had imprisoned him at Abu Ghraib prison just outside Baghdad (Rifat's father had been a politically active opponent of Shia Arab nationalist Ba'ath ideology). However, we managed to conceal his absence from the Abu Dhabi authorities and work on the theatre continued. During early 1979, we managed to complete and submit contract documents.

Somehow Rifat had managed to let his Jordanian friend in London, George Werr, know that he had the opportunity to develop the London office, and he asked George to come in with us on a new firm to be called Glowcastle that would promote the work of Iraq Consult, and seek new work in the Middle East that could be done out of London. Peter Town and I became Directors. This was good in that it gave us an Arabic speaking partner to help deal with clients in that part of the world.

⁷⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifat_Chadirji



Despite all the upheavals at work my sons Felix and Leo remained an absolute joy

The first projects we worked on were international competitions in Jordan, first for the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman, then a residential orphanage for the Religious Ministry. Both were done with a gifted Jordanian architect, Rasem Badran, who had been a friend of Rifat's. We managed third prize in each competition.

We then embarked on another international consortium project with Sheppard Robson, working for Koreans, Samsung Construction. This was a housing project of 2170 units for Riyadh University Staff. Samsung was an industrial giant already, but quite new to construction. At the end of the Korean war, there had been great opportunities in domestic re-construction, and this gave rise to many new companies. But when home opportunities declined, the companies were bought up cheap by *chaebol* (conglomerates) attracted to new markets in the Middle East, where they would outbid western contractors using their own imported labour. The oil price shocks of 1971 and 1973 accelerated this trend. I was amazed by the energy and diligence of the Korean architects and engineers, led by a charismatic engineer who had studied in the US. Invited to Seoul by Samsung, I was royally wined and dined, to say the least. Clearly, the most senior managers at Samsung were corrupt, with bank accounts in Switzerland, that needed priming to keep them on side. Nonetheless, it was great to visit and to meet Koreans. They are a fascinating people with a fabulous artistic heritage but, like Poland, they suffer endlessly from being sandwiched between two great powers, China and Japan, and in that sense are quite tragic. I liked Korea a lot. On my way home I stopped in Singapore, where my father Leo was now living with Barbara, acting as a sort of roving global marketing chief for Paterson Candy International, selling large-scale water treatment schemes.



Leo and Barbara in Singapore in the mid 1970s

Towards the end of 1979 I was approached by NEDO (National Economic Development Office)⁷⁹ to prepare two papers, one on “Diagnosing and Preventing Construction Defects” and another “Recent Developments in American Architectural Practice”. The first was a response to a growing realisation in government that the widespread rash of building failures was a social ill that cost the country dear. The second aimed to alert public sector commissioning bodies to the American system of architect selection for public work, based on experience and merit, not price, and enshrined in the Brooks Act of 1972.⁸⁰ I had intimate knowledge of this process from our American work for the US Post Office and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It was timely for Britain, too, when fee scales were being abolished and architects increasingly obliged to bid their fees

This was worthy and useful work, but it lacked excitement. Meanwhile Margaret Thatcher’s Conservatives had been elected in May, ousting Jim Callaghan’s lacklustre administration, and beginning 18 years of Tory rule by promising ‘substantial’ tax cuts to unleash Britain’s energies once more. It would take some time for any benefits of this promise to reach the coalface of the UK construction market, still reeling from the oil price rises of 1973. I had been excited by my work for the US Army Corps of Engineers, my visit to Korea and my involvement with the new world of globalised construction, through my work with Iraq Consult. But I remained quite pessimistic about the prospects for Britain in such a world. I was writing frequent articles for *Building Design* critical of government construction policy. I was encouraged

⁷⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Economic_Development_Council

⁸⁰ <https://www.acec.org/advocacy/qbs/brooks2/>

by Peter Murray, then the editor, and by Sutherland Lyall whose important book, The State of British Architecture, appeared in 1980.⁸¹

⁸¹ Sutherland Lyall, The State of British Architecture, London, Architectural Press, 1980.

8. Working in America 1980-87

Then, in 1980, Ezra contacted me. His firm was now re-badged as The Ehrenkrantz Group (TEG), working out of midtown Manhattan. He had new partners including Carl Meinhardt who had come from Richard Meier's office and Fritz Rehkopf in charge of business. In addition to conventional architectural work, the firm was doing an increasing amount of restoration of historic buildings and modern buildings that had suffered premature deterioration. This work was led by a brilliant forensic architect, Theo Prudhon. The most prestigious assignment was the restoration of the Woolworth Building on Broadway in Lower Manhattan. The 1913 terracotta clad masterpiece of Cass Gilbert had long suffered from frost and rust action that occasionally showered the street in terracotta shards. The Woolworth company had been reluctantly obliged to mount a \$24 million restoration of the tower.

The main contractor was Turner Construction, a politically powerful New York based firm, quite heavily unionised, with the terracotta repair entrusted to Colliers, experts in high rise façade engineering, who had built the nearby World Trade Center. Because of the indeterminate nature of the work, Turner were on a cost-plus contract that they were exploiting shamelessly, to the annoyance of Woolworth, and TEG were running short of senior project managers who might control the process. Ezra asked if I'd be interested to come to New York and have a go, drawing on my years of forensic experience with Bill Allen; much of the project was about accurate diagnosis of problems. In addition to the technical challenges, the project was beset by local politics in the form of a critical and powerful Municipal Arts Society, and the noisy opinions of the *New Yorker's* architecture critic, Brendan Gill. Much was at stake because of the iconic importance of the building to the city.



Contemporary postcard of the Woolworth Building 1913

Arriving in New York sometime in May, my first action was to organise an audit of the project finances, with all the documents locked in the Woolworth boardroom. This worried Turner, and sure enough we found massive abuse of expenses and timecards. But the reputation risk to Turner was high on such a prominent project; we got them to accept much tighter control and to promise better behaviour. My team worked at night on external rigs, testing each terracotta block with acrylic hammers. We marked the failed blocks for removal and replacement during the day shift. There was no suitable terracotta manufacturer, so we had to rely on high quality precast concrete for the replacement blocks. For the intricate gothic detailing of many of the blocks we used a pourable polymer concrete that could be formed into blocks or cast directly onto the building, by pouring into fiberglass moulds formed over the original shapes, before their removal. The polymer concrete, specially developed to make rapid runway repairs on Vietnam airfields, had a fine biscuit finish very similar to the original terracotta, and it set fast without releasing too much heat. We replaced some 26,000 blocks in all. This was nerve-racking work and very hard, but my colleagues Tim Allenbrook and Gary Knobloch made a great team. We later went on to diagnose problems

and devise remedial work for the Chrysler Building, which had stolen the height crown from Woolworth in 1930.



Drawing of the Chrysler Building by Gary Knobloch

At first I rented a flat on the Upper West Side, overlooking Central Park, a dodgy sublet of a rent-controlled flat from a friend, but comfortable. Ezra was supporting my application for a green card, and I was also spending some time in the TEG office on East 44th Street. There, I again met Stephanie Bartos and we began an affair.

Working in New York was certainly stimulating, and the feeling that we were helping to save one of its greatest monuments was very motivating. The audit of Turner's work had got the project back on track, and my star seemed to be rising in the TEG office. Carl Meinhardt, the partner responsible for Woolworth started to involve me in other tricky renovation projects. Perhaps the most interesting was to stop the rot at the Holyoak Center, a large Harvard Yard administrative building of 1962-7 designed by Catalan, Josep Luis Sert. TEG had recently designed a well-regarded dormitory, also in Harvard Yard, Canaday Hall, and we were asked to bring our forensic skills to the deteriorating concrete of Sert's not very old building.



Holyoak Center, Harvard University, completed 1962-67

The building's façade was modulated by very fine concrete fins only about 60mm thick, and these had deteriorated due to corrosion of their steel reinforcement. Many had already been removed as dangerous. I proposed glass fibre reinforced concrete replacements based on the work I had done in England, but I cannot honestly recall what happened in the end, except that there was huge anxiety about tampering with the master, Sert's, work.⁸² Many years later the building got a major overhaul by Michael Hopkins.

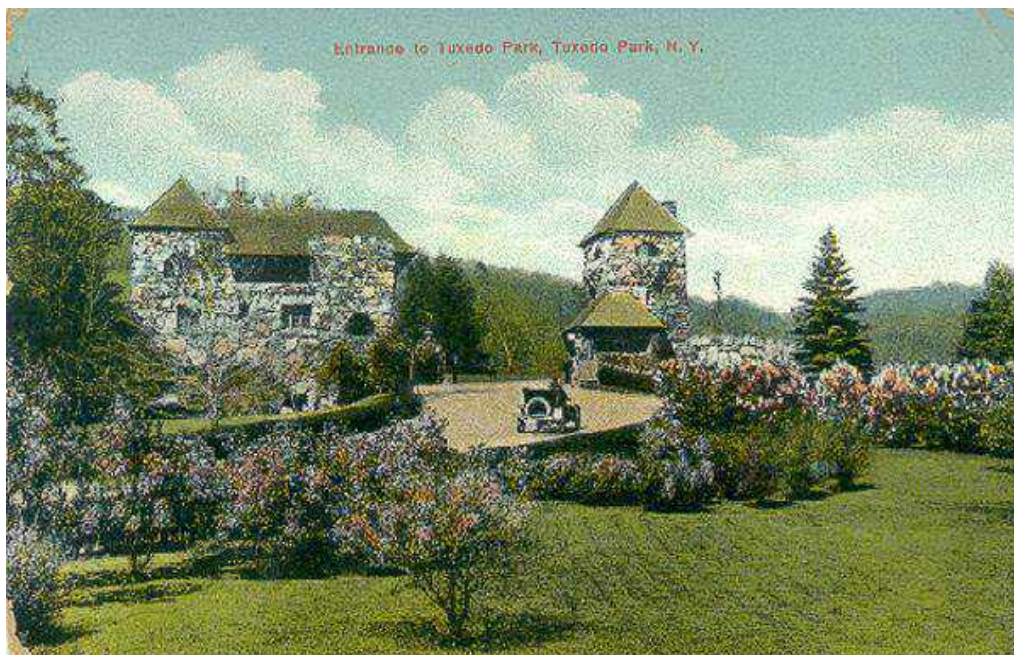
In New York Stephanie was working on design guides for handicapped accessibility, a very new topic at the time. She shared the lower floors of a fine brownstone near the Natural History Museum, perhaps around 83rd Street, a block off Central Park West; ten blocks south of my own place. We saw each other about three times a week, eventually becoming lovers. That summer a group of us at TEG rented a beach house on Fire Island. Back then, Fire Island was only sparsely built up and was still quite wild and romantic. The Friday afternoon train from Grand Central, laden with Zabar's groceries and wine, was a thrilling weekly escape for us, and our parties on the island were quite wild.

⁸² Sert had been dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design from 1953 to 1969.



Typical Fire Island beachscape - endless soft white sand.

Stephanie also had friends and family connections in Tuxedo Park, an extraordinary bucolic community of robber baron ‘cottages’ from the 1880s onwards, many designed by Bruce Price or John Russell Pope. Nestled among mountains in Orange County, north of New York, it became home to J.P.Morgan, William Astor, Albert Einstein and Henry Poor of Standard and Poor’s, among many notables. We visited several times, and I was completely captivated by the extravagant whimsy of the place, its role in introducing the dinner jacket to America - the Tuxedo - and its rich folklore involving etiquette specialist Emily Post, decorator Dorothy Draper and a host of other celebrities, ensuring a steady stream of rubbernecks even now. In 1980 the whole village had been added to the National Register of Historic Places.



The 1886 extravagant whimsy of Tuxedo Park, fortunately unimproved by progress.

The work on Woolworth continued in a pretty unrelenting way, although it did at least allow me to benefit from New York cultural life, particularly the jazz and the art galleries. Through Linda and Chris Finch, I had met Joan Rosenbaum, a wonderfully witty woman then applying to become Director of New York's Jewish Museum. Joan had a good track record in prints and drawings at MOMA, and she was eventually appointed Director in 1981. Joan had an apartment on West 85th Street, and we spent quite some time there together, cooking and talking about art and Jewishness. Occasionally, with wine, I'd fall asleep on the sofa and stay over; we became quite close.



Joan Rosenbaum

Joan was an exceptional museum director: Joshua Nash, the museum's chairman, said on her retirement in 2010, "Joan Rosenbaum is the most influential leader this institution has had in its 106-year history, she has served longer than any other director and has shaped the museum more than any other individual." What he did not say was how skilfully Joan negotiated among the rich and ambitious members of the museum board, who were often quite unscrupulous in their dealings with each other. I marvelled at how she managed to keep them all on board and backing her plans.

At some point during the summer of 1980 Jenny, Felix and Leo came to New York for a visit. We did the usual touristy things, going up the Empire State Building and circling Manhattan on a Circle Line boat. I had become friendly with Ken Ricci at TEG, a specialist in correctional design and full of exciting ideas. We all went to stay with Ken at his house on City Island, a beautiful seaside suburb north of the Bronx, a secret place of New York. Jenny and I had stressful discussions about our future and what it might hold. I was keen on trying to make a new life in America, still taking refuge from Britain's

“winter of discontent”, but she was less taken by that idea and did not want it for Felix and Leo. We had reached an awkward stalemate.

But soon after that time, Ezra hinted that he might want me to go to California later in the year. The presidential campaign was in full swing, and the Republican, Ronald Reagan, was clearly pulling ahead of Jimmy Carter, on promises of supply-side economics and increased military spending, to redress the humiliations of Vietnam and the Iran Hostage Crisis, not to mention the USSR’s recent invasion of Afghanistan. The US military were preparing for a Reagan presidency, with advanced plans for all sorts of exotic weaponry. Among these was the MX Missile, a multiple warhead replacement for the aging Minuteman, with far more firepower and a range of 11,000km. The Air Force was considering different approaches to basing the new missiles, and favourite was a sort of three-card-monte model, whereby the missiles could be moved between bunkers in such a way that attackers could never know where they actually were. This approach would involve constructing a significant main operating base to house about 20,000 personnel and their families, located in some remote intermountain area in Utah or Nevada.

Very soon after Reagan and his vice president George W Bush were elected, the Air Force issued requests for proposals for the MX Main Operating Base Comprehensive Planning. Ezra had assembled a team to respond including EDAW, a San Francisco environmental and planning firm, engineers LeMessurier for structures and Flack and Kurtz for mechanical and electrical engineering. Our team’s earlier experience designing remote military installations in Saudi Arabia must have helped because our proposal was selected by the Air Force for further development.

In early February 1981 I went to London, partly because I’d heard that my father was ill with cancer of the liver, a terrifyingly fast-acting condition. I was able to see him in the Middlesex Hospital before he died, but only just. His mother Olga was devastated that he should predecease her. I’d never been close to Leo, but I did admire him, and I felt his loss.

In March Ezra asked me to head for San Francisco, to re-establish the Ehrenkrantz office, and to invite trusted former BSD architects from the Bay Area to join a new team, based in EDAW’s warehouse offices on Chestnut Street at the foot of Telegraph Hill.⁸³ Luckily Ezra’s first partner Chris Arnold was still around to help, and I was able to get Larry Dodge, John Vilet, Joel Goodman and several others to join us, including Judith Vaughn as office manager, a friend of Stephanie’s who had also worked in the New York office.

⁸³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EDAW>

Ezra visited frequently from New York to encourage us. EDAW was led by Chris Degenhardt, a thoughtful English landscape planner; they had a strong reputation in the growing field of environmental assessment. In April I found a serviced apartment on Grant Avenue, nearby. I furnished it from *Crate and Barrel*, in a nearby shopping mall, and the work began. Stephanie was still in New York, and I spent long lonely evenings in the bars around North Beach.

One had to wonder how our left-leaning, draft avoiding, hippy/liberal sensibility had been bamboozled by an undertaking like the MX. Ezra was clearly fascinated by the potential to influence government at such a level. Our Air Force clients were mostly smart young engineers in crisp uniforms, determined to get our rather shaggy team to produce a stream of ‘deliverables’ on time and on budget - elaborate reports on our progress at planning a city in the middle of nowhere. Now, our planners and architects, schooled in post-war urbanism, dreamed only of Urbino and the work of Giancarlo di Carlo. Italian hill villages were their paradigm for a humane living environment for disoriented young servicemen. Larry Dodge drove the planning effort. I was less sure; I felt certain the Air Force were probably more inspired by Stanley Kubrik’s 1968 *Space Odyssey*.



The monolith from Space Odyssey - possible Air Force inspiration for MX main base

Actually, in discussion, it became clear to me that a more appropriate model for our settlement would be the railhead towns of the 1880s wild West, where pre-cut timber structures were brought by train and erected into the linear towns beloved of Western movies. They would at least be familiar, American, cheap and buildable. In any event, our definitive proposals ended up as an awkward merging of Italian Hill Town and Western Frontier Town.

While this work was going on I was meeting up with architect Joseph Esherick and his partners, Chuck Davis and Peter Dodge. Their firm was highly regarded in the Bay Area and Joe had long taught with Ezra at Berkeley. A founder of Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, Esherick had designed wonderful houses at Sea Ranch on the Sonoma Coast.⁸⁴



1966 house at Sea Ranch designed by Joseph Esherick

We discussed the possibility of teaming up for public work in California. We thought the MX project would be vulnerable to congressional funding battles, might be delayed, and might even vanish. So we teamed with Esherick to propose master planning and programming for the California State Franchise Tax Board's new headquarters for 3000 staff to be located in Sacramento. There was enthusiasm for Ezra in the office of the state architect, Sim van der Ryn, who had also taught at UC Berkeley, and our chances were good. Our team included two interior designers from Esherick's office, Marie Fisher and Alisa Quint, both New York trained, and then quite a novelty in the very masculine architectural world. We also sported a redoubtable psychologist, Yvonne Clearwater to address the workplace issues of what was going to be a huge, largely windowless office. What excited me was the openness of the state administration; you could make appointments to see just about anyone in the client organisations, to discuss ideas and get to the bottom of their concerns. This allowed us to prepare highly focussed proposals directly addressing real problems. I spent a lot of time on Highway 80 going back and forth to Sacramento.

⁸⁴ Review of Marc Treib's 2008 book on Esherick:
https://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2008/11/05_esherick.shtml

We managed to get appointed by the State of California to do a feasibility study for the Tax Board just a couple of months before Reagan cancelled the MX shelter system in October, calling it a ‘Rube Goldberg’ scheme. We nevertheless had to complete planning documents for the Air Force through to the end of the year. We also managed to get other work to expand the office. A Chicago client of Carl Meinhardt’s, the Trizec Corporation, had a fine 1912 building, The Hollinsworth in Calgary, with terracotta cladding made by Royal Doulton in London, which was quite common for Canadian buildings at the time.⁸⁵ I flew there to prepare a proposal for a restoration plan for the building, enjoying the rough and tumble of a rich Midwest oil town in full flow.

Around that time, I also befriended an architect at the California State Architect’s office who was responsible for the famous folk monument, Simon Rodia’s Watts Towers in Los Angeles. After Rodia disappeared in 1954, the towers became neglected and vandalised, but thanks to the energy of local preservationists they were saved from demolition and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are owned by the State of California. We responded to a request for proposals to prepare a comprehensive preservation plan for the towers. On a pre-contract site visit I met John Kariotis, a brilliant structural engineer whose innovative work on the seismic resistance of masonry buildings was already known to me. Together we noted and agreed that although many eminent Californian architectural preservation specialists were vying to get the job, most of them were far too close either to Watts Towers Community Trust, to LA special interest groups including the art museums, to the mayor’s office, or to the Hearst newspaper the LA Herald Examiner. It would thus be hard for the State to select a local consultant. Our chances were therefore good.

We had two great advantages; we were from out of town, and we had really good credentials. The Woolworth Building, in particular, because of its delicate applied terracotta detail, was analogous to Rodia’s technique of embedding ceramics into mortar. Furthermore, Chris Arnold was becoming a leading authority on the development of seismic resistant forms of construction. After an exciting presentation in Sacramento, we were awarded the project with John Kariotis as our structural consultant.

⁸⁵ Trizec Properties, founded by William Zeckendorf in Canada, was a major real estate investor/trader until 2000. The Hollinsworth was to become the cornerstone of Banker’s Hall, a major redevelopment in downtown Calgary.



Press release photo of Watts Towers for a 1985 conference on their restoration that took place after I left The Ehrenkrantz Group. I attended, nevertheless, and gave a brief talk explaining our approach to the restoration.

The Watts Towers work meant a lot of shuttling to LA on Southwest Airlines, and lot of local LA politicking in addition to doing the technical work, but we got off to a good start with a meticulous documentation of the towers' condition.

Meanwhile the Franchise Tax Board work brought me into close contact with Marie Fisher and Alisa Quint, the interior specialists at Esherick and I started to meet Alisa outside work, a witty New York Jewish girl who had studied at Parsons in New York. Marie had studied at _____. She lived on Telegraph Hill at the top of the Filbert Steps above our office on Chestnut Street, a famous floral climb of 284 steps. At the same time, I was seeing a dusky cocktail waitress at the Fisherman's Wharf Hyatt, around the corner from the apartment, after late boozy evenings. I was a bit of a mess emotionally, confused about my relationship with Jenny, and not leading a healthy life. Then one time Alisa and I went out with Marie and her boyfriend Alex Cichy, an advertising writer working for the legendary Hal Riney.⁸⁶ They

⁸⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hal_Riney

lived at 1308 Montgomery Street around the corner from Alisa, in the lower part of Anne Halsted's house. Alex seemed to understand that I was in a bad way and suggested that what I needed was a hobby, and the hobby was going to be fishing! He would teach me.



The beautiful and peaceful casting pools in Golden Gate Park

That was a remarkably generous suggestion and I resolved to take it seriously, although I had never fished. First, Alex took me to the remarkable 1939 casting pools in Golden Gate Park, where he led me through the fundamentals of proper casting with a piece of fluorescent wool to resemble a dry fly at the end of my line. It was tricky for a beginner, but by remembering the basic rules one could eventually manage to land the 'fly' with some delicacy. I revisited the ponds several times on my own to practice.

I bought some basic fishing equipment and in September/October Alex took me up to Putah Creek, a wildlife area between Yolo and Solano Counties, north of the city, suitable for a beginner trout fisherman. The setting was beautiful, and we caught plenty of not very large fish that we returned to the stream. Alex explained the various fly patterns and how to present them to the fish. It was a lot to learn, but certainly exciting. Later in early 1982 Alex took me further north to Baum Lake, a famous winter fishery east of Redding. It was perishing cold, but it introduced me to the art of fishing from an aluminium boat with nymphs and streamers.

In the summer of 1982 Alex and Marie, Alisa and I went on an expedition to the Fall River in Northern California, between the mighty volcanos of Lassen and Shasta. Driving up the Sacramento Valley to Redding before heading East, beyond Burney, where we stayed at Lava Creek Lodge, a rather primitive fishing motel at the edge of Eastman Lake, set on an *altiplano*, or high plateau through which flows the legendary Fall River, perhaps the most famous Western trout river, a spring creek meandering over beds of ancient lava, it provides a perfect habitat for trout. Alex had fished here many times, but I was a beginner. We rented flat-bottomed aluminium boats with outboards and went up the river in pursuit of the very wily fish. The scenery and the wildlife were magical. By 2022 I will have been visiting the Fall for forty years!

Also in 1982, with the help of Ken Ricci and Curtiss Pulitzer, the criminal justice specialists at TEG in New York, we began to pitch for California projects, starting with a \$25M courts complex for Diablo Valley in Contra Costa County and a new 86 bed jail for Placer County. It was instructive meeting sheriffs and jail commanders who were well educated and keen to try new ideas involving the positive reinforcement of good behaviour; a revolution in penal thinking that was gaining ground in California particularly. Ken and Curtiss also helped us to secure a master-planning assignment for the City of Sunnyvale at the heart of the newly emerging ‘Silicon Valley’, home to pioneers of the computer revolution like Hewlett Packard. Population growth and growing tax revenues argued for a new civic center and a public safety building, a police building with a jail built in.

Carl Meinhardt brought us a glamorous project at the historic intersection of Hollywood and Vine in LA. This was to be a mid-priced hotel opposite the Capitol Records HQ, developed by Carl’s client, Forest City Dillon of Detroit, as part of a downtown revitalization project by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. Forest City, keen to expand to the West Coast, were pioneers in the use of large panel precast concrete in the European manner, and they also developed prefabricated bathroom pods for hotels. We designed a quite severe *moderne* block with exterior shear walls punctuated by windows with awnings, and a lively streetscape. Sadly, the project never progressed beyond a promotional brochure.

Other hangovers from our East Coast experience included quite a bit of work for the US Postal Service’s Western Region, including an operations and maintenance manual for the headquarters building and the programming for a major new data center. But much more significantly Theo Prudhon, TEG’s leading preservationist, had been approached by the City Council of Salt Lake City, who were considering their options for the future of their magnificent 1894 Richardsonian sandstone City and County building. They knew about

our work on the Woolworth and Chrysler buildings and invited us to respond to a request for proposals for evaluate their building's future.



Hollywood Hotel for Forest City Dillon - 350 rooms plus a 650-space parking structure, complete with rooftop heliport. Capitol Records is on the left.

Early in 1983 I headed to Salt Lake to size up the project. The building housed the joint jurisdictions of the City (Mayor plus 7 elected members) and the County (3 elected members), as is quite common in America. The County committee were solidly Mormon, and closely integrated with Salt Lake Mormon politics. The City Council, though, were carefully non-partisan. The County wanted to demolish the building and replace it with something 'modern and efficient', a position supported by local Mormon press and the church, whereas the City was in favour of affordable restoration. The building had been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1970. But both organisations had run out of space - one of them would have to leave or both would need new buildings. Both jurisdictions were weary of expensive piecemeal restoration, and they wanted a permanent solution. The ongoing

work was being overseen by a local Mormon architect, Dean Gustavson, and a consulting structural engineer Larry Reaveley, so I formed a team with them to pitch for the project. Gustavson understood that teaming with Ehrenkrantz would gain him support from the City, who otherwise did not trust him. My assistant on the project was Sandra Suominen, an excellent preservation architect who had led our technical work on Watts Towers. Consultant selection was highly competitive for this prestige project, so I was thrilled to be appointed soon after our interview in February.



Salt Lake City and County Building, 1894, by architects Monheim, Bird and Proudfoot.

The first thing I noticed about Salt Lake was that whereas the City were already borrowing capital close to their authorised limit, the County had ample capacity to raise a \$45,000,000 bond issue, at that time more than enough to build a new County HQ on another site.

Fortunately, there was a suitable site, a redundant hospital at Midvale, much closer to the geographical centre of the County than the City and County Building. By discussing the potential for a new County HQ with the three County Commissioners, I suggested a master planning assignment to establish the feasibility of moving the County administration to a new building at Midvale. Interviewed again with Gustavson, we came second to a Salt Lake firm of architects, but were awarded the job anyway because of our intimate involvement with existing County facilities.

The programming of the County facilities resulted in a master plan for 400,000 square feet of space in two identical office buildings that fit comfortably on the hospital site with plenty of parking. This arrangement was appealing to the

cost-conscious County client because the duplicate buildings were economical on both professional fees and construction cost. A few years later I visited Salt Lake and was amused to see that they had actually built exactly what I proposed in the master plan, financed with a county-wide bond issue. They were relieved to no longer need to co-habit with the City administration.

Working in Salt Lake was quite strange. I would be there about every other week, flying in on Delta or Southwest for both of which Salt Lake was a hub. I stayed at the downtown Marriott, and read the *Deseret News*, the local Mormon backed paper. Ironically, because Salt Lake was an airline hub it had several exceptional seafood restaurants with produce flown in from both coasts, despite being far inland. In the City administration I became friendly with Sydney Fannesbeck, deputy mayor and very politically savvy, who led the initiative to restore the building. She was ably supported by Phil Erickson, a city manager, and his wife Jane who was responsible for city insurances. They were like behind-the-lines troops, facing the weight of Mormon influence in the city. Relations with Dean Gustavson and his engineer Larry Reaveley, both devout Mormons, were strained. They knew they had to tolerate us because of our expertise, but they did not enjoy the experience of working with us.

Our restoration study showed that seismic resistance was key to survival of the building. Salt Lake is near the active Wasatch fault. The Uniform Building Code, in force locally, meant that seismic strengthening would be required, such as had been used for California's State Capitol at a cost of \$60M. But I had been strongly influenced by John Kariotis' work on Watts Towers and his approach to improving the resistance of masonry structures. Also, Chris Arnold, Ezra's original partner, had introduced me to Ron Mayes, a pioneer of base isolation in New Zealand, who was interested in introducing the technology to the US.⁸⁷ In April 1984, our team were reappointed by Salt Lake City as architects for the restoration following a unanimous City Council vote to restore the building. I was able to drop Gustavson from the team in favour of a local restoration architect Burtch Beall who had been more sympathetic to our approach. Kariotis and Mayes took the place of Larry Reaveley to evaluate alternative methods of seismic mitigation. Base isolation plus some of John's strengthening measures came out as probably the most economic. I created a climate of support for the radical technology by getting Ron to lecture at the University of Utah's civil engineering department, by presenting the options to local code officials, and holding out the possibility of federal support to match that received by California. Although I was soon

⁸⁷ Base Isolation is an approach to overcoming seismic forces by damping, rather than by brute resistance, setting the building on shock absorbers to dissipate the horizontal energy of earthquakes. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seismic_base_isolation

to leave The Ehrenkrantz Group, the project went ahead and the base isolation was put in place, the first major project in the US. It was a huge success for Salt Lake and the building reopened in April 1989 amid massive local fanfare.

While I was still living at the company apartment on Grant Avenue, my mother Norah came to visit, which was quite unexpected. However, she enjoyed San Francisco very much and made several, mostly gay, friends who entertained her and later came to visit her in France. She seemed quite exotic to San Franciscans. At some time in the late summer of 1983 Alisa and I decided to move in together with her spaniel, Smith, and fortunately Anne Halsted allowed us to rent the lower part of her house at 1388 Montgomery Street which had been vacated by Alex and Marie, now moved to a house in Claremont, on the Berkeley/Oakland borders. I was glad to get out of the apartment and Anne's house was both spacious and attractive. At weekends we would often go up to Sea Ranch, renting a house with Alex and Marie, and other friends. I began at last to enjoy west coast life, settling down after my wild patch on arrival, consoled by friendships and fishing.

Notable among the friendships were Art and Irma Zigas. Art ran the SF office of Syska and Hennessy, environmental engineers from New York and well known to Ehrenkrantz there. We first teamed up with them on the Franchise Tax Board feasibility study. John Hennessy visited from New York, and we got on well. Art and Irma were classic New Yorkers, Jewish and funny, mad about opera and just great to be with. They introduced me to the opera, and I began to really enjoy it. The standard of productions in San Francisco was excellent; Art frequently appeared as a supernumary holding a spear, etc. while Irma was managing the travel bookstore of a new retail venture, *Banana Republic*, a clothing shop dedicated to travel wear that later became very successful. For Irma, that was just a beginning; she went on to advise the new SF Museum of Modern Art on its bookstore. Art and Irma had four children: Barry, Rita, Eve and Eric. Eve married Wolfgang Brendel a baritone star from the Munich Opera, which was a sort of third act triumph for Art and Irma, although Wolfgang was also a delightful person who loved San Francisco. Eric worked for EDAW, the environmental consultancy I had been working with on MX.

Another friend I met through the Esherick office was John Parman, who helped them with marketing. John was close to Dick Bender at UC Berkeley, and to others still there since my time like Marc Treib, who was now teaching architectural history along with Spiro Kostof. John was starting a new venture, *Design Book Review*, a serious journal that would review architectural and

planning books, edited by the wonderful Richard Ingersoll.⁸⁸ Richard and John knew about my writing in *Architectural Design*, and they asked me to review Robin Evans' *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture 1750-1840*. I knew Robin well from my AA days, and I was impressed by the scholarship of his book, developed from his AA dissertation.⁸⁹ It was a deeply researched discourse on space and power, partly inspired by Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* that had appeared in English in 1977. I also started contributing to *Arts and Architecture*, a revived California magazine edited by Barbara Goldstein, whom I had met while working on Watts Towers.

In the summer of 1983, before I moved to Montgomery Street, Jenny and the boys came to visit in San Francisco. It was a difficult visit for both of us. I made sure that we visited the normal tourist sights together and the boys seemed to enjoy that, although there was a tension in the air as Jenny and I debated our possible futures. I was in favour of a fresh start in San Francisco, but Jenny wanted assurances I felt I could not give. It was fraught for both of us, and she returned to London unsatisfied.

In the office we had periodic visits from Ezra, from Fritz Rehkopf who was the New York TEG businessperson, and from Carl Meinhardt, as well as from Ken Ricci and Curtiss Pulitzer the criminal justice specialists. I was helped in the marketing by Cynthia Ziegler, a beautiful blonde who had previously managed marketing for Syska and Hennessy, recommended to me by Art Zigas. We cranked out many proposals for just about every opportunity open to us. The Brooks Act had given a huge boost to qualifications-led procurement for professional services, and we were in a good position to respond to 'Requests for Proposals'.⁹⁰ Furthermore we were winning quite a few; our forward order book looked good, even though our current cash flow looked poor. It was the classic predicament of a start-up. Our design for Sunnyvale's new Public Safety building was coming along well - a sort of glorified jumbo suburban ranch house design by Larry Dodge - and we were securing significant justice work, including planning a new 400 bed state women's prison at Stockton. Ezra and Carl were supportive of the office, but Fritz and other partners in New York saw our office as too expensive, not quick enough to get into profit, and basically 'Andrew having fun at our expense'. Yet Ezra balked at putting a stop to that by making me a partner, nervous of upsetting his other New York partners. I was disappointed by Ezra's diffidence, and the tensions over money continued for another year.

⁸⁸ https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/architectural-critic-and-educator-richard-ingersoll-dies-at-72_o

⁸⁹ "The Fabrication of Virtue: English prison Architecture 1750-1840" long review of Robin Evans' book, *Design Book Review 1*, Winter, 14-15, 1983.

⁹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooks_Act The 1972 act was aimed at Federal procurements, but it was quickly adopted by state, county and city administrations as a fair way to appoint professionals.

Springtime fishing adventures included the shad run on the Sacramento River near Marysville. Pacific shad are anadromous - raised in the ocean but breeding in rivers - introduced to California from the East in the 1800s having been brought overland in stagecoaches! Shad females produce a delicious roe. In May we'd go to the river and fish standing in the fast water with waders up to our chests late into the evening, exhausting yet exhilarating. Alex introduced me to his friend Jean-Francois Gaillard, a French tech innovator living in San Francisco, and another keen fisherman. One time we were caught after dark resting in our car on a sandbank by policemen who had picked up, using their infra-red cameras, that we had open cans of beer! Open cans in cars are against the law in California. Fortunately, nothing happened.

In the office we continued to pursue new work in 1984, including a proposal to enlarge the jail of Marin County, North of San Francisco. This was a fantastic challenge, to expand Frank Lloyd Wight's masterpiece in an unassuming way.⁹¹ The Justice Center of the original building desperately needed more space, but there were complex political considerations as well as architectural heritage interests. We made a needs assessment and found a solution by embedding new jail space in the hillside to the West of the complex, such that it could not be seen from the normal vantage points. Debate dragged on for years, and eventually an enlarged jail was designed by AECOM, completed in 1994, pretty much as we planned.

Felix and Leo visited in the summer, but without Jenny, staying with Alisa and me on Montgomery Street. They were excited but there remained an uneasiness about my unresolved relationship with Jenny. To get them out of it we went to Fall River with Alex and Marie to take them fishing. Leo caught a large trout on a spinning rod and insisted on keeping it; going under a low bridge it became dislodged from a keepnet on the boat and sank to the bottom. Leo was so distraught that I dived in and retrieved his fish. Later I rented a small car, and went exploring with the boys, going as far as the Grand Tetons, returning via Las Vegas and Yosemite. They enjoyed the camping and cooking under the stars.

⁹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marin_County_Civic_Center



Marin Civic Center, 1960, architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The hexagonal building to the left is the new jail completed in 1994.

One of the San Francisco architects I had met and admired was Herb McLaughlin. He had a successful office, Kaplan McLaughlin Diaz (KMD), that also made specialties of both criminal justice and health planning. KMD had recently completed the County jail of Contra Costa, a landmark building for the new philosophy of incarceration based on positive reinforcement of good behaviour. It was much admired by Ken Ricci and Curtiss Pulitzer at TEG. Herb liked English architects, and his practice was already home to Leon Sugarman, David Bartlett and John Ellis, who soon became friends. Herb was a serious, innovative and original thinker, not unlike Ezra in that respect, and I was attracted to his office. KMD was quite substantial, about 120 people in a nice open plan warehouse office near the bottom of Broadway, not far from my TEG office. The atmosphere was lively, with open after work project reviews and social events.

Relations between my office and TEG in New York continued to deteriorate mainly because of arguments over money. We now had twenty people to support, and as our order book grew, the New York partners insisted on sending a new senior architect to 'support' me. But this was clearly more of a veiled ouster, and it effectively drove me into the arms of Herb McLaughlin, who was only too pleased to add another Englishman to his collection. He also

paid me better than TEG were able to. TEG continued to do quite well without me, though, concentrating more on correctional work than anything more amusing.

KMD was organised into 'studios', each led by a senior architect tending to specialise in particular building types. Herb's partner Jim Diaz led health care work, for example. Herb was attracted by my public sector experience and felt that KMD should be getting more state and county work as well as university projects. To run me in he gave me the renovation of Dearborn Street Station, an unloved Chicago landmark that he'd bought with the intention of creating a commercial centre near what was a growing and fashionable residential area, giving new life to older commercial buildings. Herb had several commercial interests like this and had also bought the famous Cleveland Arcade. I should mention that Herb was the scion of a midwestern coffee fortune, and was thus independently wealthy, on to his second wife and living in style in Pacific Heights.



Jim Diaz and KMD Architects founder Herb McLaughlin in the late 1960s

Working with Herb was a new experience; he was demanding and impetuous, full of ideas and impatient of necessary procedure. He'd come into the office on a Monday, brandishing armfuls of sketches done at home, urging immediate response and enthusiastic collaboration. His ideas were often impractical, but there were many that could be made to work, and he urged us to make them do so. But at the outset he sought to impress me, and he was friendly and solicitous, hoping for my endorsement of his ideas.

I started to make exploratory visits to various city and county administrations, seeking out planning assignments. We went unsuccessfully after a downtown

housing master plan for San Diego, a complement to John Jerde's Horton Plaza commercial centre that had just opened. Herb was clearly somewhat jealous of Jerde's exuberant post-modern work here and in Santa Monica. The San Diego project had certainly woken up the declining downtown.



Horton Plaza Mall, 1985, designed by John Jerde.

In Sacramento, Leon Sugarman was doing a project for a developer that alerted me to an opportunity to masterplan the city's administrative facilities. Development in Sacramento usually favoured sites on the fringes of the city where land was cheap; the consequence was a reducing city tax base and high infrastructure costs. The downtown was dying and boosting it with public employment was a sound idea that could win votes. We got the job, and I enjoyed working on programming the city's staff requirements and planning to revitalise a couple of downtown squares with large new buildings.

In France my sister gave birth to a daughter Manon in early May. Unmarried, but happily living with a jazz musician Pierre-Louis Garcia, she and Norah were delighted.

But most interesting for me in early 1985 was an opportunity to pitch for a new student union for the University of California at San Diego. I had visited the campus and talked with some of the student officers, so we decided to make a strong pitch for the project, teaming up with a local practice Austin Hansen Fehlman, who had good credentials with the local UC campus. The project was to be financed by student subscription, so they were effectively the client rather than the UC Dean of administration. We played shamelessly to this unusual situation and as a result were awarded the project. My team

included two young architects Phil Bernstein for planning and programming and Ryan Stevens as design architect.⁹²

Life in San Francisco was looking up, too. I was going to the opera, I joined several societies supporting city architecture, and I was enjoying the burgeoning restaurant scene. When I was first in San Francisco there were only traditional staples such as Tadich Grill for San Francisco classics, Schroeders for German food, Ed Moose's Washington Square Bar and Grill and Patricia Untermann's Hayes Street Grill for American food.^{93 94} But then more sophisticated newcomers started to appear, champions of a new Californian cuisine that emphasised seasonal local produce and fresh cooking styles. Alice Water's Chez Panisse in Berkeley was the paragon, opened since 1971, but she had also trained a cohort of brilliant chefs who came into their own during the 1980s: Joyce Goldstein at Square One⁹⁵, Jeremiah Tower at Stars, Judy Rogers at Zuni Café on Market Street, and many more. At Thanksgiving Alisa and I, together with Alex, Marie and other friends would head off to unlikely spots such as the St George Hotel in Volcano, Amador County, where monumental feasts were prepared by a gigantic lady cook, and we all drank a lot.



St George Hotel in the mining town of Volcano in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada

The San Diego project was going well. It included a huge bookstore, a ballroom, restaurants and lots of office space. We'd been struck by how the campus, set on a bluff above the coastal village of La Jolla, was made up of buildings each sited like stand-alone classical villas, many designed by

⁹² Phil Bernstein went on to become a senior manager at design software company Autodesk, responsible for the future vision of CAD and BIM: <https://www.architecture.yale.edu/faculty/339-philip-bernstein>. Ryan later rose to become Design Director of KMD and following Herb's death in 2015, he became CEO. <https://www.kmdarchitects.com>

⁹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Square_Bar_and_Grill

⁹⁴ <https://www.hayesstreetgrill.com/about-hayes-street-grill/>

⁹⁵ <https://joycegoldstein.com/>

William Pereira. A close neighbour on the bluff was the famous Salk Institute designed by Louis Kahn. The whole UC campus was covered in mature eucalyptus trees in rows, planted to provide railway sleepers until it was found that the wood was unsuitable. We felt that the student union should be more like a village, several buildings arranged around sheltered communal outdoor space, a focus for intersecting pathways to other destinations on campus. We held massive meetings with the students to discuss progress and to solicit their ideas. They were most enthusiastic.

Herb, too, was excited by this project and he insisted on being personally involved with the design, pressuring Ryan to keep up with his ideas. One idea was to clad the buildings in warm Jerusalem stone; Herb had an Israeli contact who could obtain a large amount at favourable rates. The idea was that this student owned building should depart from the prevailing campus aesthetic of raw concrete and, even though stone cladding was excluded for state financed buildings, we got a dispensation because the building was being paid for using student rather than state finance.

Although relations with the students and UC were good, Herb would occasionally undermine our work by turning up unannounced at client meetings, always with a fresh roll of sketches under his arm. Ryan and Phil were patient, and more tolerant than I was about this behaviour. The students were excited by the attention yet mystified by the obvious tensions in our team.

Back in the office KMD had hired Julie Devine, a friend of Marie's, to help with the marketing. She was also the girlfriend of David Bartlett, another of Herb's stable of English architects, who was good at commercial development work. Together with Leon Sugarman we became friendly in a mildly self-defensive way, as Herb became harder to handle. Julie and David eventually returned to London, and we'll meet them later in the story.



UC San Diego, Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. Salk Institute is upper right, William Pereira's library at the top of the drawing.

As the student union moved into working drawings, I looked for further opportunities at UC San Diego, and met a dynamic young political scientist, Peter Gourevitch, who had just been named head of a new Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. Peter was enthusiastic about our work on the student union, and he'd helped raise money to build his school. We put in our proposal and following an interview were awarded the job to design his new school. Although smaller than the union this was another excitement for Herb, who went into a frenzy of design ideas, pulling Ryan along in his wake. Our site was quite beautiful, next to the Salk Institute and overlooking the Pacific. But I was beginning to find Herb's interference tiresome, and I started looking for larger projects elsewhere.



UC San Diego student union under construction, nearing completion in 1989, after I'd returned to the UK. Photo taken from the roof of William Pereira's famous library building.

Our student clients at San Diego had alerted me to another possible student union project at UC Irvine and I went there to have a look. I was struck by the circular Ring Mall enclosing a park, the buildings arranged around it like beads on a necklace. This had been conceived by William Pereira in the 1960s. I particularly liked a budget engineering building recently designed by Frank Gehry, similar in mood to his 1984 California Aerospace Museum in LA that I had just reviewed favourably for *Arts and Architecture*. Our project consisted of a large expansion to the existing union building, adding a bookstore, food court and auditorium. I wrote a proposal and we won the job, much helped by our San Diego project and word of mouth among the students.

UC Irvine student union was a tricky project, close to an earthquake fault and on sloping ground adjacent the Ring Mall. Phil once again led the programming and planning of the project with Ryan leading the design work. We very much involved the students in the planning process with noisy large scale meetings. In my recollection Herb interfered slightly less with this project than the last, perhaps because the office was then very busy with important assignments in San Francisco. But when we started the technical work of design I remember calling for more soil tests than usual to inform the foundation design, because of the seismic risk. The building sat very close to a notorious fault line. Later, after I had left KMD, but before construction began, Herb insisted on cutting out much of the soil testing to save money. When our new building suffered in a quake soon after completion, UC successfully sued KMD for a substantial contribution to the repair work.

One potential governmental client I had been quietly stalking since arriving at KMD was the General Services Administration, or GSA, a federal agency responsible for the US government estate. Their most recent big San Francisco project had been the Federal Reserve Bank, designed by Skidmore Owings and Merrill, which had resulted in a suit against the architects. Helmut Obata and Kassabaum, the other natural candidates for a very large project were also compromised because of problems with a major project in the midwest. This meant that KMD, among other large local practices, could theoretically win a major project in Region 9, which included the Bay Area. The GSA were considering building a regional office building in Oakland, at least partly to boost the economy of that deprived city. A developer well known to KMD was preparing to make an important site available to the government at a good price. Furthermore, some of GSA's key decision makers much admired an office building KMD had recently completed in San Francisco, designed by John Ellis.

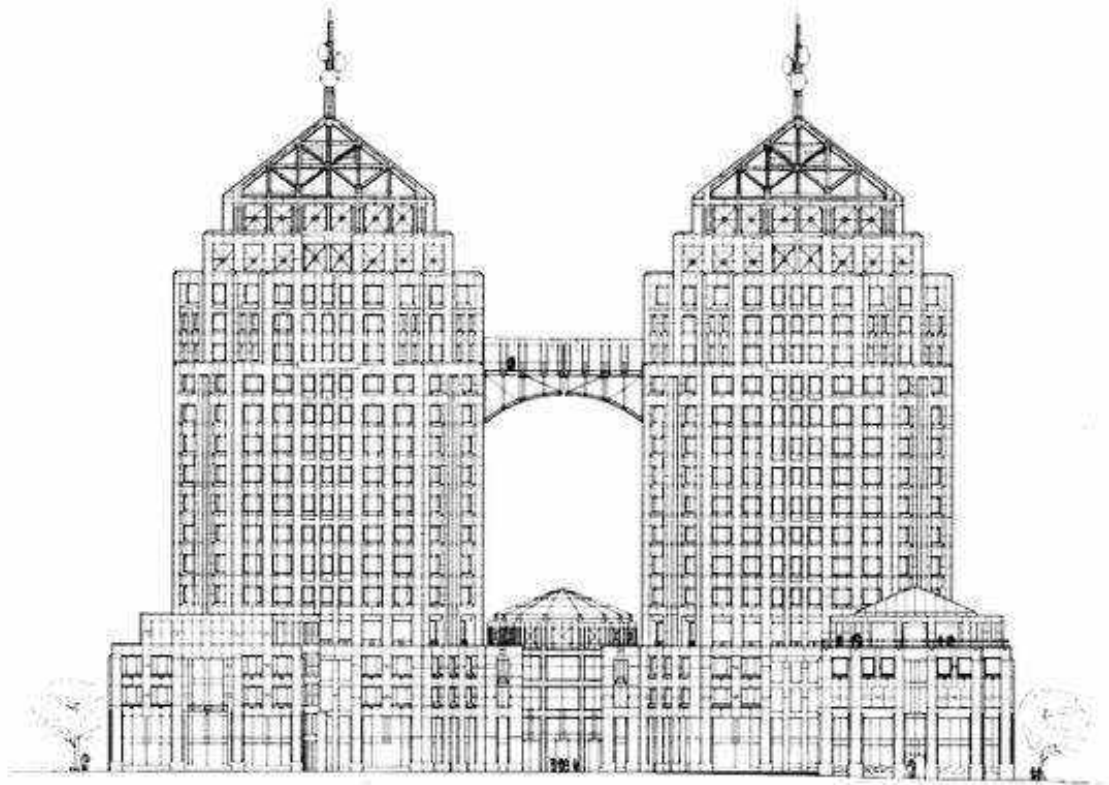
I suggested to Herb that we pursue the project seriously, but he was not keen and didn't believe KMD could win such a big assignment from the GSA; it was true the firm had little federal experience. But I persuaded him to allocate a marketing budget of \$20,000, and he finally agreed I could go after it. I put together a first rate team of architects and engineers, plus an array of specialists in environmental assessment, acoustics, workplace planning, etc. plus a generous share of woman and minority owned businesses, and we made our submission in response to a *Commerce Business Daily* announcement.⁹⁶ Naturally we highlighted John Ellis, designer of the building admired by the GSA architects, as design lead.

A month later I was called by a GSA official to say that we had made the shortlist for interview. It was a magic moment for me. Herb could no longer ignore the possibility that KMD might get to design a million square foot office building in Oakland.

The interview was theatrical. I arranged our largest conference room with tiered seating rising above quite a modest table behind which would sit the GSA officials. Our presentation was tightly scripted, with contributions from each team member, led by David Hobstetter, the studio director responsible for office buildings. Herb was only allowed to introduce the team and say he had confidence that we would do a great job, and although that was pretty constraining for him, he played his part well.

⁹⁶ The CBD listed all opportunities for government work. Response was made via two standard forms, one to explain the basic credentials of the firm or team proposed, and another to explain specifically why one should be awarded the particular job.

Soon after, we were called to say we'd been awarded the project and fee negotiations would begin. Actually, the cap on fees for federal work is 6%, which is not generous, so most of the negotiation is about what exactly the feds get for their money, how many meetings, a schedule of deliverables, a list of drawings, and so on, all of which becomes contractual. It was a thrilling moment.



Early concept drawing of the Clay Street elevation, Oakland Federal Building, KMD architects

While the mighty project went ahead I was beginning to feel ambivalent about working at KMD. I felt that Herb was almost jealous of our Oakland success; he was becoming ever more hectoring in his interventions on my projects. Furthermore I was sulking and having arguments with Alisa, who understandably wanted to know my intentions for our relationship. I was missing Felix and Leo, too, and feeling I should be with them in England. The atmosphere was not very good. Furthermore, design of the Oakland project was becoming resolutely leaden.

Then one Sunday I spotted an advertisement in the *New York Times*. Salomon Brothers, the investment bank was looking for an architect to manage their European corporate real estate from London. The advert was clearly aimed at British architects working in America who might be ready to come home, imbued with American business practice but ready for a move. I thought the advert was astute, and it aroused my curiosity. I wrote an application letter and mailed it off.



Completed Oakland federal Building, 1989, remarkably similar to early sketches

Two weeks later I had a call from Bob Metcalf of Salomon to say he was coming through San Francisco on his way back to London from Hong Kong, and would I meet him for lunch at Campton Place, one of the city's smartest restaurants. We hit it off quite well and a couple of weeks later I received a job offer from Salomon. Bob explained that Salomon had recently moved into Victoria Plaza, a new 200,000 square foot building above Victoria station, and were completing its fit out, with a massive trading floor and offices. They needed to be in business for London's "big bang" de-regulation of the stock exchange. Bob had managed the move, but now wanted to return to New York. The job offer was generous and included a full repatriation package to get me back to London.

I planned to accept Salomon's offer, but it meant abandoning my relationship with Alisa, and that was painful. Local friends were understanding but there was no escaping the fact that I was treating her badly; I got particularly frank advice from Irma Zigas. My departure from San Francisco was a low-key affair, but I was already looking forward to seeing Felix and Leo.

I did say goodbye to a red Alfa Romeo sedan that I had bought off Tim McDermott, a petrol-head friend of Alex's, a couple of years earlier. Tim was married to Ann Jones, an interior designer who later became a close friend. I had used the Alfa to go to Fall River a couple of times, and it was serviced by Alfa mechanics on Columbus Avenue; it went very fast, and Tim had stripped out all but the essential electrics. I arranged to sell it to one of the California

state architects who had worked on Watts Towers, but sadly it got bashed by a fire truck just before I was due to hand it over so I had to discount it heavily. Lovely car, though.



In England, although I was still supporting Jenny, she now had a job as a teacher, having re-trained, as well as bringing up Felix and Leo. Plus, she'd had been having a difficult time with Leo's wife Barbara, who had engineered the relocation of her mother-in-law Olga to a dreadful care home in Kent, where she was most unhappy and not well looked after. Jenny managed to get her back to a small Russian run care home in Chiswick, close to where she and Krot had been living, and where she had friends. Sadly, Olga died in March a few months before my return from California, at the age of 94.

9. Working in London 1987-2006

On arrival back in London, I was allocated a smart flat near Marble Arch for a short time, whence I could walk across Hyde Park and through Belgravia to Victoria. Victoria Plaza was a curious building; a generous *porte cochère* on Buckingham Palace Road led to a reception desk and long escalators to the first of four enormous floors above the station.



Victoria Plaza - Level 1 showing trading floor (red) surrounded by research and managers. Investment banking (left hand side). (Reduced) North atrium area in blue with escalators to ground level.

I was interviewed by Morley West, a British head of HR, and introduced by Bob Metcalf to the London management, including Americans Charlie McVeigh, the head of the whole London operation and John Lipsky, head of research, as well as those who would be my colleagues in support, in particular Alan Sutherland, a Scot who ran technology.⁹⁷

Victoria Plaza had been the brainchild of Stuart Lipton, Geoffrey Wilson and Godfrey Bradman at Greycoat, a property company that transformed London during the 1980s by realising that the high land cost component of development could be dramatically reduced by building on ‘air rights’, space

⁹⁷ Alan later became Managing Director of Technology at UBS and then JPMorgan, before setting up his own consultancy in 1996.

above strategically positioned infrastructure such as rail stations. Victoria Plaza was the first of these projects, 200,000 square feet of prime office space at Victoria. Charing Cross and Liverpool Street were to follow. They chose Elsom Pack Roberts (EPR), a rather pedestrian firm of architects to build a 'groundscraper' - a building with huge floorplates punctuated by light-filled atria - a model from America admired by Lipton (I was reminded of my meetings with him and Frank Duffy back in 1970). Salomon Brothers, together with Phibro, a commodity trading firm in the same group, had taken a 25-year lease on the whole building, subletting a small part, to Eurotunnel, the company who were to begin digging the Channel Tunnel in 1988, as their London office.

Rob White, head of corporate real estate based in New York had sent Bob Metcalf to organise the Victoria project. Bob hired Heery & Heery, a US architecture and project management firm trying for a European foothold, to design and manage Salomon's fit out. They had experience of trading floors and the complex technology needed to support them. Then, led by Charlie McVeigh, Bob hired Nina Campbell, a flamboyant London decorator to plan and furnish the client dining rooms and executive suite. That was done in an exaggerated form of Colefax & Fowler English-style decoration, with heavy brocades, wood panelling and reproduction Georgian furniture. The dining rooms overlooked the trading floor, as if to make a point. The hiring and firing of senior staff were done in the dining rooms.

I needed to find somewhere to live and went to see my old friend Janice Wainwright (see p.31), who had been married to photographer David Cripps, but was now married to an Australian architect Rollin Schlicht, living in her beautiful Lonsdale Square house in Islington.⁹⁸ She had a tenant in the basement who was leaving soon, and agreed to rent me the flat. It was a good arrangement; Janice and Rollin eased me back into London life and the flat was comfortable. It provided a landing spot for all my stuff from America; it was also not far from Felix and Leo in Highgate. Margaret Thatcher's liberalisation of the financial markets was lending London a raffish air; fashions were exaggerated with shoulder pads and platform soles. Nightlife and restaurant culture were exploding. Salomon exemplified the 'loadsamoney' idiom of financial excess, celebrated by Harry Enfield in 1988, and by Michael Lewis' Liar's Poker of the following year, his account of outrageous behaviour among the bond traders at Salomon Brothers in New York, and a take-down of the legendary John Gutfreund, president of the bank.

⁹⁸ Janice had been successful as a fashion designer since her days at Simon Massey. She had her own business at Poland Street in Soho: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janice_Wainwright_\(fashion_designer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janice_Wainwright_(fashion_designer))

Soon after I arrived Charlie McVeigh gave up overall management of London to concentrate on investment banking and Jim Massey arrived to be the titular head of European business. Jim was a taciturn bond trader originally from Atlanta who felt awkward in London. But he was a tough manager and relentless cost cutter.

One of my first jobs was to go to Frankfurt, where Bob Metcalf had negotiated a floor of space in a rather clunky tower near the river on Wilhelm Leuchner Strasse. The fit-out of the space was already under way, but Bob wanted to make sure I met the players because I would be looking after them. Particularly helpful was Egon Preusser, a young office manager. I got on well with the managers of the Frankfurt operation and I enjoyed exploring Frankfurt, with its rich museums, particularly the Liebig, and its famous buildings. Then, in 1988 Bob tasked me with finding an office for a Paris branch. The accession of Spain and Portugal to the EU in 1986 and the Single European Act of 1987, suggested a Paris platform for banking and for trading in French securities.

Charles Tatham of Savills found a terrific huge apartment of about 300M² at 4, avenue Hoche, near Parc Monceau, a very smart address, and not too dear because it needed work. We didn't want to be in a dull modern office building, so the grand Haussmann style building suited very well. The lessor's agent was a tiresome young French Sloane ranger who was difficult to deal with, but we eventually prevailed, and signed a new nine-year lease. I got some help on the interiors from Pierre Pastellas, Paris end of the San Francisco practice *Studios* whose boss, Erik Sueberkrop, was well known to me. It was challenging getting our heavy data and communications equipment installed in the 19C interior. The office furniture was brought from London, but I finished the magnificent conference room with a gigantic Bukhara carpet from dealer Moussaieff on the Faubourg St Honoré, who rewarded me with a small rug for bringing him the business. We were eventually able to open for business in June 1989. The office was close to the Alexander Nevsky Russian cathedral on rue Daru, around the corner from the Salle Pleyel and the second Paris branch of La Maison du Chocolat, opened in 1987 - still the best chocolatier in Paris. Further along, at the Place des Ternes is the famous Brasserie La Lorraine, a resolutely traditional establishment. It was a good place to be.

While in Paris I stayed at first in hotels, especially the Bristol, where we had special corporate rates, but I saw a lot of Norah and François, she in her ground floor flat with a little garden in rue Larrey and he in his room at the Invalides. His MS had deteriorated considerably, and his cortisone treatment was making him heavy. But he remained mentally agile and very good company. Norah

had bought two studios on the mezzanine floor above her flat to house François' helpers, usually Colombian medical students or post-grads who could get him up, dressed and ready to face the world. They also took him to restaurants, drove him to Clavier and looked after him there. They were a boon to François and engaging company.



9 rue Larrey, purpose built as artisan studio flats just after the revolution. Now full of students and retirees. Norah's ground floor flat had a small garden, exceptional for Paris. A popular cabaret, La Vielle Grille on the corner.

In London the 'big bang' of 1986 had launched a frenzy of office development. But land was scarce and expensive so a hundred-acre part of docklands at Canary Wharf was declared a London Docklands Development Corporation, where planning rules would be relaxed, and land was cheap. It was the brainchild of G Ware Travelstead, a manager at Credit Suisse First Boston, who sold it in 1987 to Olympia and York, Toronto based developers who were already Salomon's landlord in New York.⁹⁹ Paul Reichmann was the prime mover of O&Y together with his brother Albert, hiring Skidmore Owings and Merrill as master planners, a team led by Robert Turner. Robert was later to become my friend. The first buildings would be ready in 1991.

The Reichmanns approached Gedale Horovitz in New York, a Salomon main board member, suggesting we should move to docklands and that they'd offer us a very good deal. They were making a similar pitch to every American bank in London. Gedale, known as Dale, had been a star municipal bond trader and was a very nice man, cultured, and quite unlike the stereotype of a Salomon trader. He took a shine to me on his visits to London, inviting me several times to the opera with his wife Barbara. He approved of what I had done in the Paris office, too. On one of Dale's visits we were taken on a tour of Canary

⁹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canary_Wharf

Wharf, led by Robert Turner and Anne Kriken, then SOM's marketing manager, who had been married to John Kriken of SOM in San Francisco. A short while later O&Y sent us an offer for 400,000 square feet of space in a new building being designed by Kohn Pedersen and Fox. As a huge sweetener there would be ten years rent-free, before a rent review. It was a stupendous offer. But I felt ambivalent; our well-paid traders and bankers lived in Kensington, Belgravia and Holland Park. Victoria Plaza was very convenient, and docklands, even with a new light rail access, was still the pits. They wouldn't want to go. Plus, I thought that a 25-year lease in the longer term, after the ten-year holiday, would turn out expensive because of tough rent review terms; there was no effective cap on what they could then demand. I discussed the offer with Barden Gale, a brilliant property lawyer in the investment bank, who undertook to analyse the present value of the lease for different assumptions, and he reached a similar conclusion. The offer was not quite as good as it seemed.

Still, the Reichmanns needed an answer. When John Gutfreund was in London, they came over to make a private pitch to him in a client dining room. I had reduced the complicated analysis of the options to a few bullet points on one side of A4 paper. The next day I was summoned to a meeting with Gutfreund and Jim Massey. I had been over my bullet points earlier with Jim; Gutfreund reminded us that the Reichmann offer was 'truly remarkable'. "But", he said to Massey, "Jim, it's your decision". Jim thought for a bit, then said "Well . . . I'm not going". And that was that. It was high drama, but a relief for me. And Gutfreund was off the hook. Perhaps I should say here that one of the things I liked about working at Salomon was that if you were responsible for something you stood or fell by your decisions. I had advised against accepting the Reichmanns offer, and my advice was accepted. I felt good.

Gutfreund had bought a magnificent Paris house on rue de Grenelle in the 7th arrondissement, on the Left Bank. He frequently pestered me for help in getting contractors and other support in Paris, mainly because he knew I spoke good French. Eventually Susan, Gutfreund's second wife, hired Henri Samuel, doyen of Parisian decorators, to turn it into a lavish setting for entertaining.¹⁰⁰ John and Susan had married in 1981, and they had a son. But their extravagant lifestyle was picked up by WWD and *New York* magazine, just when trading was stumbling and John was trying to get more into investment banking, which was not his natural field. Enemies within Salomon began carping, and John ended up jumping from crisis to crisis. This is all vividly described in

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.veranda.com/decorating-ideas/house-tours/a35036002/susan-gutfreund-paris-apartment-tour/>

Bryan Burrough and John Helyar's Barbarians at the Gate: The Fall of RJR Nabisco of 2004.

For recreation in London, I spent a lot of time with Janice and with Rollin, who was working for developers MEPC. In 1987 when he had not been able to get away Janice took me up to Scotland to stay at Lunga Castle in Ardfern on the West Coast. It was remote and beautiful, close to great botanical gardens and unbeatable langoustines. Colin was a romantic who put on local cricket matches. He had the notorious Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, third wife of the 11th duke, as a lodger in the tower and each morning a piper would arrive to play a lament in full highland dress.¹⁰¹ She mostly stayed in her suite, but could be visited for a drink and a chat about London life.

In August of 1988 I took Felix fishing, first at Rooksbury Mill and King's Sombourne in Hampshire, for a bit of practice, and then to Pen Wern Fach on the beautiful Teifi in Wales for a few days, staying with a family near Newcastle Emlyn.

Then around Christmas time Alisa turned up from San Francisco. We'd stayed in touch since I left the US, but I had not really expected a visit. We spent Christmas with Ernie and Hilary Lowinger and then I took her off in my red Alfa 75 to Lyme Regis and to Cornwall where Aunty Cath had bought a house to retire in near St Austell. I ended up taking Alisa touring in Normandy, Mont St Michel, etc. but I was pretty clear that our relationship was not going to continue once she had gone home.

Earlier in the year Janice and Rollin had a friend to stay, Tamara Asseyev, who came with her friend Christiane Laupie. Tamara was a successful American film producer, best known for her 1979 movie 'Norma Rae' directed by Martin Ritt, about unionisation in the American south, starring Sally Ann Field.¹⁰² Tamara had lived in London and knew Janice through her fashion. Christiane was a beautiful petite Parisienne and a family friend of Tamara's; their fathers had been close. I was quite smitten by Christiane, despite the fact she was in mourning for her daughter, tragically dead from a sudden embolism not long before. Tamara was clearly using their London visit to distract her from that terrible truth, as well as looking for a flat for herself in Belgravia.

I was working very long hours at Salomon, but felt the need for some recreation, and I was missing fishing. I had been told about the Salisbury and District Angling Club in Wiltshire, and I applied to join. Unlike traditionally exclusive chalk stream clubs, SADAC leased multiple stretches of river and

¹⁰¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Campbell,_Duchess_of_Argyll

¹⁰² <https://www.newyorker.com/recommends/watch/the-ongoing-relevance-of-norma-rae>

opened membership to about 1500, keeping subscriptions low. I was soon driving down about twice a month, enjoying it immensely. Another diversion was writing articles for architectural magazines, keeping my hand in after my long absence in the US. In early 1990 I wrote a well-received article about American consultants in London for the *Architect's Journal*.¹⁰³ That article followed up on one I'd written the year before, reviewing the respected Princeton academic Robert Gutman's merciless analysis of the profession *Architectural Practice: A Critical View*.¹⁰⁴ I was writing articles as a way of staying in touch with architectural thought, despite my apostasy into the world of property management. Late in 1990 I wrote a piece about Rosehaugh Stanhope's Broadgate development above Liverpool Street Station. This article complimented Stuart Lipton on the boldness of spirit of the development, on the quality of its planning and on his choice of beaux arts inspired architects at Skidmore Owings and Merrill to execute it. I contrasted their style, with its precedents in the grand Edwardian London schemes of 1910-20, and its rejection of the mean-spirited 'Arts-and-Crafts modernism' that has made so much of modern London dull and uninspiring.¹⁰⁵ I was pleased to receive a charming note from Stuart Lipton, thanking me for being 'so kind' in the article.

At Salomon I was asked to find an office in Zurich, for limited trading and some investment banking, as in Paris. Phibro, Salomon's parent, already had an office in Zug nearby, the canton with a relaxed tax regime that made it a village of financial HQ operations. The principals of the new office would be charming Swiss nationals who had done a stint in New York or London. I found a nice little newly built office in a good location, and an excellent local architect, Caspar Brüllmann, to make sure our fit out went smoothly. Staying at the stately Baur au Lac hotel in quiet luxury on our special corporate rate, I was hugely impressed by the craftsmanship of the Swiss tradesmen. All came with impressive tools and huge competence, particularly the communications installers who precalculated the lengths of all the cables, providing each with terminations before bringing them to site and installing everything in a single day. It was a stark contrast with the messy improvisational style of London's tradesmen. The joinery specialist, Norbert Stadler, brought a laptop computer with schematics of the trading desks to the office and we were able to refine the design on the spot before he made them.

Later in the year I had a new boss. Peter McSloy, who arrived from Standard Chartered Bank in Hong Kong to be head of operations for Europe. This was

¹⁰³ https://www.academia.edu/48745484/The_American_Invasion

¹⁰⁴ https://www.academia.edu/48741603/Your_Future_or_Your_Life

¹⁰⁵ https://www.academia.edu/48740039/Broadgate_and_The_Beaux_Arts

a big improvement on the previous rather *ad hoc* management, in which each of the firm's businesses thought it had absolute say over what the support departments should be doing. At last, we could have a coherent property policy and a systematic approach to the bank's occupancy costs. Peter was a sophisticated operator, very clever and politically astute, who quickly won the fidelity of his direct reports. He also found a main board ally in Dale Horowitz, my protector. Soon after Peter arrived, we were visited by a ruthless cost cutter from New York, whose name I forget. Salomon stock was behaving erratically, and profits were down. Each department had to make sacrifices.

Then on November 9 came the momentous news that the Berlin wall was coming down. There had been rumblings from East Germany's Erich Honecker since August, and tens of thousands of East Germans were emigrating to Hungary. Despite anxious objections from Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterand, Mikhail Gorbachev did nothing to prevent the opening of the iron curtain. It was all quite sudden, with vivid TV coverage of people attacking the wall with pickaxes. A couple of days later I received an internal mail envelope from New York. It contained a full-page advertisement from the New York Times, a photo of the Brandenburg Gate, beneath which was the slogan: 'Salomon Brothers- open for business'. Scrawled across a corner of the page was the message "Andy - hope this is true! Dale" It was a signal to get on a plane to Berlin and find some office space PDQ.

I flew into Berlin and took a taxi to the *Grand Hotel Berlin* on Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden. It took some time to negotiate Checkpoint Charlie, despite the border being 'open'. The hotel was a massive ersatz old-style city block, built by Japanese contractors Kajima at the behest of Honecker, to encourage Western tourism, opened in 1987. Wandering the streets was a strange experience; there was a ghostly quality to the whole *mitte* area, with very few people around. Schinkel's Schauspielhaus didn't look as if a performance had been held in a long time, but there was a flame lit in his *Neue Wache* monument to the unknown soldier on Unter den Linden. Colleagues in the Frankfurt office had lined up meetings for me with the Treuhand, an agency set up to manage disposal of publicly held East German assets. I explained that I was looking for office space in a first-class building, historic for preference. They immediately sent me to see the *Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft - DSF*, (Society for German-Soviet Friendship), located just behind the *Neue Wache*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ The DSF was set up in 1947 to teach Germans about Soviet life. Ironically, with the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev, it achieved its highest ever membership, 6.3M East Germans, disillusioned with their own hardline Communist leaders.



The DSF in 1953, sporting banners with Stalin (left) and Otto Grotewohl (right), Prime Minister of the GDR

The building was a beautiful 1753 classical palace with a neat little Karl Schinkel designed porch added to the front, a restaurant, a small 100 seat theatre and a lovely garden courtyard. It was next door to the Maxim Gorky theatre, too. Sotheby had already sublet space in one of the wings of the building, but the first floor *piano nobile* was available to rent. The rooms were magnificent with high ceilings, and most overlooked a small park behind the *Neue Wache*. It would be ideal for a boutique investment bank office. The one shortcoming of the building was that it had only a minimal internal elevator.

I invited Egon Preusser, the operations manager from our Frankfurt office, to come and help negotiate with the DSF officials. We agreed to build a decent sized lift on the courtyard serving all floors in exchange for an extended rent-free period. This was easily agreed by the DSF, mainly because they knew they would have no stake in the longer-term future of the building after reunification. They were quite jolly people and we got on well with them, enjoying the excellent restaurant in the building. We got a West Berlin contractor to do the work using East German labour and I must say the quality of work was excellent. We managed to get both Western and Eastern telephone lines into the building which was essential for our business, and a great selling point when we later wanted to dispose of the lease.



Palais am Festungsgraben - home to Salomon Brothers AG, 1990-1994

The building had been renovated before by Karl Schinkel in the early 19C, when he added the porch, and a few examples of his details, such as door handles and hinges, remained. Our carpenters, who knew people in the metallurgy department at Dresden University, undertook to have replicas made so that we could use them throughout the office. One day they drove up in an old Trabant with boxes full of gleaming new brass hardware. They were proud to help; it was a symbolic gesture towards Karl Schinkel's legacy which is so potent in Berlin. Indeed, I spent weekends visiting his masterpieces in Potsdam and exploring the fabulous Altes Museum, still staffed by surly East Germans.

I continued to spend a fair time in the Paris office, and I took Christiane out a few times to her favourite restaurant, La Marlotte, in the rue Cherche Midi, run by family friends from St Tropez. Christiane had a nice garden flat in Neuilly, and a daschund called Yam. Her father Gustave, now a widower, had a large flat near the Etoile, as well as a family home in Vidauban in the Var not far from Clapiers, and a fine villa at Beauvallon, a smart suburb of Ste Maxime. Gustave was quite a character. A Marseillais, he'd been the first French student at MIT where he studied business. He returned to France to become marketing chief for the appellation *Côtes de Provence* then, as now, struggling to win reputation. Hence the house in Vidauban, centre of the trade. His favourite jingle was '*Tous le jours comme en vacances, buvez Côtes de Provence!*'

Christiane and I became quite close, but she was wary of romance, still mourning her daughter. Her ex-husband had been a spoiled rich boy, heir to a shipbuilding firm in LeHavre. He treated Christiane poorly and she could not wait to leave the boonies for Paris. She was a keen golfer and I often accompanied her to the Golf de Fourqueux west of Paris where she was a member, meeting many of her friends as well as her sister Simone, divorced with a schizophrenic son, Alex. Eventually, we became lovers at the Bristol Hotel. I enjoyed visiting her in Paris and we took little holidays together, memorably to Athens and Venice. In the south we went to the Golf de Beauvallon, a beautiful course near Ste Maxime with a 1927 clubhouse by Pierre Chareau. In Paris Christiane and her sister Simone were members of an exclusive club, the Interallié, located on the faubourg St Honoré. It had a very good restaurant and a large swimming pool, and was frequented by *le tout Paris*, under the watchful eye of the Comte de Beaumont who admired good looking women club members. I ended up paying Christiane's membership for several years, but greatly enjoying the club.

Back in London, the growing riskiness of the modern world - the fall of communism, mainland IRA atrocities, the eight-month recession in the USA to March 1991 - led us to plan seriously for disaster recovery. Although Victoria Plaza was discreet and we did not advertise our London presence, we were aware of our vulnerability, whether to power outages or terror attacks. Helped by Greg Cooke at Weatherall Green and Smith, I found a cheap large space in Bermondsey, the Tower Bridge Business Complex, owned by some quite shady Jewish realtors. Here we would be able to house 150 traders and their equipment, all backed up by generators and duplicating our communications infrastructure. I think we were one of the first banks to do this, signing a lease in June. We furnished and equipped the space as cheaply as possible and ran practice drills of occupying it. Everyone knew what they needed to do in the event of an emergency.

Compared to the crises of the 1970s and the turbulent clashes of the 1980s, popular memory of the 1990s has tended to see the politics of the era as boring: a period of consolidation for the neoliberal hegemony first established by Thatcher, or as Peter Sloman put it, a kind of 'phony war' before the inevitable arrival of Tony Blair's New Labour. In November 1990 Michael Heseltine challenged Margaret Thatcher for leadership of the Conservatives and was forced out in favour of John Major. The internal wrangling over Britain's place in Europe was exhausting for all.

Then in 1990 news began to come through of a real emergency at the firm. We learned that Paul Mozer, a rogue trader in New York, had submitted bids for US bonds way in excess of Treasury rules, but that CEO John Gutfreund

had failed to take disciplinary action. In 1991 this led the Securities and Exchange Commission to impose a \$290M fine on Salomon, a large amount at the time. The reputation risk was massive, and by August John Gutfreund was forced to resign. The famous investor Warren Buffett, who already held a substantial stake in Salomon stock, stepped in to act as Chairman and calm the markets. In London Jim Massey had already been replaced by Deryck Maughan at the end of 1990, an English banker who had been running Salomon's Hong Kong subsidiary and, like me, a Harkness Fellow, although five years younger than me. The following year Buffett made Maughan, CEO of the whole firm, later claiming it to be the best appointment he ever made.

On July 6, 1991 my mother Norah died at Princess Grace hospital in Monaco. She had been unwell and depressive for some time, and was taken in for intestinal knot surgery, yet she died a couple of weeks later; she never properly recovered.

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY JULY 10 1991

The Lord said, 'They are my people: they will not deceive me'. And so he saved them from their suffering. Isaiah 63 : 8 G.N.B.

BIRTHS

AUSTWICK - On July 5th to Sarah (née Bengough) and Malcolm, a son, Richard John, a brother for Charlotte and James.

CARPENTER - On July 5th, at Kingston, to Emily (née Atchison) and Tim, a son, William John, a brother for Alexandra.

CLITHEROW - On July 7th, to Caroline (née Hitchcock) and Bruce, a daughter, Charlotte Anna.

COVENTRY - On June 29th in London, to Rowena (née Doe) and David, a daughter, Catriona Moncrieff.

DUDGEON - On June 29th to Juliet (née Turnbull) and Angus, a daughter.

DUNN - On July 7th in Bristol to Justine (née Judd) and Robert, a daughter, Hazel Ruth.

FIELDING - On June 16th, to Solange (née Payne) and William, a son, Jonathan Raphael Spencer, a brother for Rachel.

GRANT - On July 3rd, to

CLARK - On July 8th, peacefully at home, Stella, of Horninghold, Leics., most dearly loved wife of the late Major Kenneth (Dick) Clark. Funeral Service at St. Peter's Church, Horninghold on Tuesday, July 16th at 2.30 pm followed by interment. Flowers to J. Stamp & Sons, Funeral Directors, Market Harborough. Tel: (0858) 462524.

DAVIDSON - On July 8th, at his home in West Wittering, after a long illness bravely borne, Arnold late of Burmah-Shell and Bursar of The Prebendal School, beloved husband of Geraldine and father of Jerome, Guy and Moyra. Cremation at Chichester, on Monday July 15th at 11.30am. Family flowers only, but donations to Imperial Cancer Research, c/o Edward White & Son, 5 South Pallant, Chichester, will be gratefully received.

DAVIS - On July 6th 1991, suddenly at Thorndon House, Rewe near Exeter. Elizabeth Jane, sister of Robert and former Headmistress of Truro High School and Tiffin School for Girls. Kingston-upon-Thames. Funeral service at Exeter Crematorium, Friday

HALLARD - On July 5th in hospital, David. Funeral at Islington Crematorium, Tuesday, July 16th at 3.30pm. Family flowers only, donations if desired to Cancer Research. Enquiries, J Seaward. Tel: 071 272 2065.

HOOD - On July 7th, after an illness bravely borne, Miriam Blanco-Fombona De Hood, formerly Minister Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, Venezuelan Embassy, London and Director Miranda House. Dearly beloved wife of Robin, mother of Simon, Bernadette, Martin and Anne-Marie and grandmother of James, Victoria and Thomas-Lee. Requiem Mass, Our Lady Queen of Peace, 222 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey on Monday, July 15th at 11.00am. Burial private. Family flowers only. Donations to Society of St Vincent De Paul, East Sheen Conference, c/o 40 Graemesdyke Road, London, SW14 7BJ. May she rest in peace.

JACKSON - On Friday, July 5th, 1991, suddenly whilst on holiday, Graham Bickerton Jackson, aged 54, much loved son of Cyril and Kathleen. Service at Worthing Crematorium on

SCHERMAN - On July 6th, Carl-Edward Royson, beloved son of Isolda and Roy (deceased), brother of Madelaine and Marie-Claire, brother-in-law of Richard and Michael, dearest and much missed uncle of Krister, Camilla, Oscar, Marcus and Bruno. Much missed by his colleagues, friends and their families and his godchildren, Sophie, Amy and Marcus. May peace be yours eternally. Enquiries to Leverton & Sons (071 387 6075).

SHEDDICK - On July 8th, in Hereford, after a short illness, Professor Vernon George. Service at 11.30 on July 13th at Hereford crematorium. Family flowers only. Enquiries to Dawe Bros, 0432 274066.

SIMON - On July 6th, Norah at Princess Grace Hospital, Monaco, peacefully after a short illness. Dearly loved by her husband Francois, her children Andrew Rabeneck and Claire Blanchette, and her grandchildren Felix, Leo and Manon. Interment at Claviers, Saturday July 13th. Letters to Francois Simon, Les Combes, Claviers 83122, France.

SIMON - On July 7th 1991, Frank H. dearly loved

Norah had not lived with François for some time, preferring her flat at La Roquette near Cannes. But she would come up in the summer to stay for a week at the grand Hotel Bain at Comps, watching Wimbledon tennis in her room. We had always loved the Bain hotel, its excellent restaurant, and well-chosen wines. Jean-Marie Bain unfailingly appeared in the dining room, in his whites and chef's *toque*, to greet the guests.

Claire and I were both with her in the hospital, and we felt strongly that some surgical blunder was probably involved. Yet we could do little since the distinguished Reimois surgeon, doing a favour to François, was an old family friend. We consoled ourselves by thinking that Norah was most probably simply weary of life. She had devoted herself to François and his terrible MS for many years, but she felt unrewarded and very tired. She was just 77. No longer needing the studio flats at rue Larrey, they became earmarked for Claire and me. On the death of François, we would inherit one each.

In 1992 Salomon underwent another round of restructuring and cost cutting. This resulted in a re-organisation of support by Peter McSloy and a change of title for me to Director of General Services, meaning not just property, but including things like food service, purchasing, security and managing the disaster recovery site. I was particularly interested in the food service which had been run in a typically penny-pinching catering style, with mediocre ingredients, unimaginative cooking and presentation. I used a food service consultancy to come up with something that better matched our population. For example, we had wealthy traders and bankers who often ate at their desks; mostly what they wanted was first class purpose-made hamburgers on brioche buns with quality salads and trimmings. The secretarial staff wanted to graze on interesting salads, while the lower grade administrative staff wanted pies, sausages and mash. My food manager Zac Toumazi, an ambitious young second generation Cypriot, understood completely what I was trying to achieve. Following a re-bidding of the contract we managed to get a good result from some much better chefs, and I must say it greatly improved morale within the firm.

In Milan I found a 1920s apartment that could be converted for investment banking use. Luigi Mangano of Frank Duffy's Milan office helped. I very much enjoyed working in Milan, and our local managers were charming and helpful.

Meanwhile London's population continued to drop, having lost two million people since 1941. In April John Major's conservatives were elected for a fourth Conservative term, but with only a small majority. The year was to prove financially challenging. Sterling had declined in world markets until on 'Black Wednesday' in September the government suspended the UK's membership of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism following a wave of speculation against the Pound. Earlier, in April, there had been an IRA bomb explosion at the Baltic Exchange in the City that killed three people, seeming to vindicate our setting up of a disaster recovery site. Led by New York, the real estate market entered a deep recession. Even Olympia and York filed for bankruptcy, owing over twenty billion dollars. Paul Reichmann was forced to

resign in March. I was glad we'd decided not to go to Canary Wharf, even though it later recovered under new owners.



Canary Wharf in 1992, looking West. Salomon were to have taken the white building designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox of New York, to the left of the One Canada Square tower. Credit Suisse, Morgan Stanley and American Express already occupied other early buildings in this photo.

Helped again by Greg Cooke, I found space in Madrid for a small trading operation. Visiting Madrid allowed me to see Philip Neres, my great aunt Madeleine's son.¹⁰⁷ Philip was retired from an editorial job at the *Economist* and lived in style on the top of a venerable building near Plaza Santa Ana, surrounded by books and old mostly male friends. To design the Salomon Space I asked Juan Carredano, Madrid representative of Frank Duffy's DEGW consultancy. They made the space very agreeable, and the contract went without mishap.

The downturn in the real estate market made me think seriously that we should purchase the freehold of Victoria Plaza. Greycoat had just presented us with an abusive rent review that asked for double what we were paying. So, I discussed the possibility with Barden Gale in the investment bank and he agreed that for the longer term it would probably make sense to create a special purpose company to own the building and then to lease it back to Salomon. He would put brainy young analysts onto the job of calculating the possible risks and benefits.

A colleague of Barden's was Derrick Bretherton, an experienced English property lawyer who advised the bank on English property matters. Derrick felt that if we were to 'chuck a rock' into the complex pond of English property

¹⁰⁷ Philip. Who died in 2005, was the son of Madeleine's marriage to Louis Philip Neres 1882-1933. He had a distinguished war in the Special Operations Executive, mainly in France.

we would need a few canny allies. One was certainly Liell Francklin of Savills who had been advising me on all our London moves and on our rent review. Derrick was another one, but he suggested we also appoint Stanley Honeyman, a director of Stuart Lipton's Stanhope Properties, the developers of Victoria Plaza for our landlord Greycoat. Stanley was delightful, patrician and street smart at the same time, an experienced developer and a great opera lover; I went with him a few times, once with Christiane. And we named our special purpose vehicle Salomon Brothers Tosca Inc, a tax-efficient Delaware corporation. Stanley was very good at warning us of possible obstacles to our plan, and how to get around them. We were able to buy the building at the low price of £82m, probably less than it cost to build, before renting it back to Salomon Brothers International at full rent. I got a lot of ribbing from senior staff about how the rent should have been cheaper now we owned the building, but that would be to ignore the golden principle that each business should maximise its potential. Peter McSloy, my boss, smiled on this whole enterprise and was most supportive.

In March there had been another IRA bomb in the city, in Bishopsgate. This was much larger than the year before. It killed fewer people, but it caused a great amount of damage, and it really woke people up to the risks of terror. The city implemented a 'ring of steel' to protect itself with checkpoints on the main roads. Once again I was pleased we had our disaster recovery site.

In the summer I began to think I should try to benefit personally from the market downturn. Flats and houses in London were at their lowest valuations for a long time. I had enjoyed renting first with Janice, and then later with a friend around the corner. But I felt I should buy something. I was being well paid at Salomon and could afford a meaty deposit. I had the idea of living in the middle of town, and I had always admired mansion flats; they are so un-English, and they were not fashionable places to live, but they were often spacious and conveniently located. I wandered around Marylebone, High Street Kensington, and Chelsea, looking at many flats. I found they were often badly planned or had unappealing common parts, and those in Chelsea remained seriously overpriced, with terrifying service charges. I ended up at Ellis and Co., a small agency in Ivor Place just North of Marylebone Station.

The agency was run by a charming Polish chap, who claimed to know all the mansion blocks in the area. He wore a trench-coat and tinted specs like a character from a Wajda or Godard film. I liked him, and decided to trust him with my search. My specification: A large three-bedroom flat with a good regular plan and double aspect, in need of modernisation, preferably on the second floor of a walk-up building (to avoid lift maintenance charges); ideally it should be a repossession from a defaulting mortgage, where we could

negotiate the price a bit. I heard nothing from him for two weeks, then he called to say, “I’ve got your flat”. I thought this sounded a bit presumptuous, but we went to visit. The flat, in Hyde Park Mansions, perfectly met my specification, and I was quite excited by it. It was offered for £150,000 with



15, Hyde Park Mansions. My second-floor corner flat had huge windows and spacious rooms.

a 90-year unexpired lease. My agent had been retained by the lender, Bradford & Bingley, to dispose of the flat so he was keen to make the deal quickly. He instructed me to bid low to incite a counteroffer; we could then split the difference, and I should be able to get the flat for £125,000. And that’s what happened. Luckily, I had Derrick Bretherton as my solicitor who acted like lightning and held the vendor’s feet to the fire.

I knew a builder, Bill Bissett, who had done odd jobs for us at Salomon, and I put him to work upgrading the plumbing and electrics, fitting wooden flooring throughout. I was able to move in October. The exterior of the building and the common parts were in poor condition and were due for redecoration. I did not mind, because that had contributed to the low price of the lease. The bad news was that the freeholder was a subsidiary of Freshwater, a famously exploitative landlord. They had a dozy but professional managing agent whom I pestered mercilessly for service, even though he preferred a quiet life.

To furnish the flat I relied to some extent on IKEA for beds, wardrobes, bookcases, dining chairs, etc. plus I was able to improvise some good pieces from work: Phibro were throwing out a magnificent marble topped sideboard. British Rail had abandoned a couple of fine granite slabs in our car park that made a perfect kitchen table and coffee table. I got our trading desk joiners to

make me a large oval dining table on a single pedestal. The Conran shop heavily discounted a pair of large sofas. Also, I was able to recover quite a bit of Norah's furniture from Paris and from Claviers, as well as many Mervyn Peake pictures.¹⁰⁸ I had a large Citroen XM car at the time, which was ideal for bringing stuff back from France.

I was quite well-known in London architectural circles as a member of the Architecture Club, and partly through my long friendship with Frank Duffy, John Worthington, and Peter Murray who had become a sort of impresario for London architecture through his *Wordsearch* publishing house, that did a lot of work for Stuart Lipton's development firm, Stanhope. I was also writing quite frequent articles for *Building Design* and the *Architect's Journal* about London development. Some even remembered my time teaching at the Architectural Association from 1974 to 1977. In 1993 Frank, slightly surprisingly, became President of the RIBA, and he invited me to join the institute's marketing committee, feeling that my experience as a manager of buildings could inform the discussion. He was a strong believer in the potential for facilities managers to influence architecture for the good. A slightly forlorn belief, as it turned out. But administrative support to the committee was provided by Amy C, a very bright presence, to whom I was immediately attracted. She was very stylish, wearing a demure tweed suit and sensible brogue shoes. But I was too shy to invite her out. Months went by.

By 1994 Salomon decided that it would soon be safe to open an operation in Moscow, egged on by Bill Browder, a colourful American-born trader who had run Salomon's Russian equities desk in London, but who was now based in Moscow on his own account. Browder was actively investing in Russian equities amid the chaos and corruption of the post-Soviet economy. His hallmark: finding hidden values in Russian companies and driving up their share prices by exposing corporate malfeasance and mismanagement.¹⁰⁹ It was a high-risk strategy for which Browder was later grotesquely punished by the Russians, but in 1994 it was still working. I was apprehensive about going to Moscow; my father Leo had been only once since fleeing Russia, and he found it very unsettling. However, it was exciting and, with Bill's help I soon found a good location for our office in a newly built small office building. I was shocked by the primitive construction practices being used by the finishing trades, but eventually the building was completed. The hallmark of Moscow life in that strange post-communist time was squalor and luxury, side by side. Fitting out our space took much longer than I had hoped, and we were able to move in only in January 1995. On my Moscow visits I was put up in a fine

¹⁰⁸ Norah had an affair with Mervyn, starting just before the war, but mainly in 1947, and not mentioned in any of his biographies.

¹⁰⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Browder

old-style hotel with good food and I enjoyed walking around Red Square, St Basil's cathedral and the Gum store. I ventured only once into a Moscow nightclub, which was frenetic; noisy, sexy and dangerous, but quite exciting.

Towards the end of the year Amy C called me up and asked if I'd like to have lunch. I could not believe it, but immediately agreed. I think we went to Oliveto.¹¹⁰ Amy told me about her family, her Scottish father and South African mother, and her job at the RIBA that she enjoyed. She worked with the Director General, Alex Reid, whom I knew from DEGW where he'd been chairman. She oversaw membership services, trying to get some order into the institute's relations with its members. I was very taken with her. Like me she had just bought a house. Hers was in Kennington, purchased out of the settlement for a horrible accident she'd suffered on a motorcycle, resulting in hip and knee surgery. It's true she was still limping a little, and often used a stick.

Also, at the end of the year it was decided to dispose of the lease on our Berlin office, after barely four years. I was disappointed; it had been one of my favourite projects. By an irony the best offer for the space came from the *treuhand*, the German agency charged with disposal of East German assets, who had originally pointed me towards the building. What they really appreciated was our modern communications infrastructure linking East and West, as well as the classy setting for doing big privatisation deals. We actually made more money on the deal through a premium than we had spent doing up our space and installing the lift.

In 1995 we opened the Moscow office, now completed after lengthy fit out. I also negotiated for an expansion of our London disaster recovery site in response to increasing anxiety about terrorist activity. In Frankfurt I took on the gifted Robin Ambler of Weatherall Green and Smith to find new space for an expansion. The market was tight and there was not much attractive space available. But Robin found an incredible possibility at the Eurotower, so called because it was home to the European Monetary Institute that later became the European Central Bank.

¹¹⁰ Oliveto is a pizzeria opened by Mauro Panna in Elizabeth Street, Belgravia. His first restaurant had been Olivo's, opened in 1989, where his wife cooked, and he did front of house. They are Sardinians, and brilliant restaurateurs. Their restaurants became very popular with Salomon staff.



Salomon took the upper floor of the plinth in the Eurotower, providing very large open floor space. The Frankfurt New Opera house in the foreground.

The forty-story tower rose above a plinth block that was originally intended to house shopping space. Like much of German real estate, it had been built without much idea about commercial reality - no shoppers were going to go up two levels from the street at this location. The rent was modest as a result, plus the office overlooked a park. I was able to plan a generous trading floor with novel semi-circular trading groups to allow maximum visual interaction. I had good support from the senior managers of the office, with whom I had worked since the move into their last office, supported by Egon Preusser. I simply cannot remember whom I used to design the space, but I remember using Norbert Stadler, the Swiss trading desk wizard from Zurich. A brilliant engineer and salesman; he'd arrive at the office with a laptop computer on which he's already installed the base plan of the space and we'd develop the design interactively. This was quite revolutionary in 1995.



Eurotower, Frankfurt, Salomon Brothers layout for move-in 1996, with curved trading desk groups.

For construction I turned to David King of Interior Services Group, ISG. They had an office in Frankfurt, and they were in tune with what I was trying to do.

In February 1996 the IRA exploded a huge bomb close to Canary Wharf, knocking out a large newly built office, killing two and injuring 40. It was salutary, and it certainly made me feel better about not taking the firm there.

But I still faced a big challenge: how to gain more space at Victoria Plaza, particularly for the investment banking function. An obvious move would be to partially fill in one of the atriums. I discussed the possibility with Stuart Lipton, the original developer of Victoria Plaza, who thought it would be fine to do so. He had no sentimental attachment to the original configuration. Westminster planners were a bit more circumspect but had no fundamental objection, so we decided to proceed. I used EPR, the original architects of the building, to modify the existing building, but first I asked Jan Kaplický of Future Systems, an old friend, to come up with some ideas for retail in the atrium area to liven it up.¹¹¹ Jan had married Amanda Leveté in 1991, another Czech refugee. In the end, I asked Katrina Kostic of Gensler's London office to do the space planning, falling slightly for her charms. She was tough, and effective in dealing with my internal clients. And around this time a talented

¹¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Kaplický

young American architect came to work for me, Dan Lonergan, who proved very valuable in bringing our larger projects to fruition. Dan and his wife Penney later went on to open a very successful shop, *Gotham*, in Notting Hill selling well-designed high-end furniture to London's rich young investment bankers.¹¹²

Amazingly, we got the new space completed without disrupting the bank's work, providing over a hundred new positions on two levels, the upper one spanned by three graceful lightweight vaults. Once again, I turned to ISG to build the project. At some time in the late spring, I had a health check from the company's doctor, Sydney Kaye. Ironically, in one of our manic cost-cutting rounds I had argued for doing away with an in-house doctor. But fortunately I lost that argument, because Sydney wisely sent me off for a more detailed cardiac evaluation involving a treadmill, where it was found that I needed a triple heart bypass! But this was a very busy year for me, and I had three other office locations to see to.

Our Paris lease at avenue Hoche was up, and Robin Ambler found excellent space in one of the little palaces on rue Tilsitt, a street that circles the Étoile. This was after a mad chase for the top floors of the Normandie building on the Champs Élysée above the Lido nightclub, which would have been a real coup. Sadly, the ownership of that building was too opaque for me to be able to bring it off. Still, rue Tilsitt was not shabby. I worked with Pierre Pastellas of Studios to plan it. Studios was a San Francisco firm of architects whose founder, Erik Sueberkrop, I had known during my time in America.

But a more exciting project for me in 1996 was in Milan. Back in 1992 I had installed about ten staff in a converted apartment, very nicely fitted out by Tiziano Betti of DEGW, Frank Duffy's firm, who had a substantial Milan office managed by Luigi Mangano. Now Salomon's business had grown, and something more substantial was needed, which was difficult in a tight market. One day I was taken by one of our managers to lunch at the Società del Giardino, a smart private club in a beautiful 16C palazzo in the heart of downtown.¹¹³ I was introduced to the manager of the club, and I mentioned that we were looking for office space, and did he know of any? He told us that he had two spare floors in the palazzo, but they had been unoccupied since the war, when a bomb came through the roof; we were welcome to take a look. The space was sensational; it had been a theatre originally and had a long span roof over a big open space, ideal for a trading floor. This was most exciting, but we had to show reserve in negotiating with the club manager. Eventually

¹¹² <https://www.gothamnottinghill.com/service/about-us>

¹¹³ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Società_del_Giardino

we worked out a deal whereby we considerably improved his building in exchange for rent reduction; it was a good deal for both. DEGW planned the space, and we built it out using local contractors managed by Tiziano Betti. It was a big success, not least with our staff who could lunch daily in the club, and it did wonders for the club's finances. The third office requiring attention was Zurich, where they'd run out of space, and I had just time to negotiate a new space before my heart operation.

On November 7 I went into the Wellington Hospital. John Keates, my surgeon, came for a pre-op review and on leaving said, rather like the TV detective Columbo, "By the way, about the smoking, please don't waste my time." It was brilliant. I never smoked again. Amy C was wonderfully warm in her support, before and after the operation; I was definitely falling in love with her. I tottered around the wards to get my legs working and was eventually allowed home to recuperate. Right away Amy spirited me away to the Bishopstrow hotel near Warminster, for a restful weekend - fabulous. But on November 23 I heard that François had died at the Invalides, at the age of 68. It was terrible news; at once unexpected, yet somehow inevitable too. He had been deteriorating. I needed to be with my sister. When I was well enough, I went to Paris, saw her, and spent some time re-decorating and furnishing my studio at rue Larrey. This involved trips to IKEA near the airport, and to the BHV (Bazaar de l'Hotel de Ville), a cornucopia of DIY. The visit was truly therapeutic.

We signed the new Zurich lease in December and planned the move in to rue Tilsitt in Paris during January. When I returned to the office full time the issue of space for expansion of London operations came up again, despite the newly built space in the atrium. I was very much aware of a large office building across the street, Belgrave House, 76, Buckingham Palace Road. For a few years it had been mostly occupied by American Express who had taken the head lease, but I'd heard they were eager to move their HQ to a new Canary Wharf building. They had about half of a 25-year lease remaining, so I offered to take over their lease if they would compensate us. They did not object to the principle, and Liell Francklin at Savills negotiated an acceptable valuation. They would pay us £70 million to take on their lease. This was exciting. The building was quite modern and could easily be brought to our standard for much less than that. A heavy-duty communications link across the road would connect the two buildings, and it was super-convenient for staff. It would add about 150,000 square feet to our existing 200,000.

On Sunday, 31 August, the death of Princess Diana following a car crash in Paris the day before, paralysed London. Bill Adams from the US was staying with me, and we jogged over to Kensington Palace, where mountains of

flowers were already piling up at the gates and many people were milling around. It was an extraordinary sensation being in the sunny park and coming across this strange scene.

Then, during September, we at Salomon heard that Sandy Weill, the entrepreneurial head of insurance giant Travelers, the parent firm of Smith Barney, had acquired our firm for \$9bn to create Salomon Smith Barney Holdings Inc. It was a time of takeovers and mergers and Deryck Maughan seemed to approve. Jobs could be cut, and businesses streamlined. Morgan Stanley and Dean Witter had already done similar deals. Dale Horowitz called to reassure me, but he warned that Weill had a hit squad of trusted lieutenants - "They all go to the same synagogue" he told me - who would come and appraise the European businesses before deciding on our future. They worked as a team and had done the same thing for Weill's previous acquisitions.

In March 1998, the Travelers team arrived in London and started setting up meetings with the various business managers, including me. The person I dealt with was clearly not a real estate professional, although he wanted me to believe he was. He observed that many of our competitors had moved to Canary Wharf so why wouldn't we want to go? I explained how we'd turned down the Reichmann's offer a decade earlier, that our staff didn't want to go there, and that we'd come up with a brilliant solution to our space needs, getting paid big bucks to take on Belgrave house. He simply could not believe it. Reverse premiums, like the one Amex were prepared to pay us to take over Belgrave House, are unknown in the New York market, where leases are more flexible. I even organised a meeting where Liell Francklin patiently explained the deal to him and showed him the paperwork, but he became visibly irritable. I sensed that this was a person I could not readily work with.

When I swapped notes with other managers, I heard more tales of bone headedness, and a repeat of the notion that we should move to a big new HQ in Canary Wharf. What the visitors were not telling us, but they probably already knew, was that Travelers were about to merge with Citicorp to create the world's largest financial services corporation.¹¹⁴

I talked it over with my boss Peter McSloy and Morley West, head of HR. There was an option for me to leave Salomon with a £30,000 tax-free payoff in exchange for a non-disclosure undertaking. My pension would not be affected. I decided to take it. I had spent ten good years at Salomon, had enjoyed the people and the work, and that was probably enough of the banking world for me.

¹¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citigroup>

I had become quite friendly with David Wilson, head of property for Eurotunnel, our tenants on the fourth floor. His partner Heather worked for Rolls Royce as a sort of general services manager. I had kept him abreast of the goings on at Victoria Plaza, and the takeover of Salomon. For several years we'd met in February at MIPIM, an international property fair in Cannes that was unrivalled for networking.

When he heard I was leaving Salomon he suggested I give some thought to working at Eurotunnel. It took a few dinners with Heather to work out his idea, but broadly he felt Eurotunnel needed a shake-up in the management of their support services, both property and general services. It was all complicated by the Franco-British management structure of the firm, but could I come and take on the general services part of that? He was partly attracted by my good French which would help with the French managers. David himself was more interested in the real estate aspects of the work; Eurotunnel had substantial land holdings in France and UK with development opportunity. David admired traditional toffs and gentry and yearned to join them, but he was quite small-minded. He was a curious mixture of brash confidence and deference to establishment mores. But I decided to accept his proposal, nonetheless.

The job would entail a commute to Cheriton near Folkestone, some seventy miles, which was a bind. David lent me Heather's sporty Honda, which made it not too bad.



Eurotunnel office at Cheriton overlooking the M20 and tunnel terminals.

The company was made up of fiefdoms responsible for shuttle services or freight, mirrored on either side of the channel. They were survivors from when the company was an engineering/construction business digging a tunnel, but now it was just an operating company. The businesses were typically run by engineers who liked to manage their own affairs and strongly resisted any

form of central control. The result was multiple suppliers providing similar services with no economies of scale or business discipline. I had to get to know the various managers and persuade them of the advantages of centrally managed services. It was not easy, although I found the French managers generally more amenable and more up for improvement than the Brits. Office life was not very lively, although I enjoyed frequent visits to the offices at the Calais terminal.

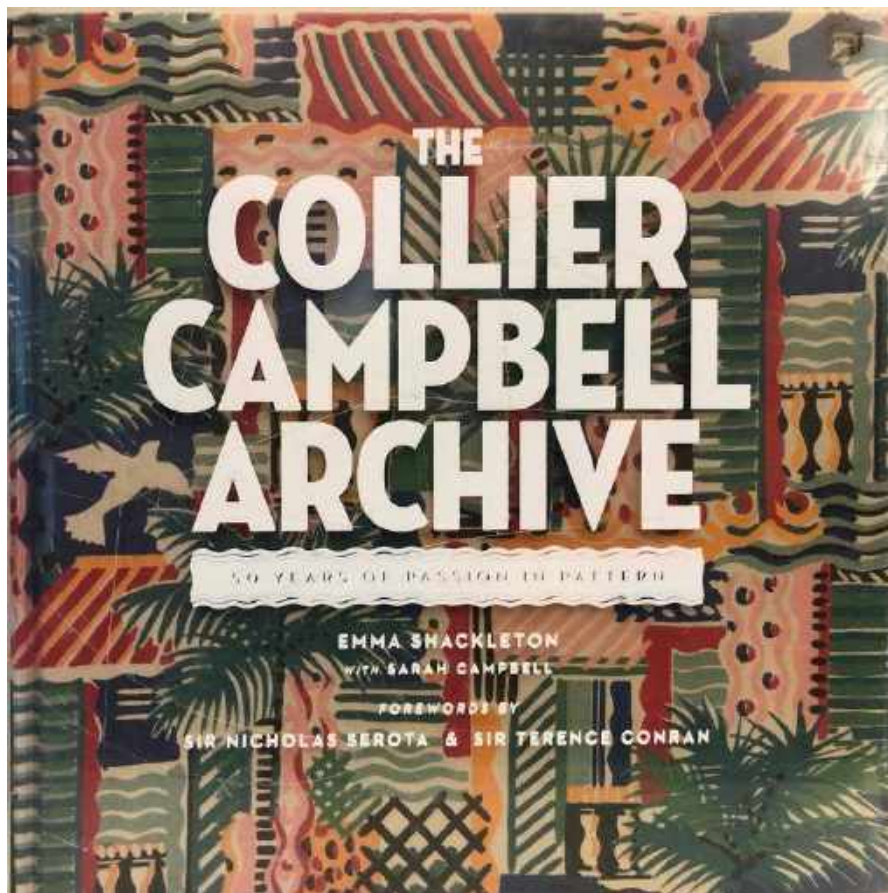
I eventually managed to analyse the services provided/needed and to establish agreed service levels for each, so that invitations to tender could be prepared. I wrote up my findings in a report. But well before then I had been approached by David King of Interior Services Group (ISG). ISG was a buy-out from Stuart Lipton's Stanhope Properties and were already the most successful office fit out contractors in London, and David was interested in branching into Europe. He, too, was an enthusiastic visitor to MIPIM in Cannes, where I'd been in March. Amy C and I flew down and rented a car so we could stay in Clavier. ISG had done several jobs for me at Salomon including the infilling of the atrium at Victoria Plaza. David knew I had built offices all around Europe for the bank and thought we could use that experience to support anglophone companies moving into Europe. It made sense; most companies were nervous of working with local contractors and felt reassured by using a firm they already knew in London. In addition, this arrangement worked for American as well as for British businesses, because most Americans based their European operations in London. My discussions with David in Cannes were exciting, coming just before my meetings with the goons from Travelers. They certainly helped me on my way out of Salomon.

I quite liked the idea of becoming a building contractor, particularly in the European arena. After my 1970-80 years as a construction consultant and defects detective, I had at last been a proper architect and planner in America during the 1980s, as well as a renovation specialist. I had now been a facilities manager at Salomon for more than ten years, on the other side of the demand equation. My job with Eurotunnel was always more a project rather than a career move, so I decided to join ISG on September 24, 1998. I'd been briefed on what to expect by Robert Horvath, David King's business partner, an urbane banker intrigued by my decision to work in a building firm. My arrival was softened on the very first weekend, when Amy and I went to a barbecue at David King's stockbroker Tudor house near Arundel, where I met many of my future colleagues.

At the time I was still helping David Wilson with Eurotunnel business meetings, selling our vision of reorganisation to various management groups in Folkestone and Calais. But I also started to take German lessons at the

Goethe Institute on Exhibition Road, preparation for managing the first of ISG's European ventures, a small office in Frankfurt.

It would be wrong to give the impression that life was all about work. I was seeing quite a lot of Susan Collier, the fabric designer, trying to help her think about the future management of her and her sister Sarah's formidable Collier Campbell archive that they kept in a low rent warehouse. It was a fairly fruitless task; the enthusiasts had no money and the moneyed were not enthusiastic. Susan was a wonderful gardener and I enjoyed helping out whenever she took part in London's Open Garden season. I was also a member of the Architecture Club, an informal talking shop managed by Peter Murray, who'd been editor of *Architectural Design* and the weekly *Building Design*, to both of which I had often contributed. In 1998 we held a meeting at 1, Cornhill, a building bought as a luxe drop-in office by Stuart Lipton's in-house architect Vincent Wang, now very rich thanks to Rosehaugh Stanhope and Broadgate. In other years we met at the Reform Club, and once at St Bartholomew's Hospital with the fantastic Hogarth murals on the stairway. The club was a good way of staying on people's radar. On the other hand, I was a poor institutional joiner letting my RIBA membership lapse after my stint on the marketing committee, and hardly visiting the Architectural Association.



10. Interior Services Group Europe 1998-2002

Tony Blair's labour party had won a landslide general election in 1997, and there was a tone of optimism in the country following the lacklustre years of John Major's premiership. 'New Labour' was also a fresh brand, imparting a feeling of optimism, even though the country was not doing too well. I was not in a particular hurry to get back to hard work and I indulged in a bit of journalism - a review of Frank Duffy's hefty *The New Office* for *World Architecture* and a building study for the *Architect's Journal* of the Paribas headquarters built above Marylebone Station, designed by Whinney Mackay-Lewis. This was an air rights project above rail tracks like Victoria Plaza so at least I knew something about it. The building was ugly, but the technical solution good.

In the spring I heard that the Ginestières had changed hands, sold on by a rather feckless art dealer from Aix after a messy divorce. The new owner, Bernard Starkmann, a Swiss library supply specialist, graduate of the London Business School, and his German wife wanted to meet me, and we arranged to have lunch at a Conran restaurant on Devonshire Street in Marylebone that I enjoyed (now a Côte Brasserie). Bernard had been told I was an architect and had grown up in the house, and he was curious to know what I thought he should do with it. I congratulated him on the purchase, and we discussed materials to use in re-rendering the exterior; I explained it was essential to use lime mortar to prevent moisture from being trapped in the walls. I do not think that at that stage he had hired an architect, but he told me his wife was partial to 'open plan' living. This was a bit of a conversation stopper; I pointed out that the house, built in 1739, was so classic and decidedly cellular, albeit with huge principal rooms and a beautiful winding staircase at the centre, that it was hard to see how more open planning could be achieved without destroying the architecture. (See P.19)

He suggested his architect would find a way, and we parted. Later, I learned that he eventually hired Claudio Silvestrin, an Italian minimalist architect, known for his retail work, boutiques for Armani, and for meticulous minimalist detailing. This did not promise well; Silvestrin was a bit of a megalomaniac who played his clients expertly, flattering them into his world of expensive finishes and bland spaces. A fawning article on the purity of his vision quoted him as saying: 'The first step is the demolition. Just as the farmer cuts the grass before sowing, I knock down all the walls. Then I start to

reconstruct on the basis of the functions.’¹¹⁵ We’re going to meet Silvestrin again later, in a different context, but still part of my story.

Eventually I turned up for work at ISG’s Appold Street offices hard by the massive Broadgate development at Liverpool Street station. It was a typical open desk type office, with no personal space. Mondays were marked by an open cry marketing meeting where leads and opportunities were paraded and commented on by senior staff. There was a lot of showing off and jostling for favour. I met Mark Johnson, a tough contract manager who was keeping an eye on ISG’s interests in Frankfurt, and who was suspicious of my arrival. Also, David Mayo, a manager who’d expressed an interest in working in Europe. The atmosphere was gritty, very much a construction firm, although Rob Harris, in charge of ISG’s image in London, was more sophisticated; the brains behind the way the firm presented itself to the client community. I started planning trips to Frankfurt with David King to get the lie of the land. Fortunately, I was helped by Ian Chandler, a manager at ISG who liked to work on the Europe project, partly because it got him away from others in the firm. He had been a founder member of ISG, kept them out of trouble in Frankfurt, and knew a lot of the British estate agents and architects active in the market. We were handicapped to some extent by our construction managers like Mark Johnson who were impatient of German practice that was calmer and more methodical than the crazy pragmatism of the London style. Labour relations on site were often strained.

In Frankfurt we had a small office in West End with three or four people, as well as a company flat. Most of our time was spent chasing mostly the British estate agents like Wetherall Green and Smith, or CBRE for leads about companies relocating, who might need to fit out office space, such as Oracle, Siebel or Level 3, tech companies that moved about a lot. A local British husband and wife architectural firm, run by David Hancock, was also a good source of leads. Our German colleagues took care of retaining and managing German tradesmen to do the actual work, while Ian and I took care of the clients.

The evenings were quite lonely. I went a lot to the Städel Museum and to the opera, mostly on my own, and I particularly admired the sculpture collection in the Liebighaus Museum. I already knew Frankfurt quite well from my Salomon days, so adapting to German working practice was easy for me. My German was improving with use, and I was still going to classes in London.

¹¹⁵ Silvia Robertazzi, ‘Gli ambienti puri di Claudio Silvestrin’, in *Io Donna*, no. 13, March 28 1998, 88-91.

In January 1999 David Wilson took my Eurotunnel re-organisation report to the main board, and that was the last of my involvement. Things had not been going too well, with Wilson wanting a more British style of management that I felt would upset the French directors. At a final farewell dinner for the UK team at the Mirabelle, I incurred Wilson's eternal opprobrium by ordering several bottles of very expensive *Hermitage* Grand Cru Rhone wine, rather than the more modest *Crozes-Hermitage*. When the bill arrived, Wilson was embarrassed. We did not speak for some time.

From the London office we'd had a lead that Seibel Systems wanted to open an office in Paris. They were a unicorn tech company specialising in Client Relationship Management (CRM) software, a very hot ticket at the time. So, I started going to Paris to see if we could mount some capability there. It was a great comfort to stay in my little studio and not be reliant on hotels. Through Simon Jouning, a contact at London architects Aukett, I was introduced to Martin Bailey and his wife Carol, an urbane British architect in Paris with an office on the avenue de la Grande Armée. Martin in turn introduced me to Peter Terrell, a brilliant British structural engineer also based in Paris. Peter had made a great success of designing steel-framed office buildings in Paris, cheaper and quicker to erect than reinforced concrete, the traditional Parisian material for offices. His steel-framed buildings were very much in tune with current American and British practice; deep floor spaces, internal atria and good building services. He was doing a lot of work for Christopher Holloway, an enterprising British developer, who in turn was working with my friend from Canary Wharf days, the architect Robert Turner, now retired from Skidmore Owings and Merrill's London office. Robert would prepare sketch plans for the Paris projects, albeit very precise, that Peter Terrell and a firm of local architects would work up into construction documents. Robert was now living in Paris near St Sulpice on the Left Bank, and in October we met for dinner at Le Villaret, a smart new restaurant in the 11th arrondissement. Robert was gay, a witty and stylish architect, originally from West Virginia, who had been a mainstay of SOM's ascendancy in London together with Roger Kallmann. He'd also worked closely with another friend of mine, Anne Kriken, as his marketing lead. Anne had been working for SOM and for Syska and Hennessy in San Francisco during my time there, where she'd been married to John Kriken, a renowned planner at SOM.

Siebel had taken a building on rue de Presbourg, overlooking the Arc de Triomphe. It is a little *Haussmannien* palace, one of a necklace of such buildings around the Etoile, very similar to the one I rented the other side, on rue Tilsitt, for Salomon. On the top floor was to be a grand apartment for Tom Siebel, with offices below. Claudio Silvestrin was his chosen architect. Siebel

had started his career at Oracle, for whom ISG had worked in the London.¹¹⁶ We were chosen to do his Paris HQ because of that and because we spoke English. Luckily, I had met André Bernstein, a Paris based fit-out contractor, through Martin Bailey, and we decided to tackle the job together. It was too big for us alone and we simply lacked experience in the tough Paris market. André proved invaluable in keeping Silvestrin happy and understanding his extremely demanding specifications. A large part of André's business was the fitting out of cruise ships built at St Nazaire, similarly demanding work. I brought one or two construction managers from London to help with the project, including Neil Coles, an enthusiastic young builder, keen to work in France. André contributed the French craftsmen to do the work. The differences between French and British construction cultures were thrown into sharp relief, and it was tough preventing know-it-all ISG London managers from coming to Paris, fomenting international friction.

In October I found time to visit Barcelona, for a big construction exhibition and a meeting of NACORE, an international office building occupants lobby group I belonged to.¹¹⁷ I was anxious to see the new development of the city spurred by the 1992 Olympics, particularly the rebirth of the waterfront, with Gehry's giant golden fish. Bill Adams and his wife Ann were there at the same time, and it became a memorable visit for me. I had not been there since the death of Franco in 1975, and I was eager to see how Spain was adapting to democracy. I was enchanted by the Ramblas, the markets, the progress being made on the Familia Sagrada cathedral, and general buzz of the place. Barcelona was always a magical place.

Back in Paris, I had been pursuing further work for tech companies like Level 3, Cable and Wireless, and London venture capitalists Cinven, so with André we decided to set up a proper French entity to pursue and execute work together. In early December, Robert Horvath came to Paris, and we went to see a lawyer about company formation. The result was IASA (Interior Alpha SA), a joint company between ISG and André's Alpha Construction.¹¹⁸ As we began to get more business the managing of timetables for Ian Chandler, Neil Coles and the construction managers became complicated by rules around the new 35-hour week legislation that gave workers discretion over the allocation of their time.¹¹⁹ Programming work became a major headache, particularly for

¹¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Siebel

¹¹⁷ NACORE - National Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives, headquartered in Florida, USA.

¹¹⁸ In 2012 ISG bought out André for £7.5M. making him European MD for retail. By then IASA had a glittering client list including Apple, Louis Vuitton, Uniqlo, Gucci, Tiffany, etc.

¹¹⁹ The 35-hour working week is a part of a labour law reform adopted in France in February 2000, under Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's Plural Left government. Pushed by Minister of Labour Martine Aubry, it was adopted in two phases: the "Aubry 1" law in June 1998 and "Aubry 2" law in January 2000.

smaller French businesses. The new law was a catastrophe for restaurants, for example.

After a while my weeks became tortuous, consisting of an early morning flight to Frankfurt on Mondays, followed by a flight to Paris on Tuesday evening, two days in Paris, with Fridays spent in Milan or Madrid, chasing further business. This period was very hard work and quite exhausting. I also had to deal with a level of chippyness, resentment within ISG that David had gone out and hired an architect to run the European business. I was to some extent consoled by spending time with Christiane when in Paris, going out to dinner and accompanying her to her golf club at Fourqueux. Her sister Simone's rather schizoid son, Alex, was most trying, but I enjoyed her circle of mostly rather brittle Parisian pals; we often dined or swam at the Cercle Interallié, on the Faubourg St Honoré. Her father Gustave was in decline, he died the next year, and what kept her going was *Pro Anima*, a not-for-profit association she'd set up dedicated to eliminating animal testing. She'd secured the patronage of the famous naturalist Théodore Monod and a clutch of distinguished scientists researching alternative methods of testing for toxicity.

IASA took cheap office space in Suresnes in Western Paris, and André's wife Lucette became our office manager. I always felt she was more a spy for André than a true colleague, but she was very valuable doing the book-keeping, payroll, taxes and dealing with French employment bureaucracy generally. In March of 2000 I went to MIPIM in Cannes, where I met all my old cronies, but now as a contractor seeking their business rather than as a colleague. I saw David Wilson there, still working for Eurotunnel, but very much looking around for a new career opportunity. Later in the same month I took the Frankfurt team to Innsbruck for a ski break; their behaviour was quite rowdy. Keeping everybody happy at ISG was a challenge.

In May I flew to New York for a big NACORE meeting, after convincing David King that it would be good for business, which it was. I hadn't been to New York for years, and it was great to meet up with old friends like Joan Rosenbaum, and one or two from the Ehrenkrantz Group. Chris and Linda Finch had moved to Woodland Hills, a suburb of Los Angeles, but others were still around. I even went to dinner with Dale Horowitz and his wife Barbara for a rather sad *post mortem* on Salomon Brothers. It was spooky for me, wander around downtown, looking up at my work of twenty years earlier on the Woolworingth building. I remember buying a beautiful DKNY silk/linen herringbone jacket from Saks Fifth Avenue, sold to me by a persuasive and elegant Black salesman, a jacket I wore for twenty years.

In June Amy C came with me to Paris and we went to a party at André's house in the smart suburb of St Germain-en-Laye, close to Christiane's golf club. Lucette was the hostess, and the guests were mostly business fiends of André's. I felt I was at last becoming integrated into Paris business life. This happened in the middle of a rare visit to London by Chris and Linda Finch who stayed with me, using my flat as a base for side trips to Chris's relatives in Guernsey. They seemed to be enjoying West Coast life, and their adopted daughter Chloe was starting to get into the music business as a singer, although still living at home.

In September I went to another NACORE meeting, this time in Copenhagen, where I'd never been. I felt I needed a brief break from ISG. I found the city delightful and managed to stay in the famous SAS Royal Hotel designed by Arne Jacobsen and built in 1960. I was sad to find it had lost much of the original furniture and décor since Radisson took it over in 1994.



SAS Royal Hotel, Copenhagen; architect, Arne Jacobsen, 1960

During my stay I managed to get a bus over the newly opened Øresund Bridge connecting Denmark to Sweden, just for a wander around Malmö before

returning. It was mightily impressive engineering, and obviously an important new commuter highway.

In November, David Mayo came to Paris from ISG. As our orderbook filled up London became more interested in what we were doing in Paris, and David was earmarked to keep an eye on me. We visited St Nazaire with André to see first hand the fit out work he was doing on cruise liners. The size of the ships was awe inspiring, the scale and animation of the shipyard astounding. André's craftsmen were certainly doing impressive work in difficult circumstances, even though the designs seemed to me very vulgar. Later in the month ISG's Rob Harris hired Julie Devine, my old San Francisco marketing assistant, to come and help with marketing in London. It was good to have a friend with a sensitive political nose to discuss the workings of the firm. Julie also knew many of the same American architects in London that I did. Her husband David Bartlett had been offered a good job at Gensler's London office, working for Tony Harbour, more San Francisco transplants doing well in a burgeoning London market, and a firm that had done work for me while at Salomon.

During this time, when I was away from London a lot, I spent too little time with Felix and Leo. They had been doing an estate management course at Oxford Brooks and were sharing a house off campus. Felix took to it better than Leo, and eventually qualified as a chartered surveyor, later joining Savills. Leo tried several directions including doing a foundation course at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, that he didn't very much enjoy. I was continuing to support them, but I was too busy to really engage with their lives as much as I should have done. Shades of my own father, I suspect.

In April of 2001 I was invited by Chester Jones and Sandy to join them on a trip to Cornwall to stay in a house owned by their friend, the painter Patrick Heron, near his Eagle's Nest house at Tregurthen, a few miles from St Ives. The White House as they called it had beautiful high ceilings and long views to the sea. The light was extraordinary, and we did a lot of outdoor sketching. Another of Chester's friends Angela Landels joined us for the trip. On our last day Sandy and I went to the fish market at Newlyn. We were shocked to find the port swarming with French lorries carrying away the catch to sell in Paris, but we did find a beautiful turbot that made a true feast. With Chester we were able to visit Patrick Heron in his house, and also the Newlyn Art Gallery with its rich collection of Cornish artists, particularly Roger Hilton.



My 2001 sketches of The White House, onshore and offshore, 2004

While on our visit we all went to Prussia Cove on the South coast near Penzance, where a remarkable music school operated in romantic Edwardian buildings by Philip Tilden.¹²⁰ One could sit in on master classes. The star was Sandor Vegh, a really wonderful older Hungarian violinist, ably supported by cellist Steven Isserlis, then quite young. It was a wonderful experience complete with a concert given by Vegh and the students in a local church.¹²¹

On the return from Tregearthen, I was able to stop at Grampound Road near St Austell, where my aunt Catherine and her sister Bunty, Norah's sisters, had bought a large thatched retirement house, set in a field facing southwest. It was a lovely old house, slightly ramshackle with a terrific garden that the sisters enjoyed immensely.



My 2001 sketch of Prussia Cove from the rocky beach

There was a small vineyard, an orchard, and they kept chickens, thus recapturing some of the earthiness of their mother's house at Mill Hill. I had

¹²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Tilden

¹²¹ <https://www.i-m-s.org.uk>

visited them soon after they bought the house in 1988, but now the garden was a resplendent reflection of their efforts. Cath and Bunty kept separate living arrangements in the house with two sitting rooms, for example (Bunty did not smoke), but they got on quite well and ate together. I had been earning credit with Cath by sending her cartons of *Disque Bleu* cigarettes on my travels.

In June 2001 Tony Blair was convincingly elected to a second term and was soon to drag Britain into the Iraq war. I was spending more time in Milan and Madrid, trying to expand our order book beyond Germany and France. In Madrid I was able to visit my Uncle Philip, Madeleine's son, now retired from a post-war career at The Economist Intelligence Unit. Philip, who was gay, lived on the top floor of a nice old central apartment building, with generous roof terraces. His flat was stuffed with books, furniture, and bibelots. I thought I recognized some pieces from the London flat of Madeleine and Lev. He was working on a scholarly history of old Spain and seemed quite happy. Luckily, he was helped by Luis and Giselda, a couple who did not live in, but looked after his every need. He was 71 years old and already quite frail.

On 11 September I was in the Appold Street office of ISG just after lunch, when news started to come through of terrorist attacks in New York, with airliners crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. I immediately tried to call Leo, who was visiting friends on Houston Street in Manhattan. I managed to get through briefly just before the lines froze up. About twenty minutes after the first impact Leo saw the second crash from the roof of the house where he was staying. When I managed to reach him again a few days later, he'd been traumatized by what he'd witnessed. Luckily the friends he was staying with rallied round, and they all went off by train to recover on Fire Island, well away from Manhattan. A few hours later on the same day, on TV news, I was appalled to see 7 World Trade Center, the building occupied by Salomon where I'd previously worked and visited only a year earlier, collapsed in on itself. Fires started by debris from the first impact had spread to 7WTC where water supplies had been cut, preventing sprinklers from working and eventually resulting in a sudden progressive collapse of the structure. Fortunately, the building had been successfully evacuated. The outrage continued to monopolize all media space for several days. 67 UK nationals perished in the attacks, the largest loss of life from any nation other than the United States. The day after the attack I was in Paris, where I saw a copy of *Libération*; they had devoted their cover to an astonishing photo credited to Associated Press.



I later framed the *Libération* cover and hung it in my Paris studio. Then ten years later to the day the newspaper reprinted the photo as a souvenir of the event, with a credit for the British photographer, Suzanne Plunkett. I managed to trace her and ask for a JPEG of the photo, below. AP had not told her that her photo had been used as a cover the day after the attack, and she was pleased to learn it from me.



Suzanne Plunkett's astonishing photo for AP of the 9/11 attack, showing two buildings I was closely associated with - Woolworth to the left and 7WTC looming 43 storeys to the right shortly before it collapsed due to fire.

In January 2002 there was a memorial service in London for Bunny Dexter, a slightly eccentric American I had befriended in France, and from a grand family, who had bought a ruined house in Claviers that she was doing up, and who was friendly with musicians, including pianist Byron Janis. Bunny had a

flat in Lennox Gardens, Kensington, and she was lively company. Amy C was fond of her, too. She had an equally eccentric Scottish boyfriend who used to call me at all hours about Bunny. When in Clavier we often took her on picnics to the mountains, swimming in the Jabron, and so on. Memoirs should leave space for incidental memories such as this.

In March I went, as usual to MIPIM in Cannes, where I met David Wilson. He told me excitedly that he had started working for Imperial College as Director of Estates, having finally left Eurotunnel. Imperial's new rector, Richard Sykes, had been chair of Glaxo Smith Kline, the pharma conglomerate he'd brought into being.¹²² Richard was going to shake up fusty academic management at Imperial and put it on a sound business footing, David claimed. Furthermore, he was keen to recruit business people to help in that.

The rest of the spring was spent watching over my Paris and Frankfurt jobs and securing a big fit out in Madrid for MBNA, an American bank later notorious for its credit card practices. Around the time we were working for them, MBNA hired Senator Joe Biden's son Hunter, lobbying his father to weaken bankruptcy protections. The job was in a new building in Las Rosas Business Park, on the edge of town. Once again DEG's Juan Carredano, who had helped me at Salomon, was extremely helpful, not only in adapting the office space layouts sent through by MBNA's American architects, but lining up trade firms to do the work, which would be managed by an ISG colleague from London, Roddy Cooper. This was a stressful time for me; ISG management, while pleased that business was expanding, were wondering whether I was the right person to be doing it; was I still too much of an architect rather than a tough contractor?

So, when I again met David Wilson and a recruitment consultant in early June, I was ready to listen to his suggestion that I come to join him at Imperial. The job would be to manage the estate, the largest university campus in the country, although capital projects would generally be led by John Walsh, an ex-navy engineer who came from John Laing Construction and had joined Imperial at the same time as David. Nigel Buck also joined the team from Imperial's Department of Medicine, to run the real estate portfolio.

¹²² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Sykes_\(microbiologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Sykes_(microbiologist))

11. Imperial College 2002-2006

Life at Imperial was exciting, and something completely new for me. I very much enjoyed walking or cycling to work across the park from Hyde Park Mansions, which took me only 30 minutes door-to-door. There were large unwieldy departments that Richard Sykes was in the process of recasting as faculties of Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences and, a new one, Business.

Imperial is a resolutely scientific and technical university, very strong in research, a UK equivalent of MIT or Cal Tech in the US. The process of faculty formation clearly resulted in some winners and some losers. Sykes surrounded himself with a cabinet of advisers with long knowledge of the college, notably Chris Towler, a calm yet Machiavellian organiser. Sykes let everyone know he was fearless about re-organisation and very ambitious about the future, and that included real estate. The Estates management team met with him almost weekly.

In my own domain of facilities management, I found that departments usually had their own staff, responsible for cleaning and light maintenance. Only electrical and heating services were managed centrally, together with the upkeep and cleaning of the common parts. The departments were powerful, and the central team was relatively weak and demoralised. The existing arrangements were jealously guarded by professors or by managers within the various departments. Rather as I had done at Eurotunnel I imagined a more centralised provision of services, organised into efficient units delivering to the academic departments, relieving them of the need to manage such non-essential functions. There were several areas where this was the obvious path to follow: engineering maintenance, cleaning catering and security. Economies of scale and outsourcing of non-essential functions lay at the heart of the new approach. The delivery of facilities services should be under a manager for each of the major buildings.

The theory was fine, but as is often the case, we were not starting with a clean sheet, but with a rich tapestry of relationships and obligations that derived from long history. There was considerable resistance, not only from workers, but also from their departmental patrons who resisted relinquishing control of these people-sensitive functions to central authority. Fortunately, Richard Sykes backed my ideas and started to apply pressure on the Departments, letting them know that the future was not going to resemble the past. Accordingly, I got on with the big job of organising a procurement for engineering maintenance based on risk assessment, and for cleaning. This was also around the time that Richard's plans for creating four faculties were at a

high pitch, so managers were jittery about their futures for several reasons. Possibly not the best time to be launching a major reorganisation of how the whole place was managed.

At the beginning of October, I was contacted by Chris Arnold; ex-employees of The Ehrenkrantz Group were planning a memorial in San Francisco for Ezra on the 5th. Ezra had died in September 2001, at the young age of 69, from cancer. I should have liked to attend, but my new job made this the one year when I could not visit San Francisco in October. The organisation of the memorial nevertheless put me in touch with several people from my past.

Also in October, a merger was proposed between Imperial and University College London that would have formed an institution with 28,000 students and a research budget of £400 million – more than Oxford and Cambridge combined. Richard Sykes said that the merger "would lead to the creation of a truly world-class research-based institution with the resources necessary to compete effectively with the best in the world." Strong opposition from academics, particularly at UCL where a "takeover by Imperial" was feared, led to the proposals being dropped a month later.

There were some other reasons why a merger might have been a mistake. We'd been given some financial data on the UCL estate that revealed they had been spending heavily on new development, while deferring maintenance to the tune of some £800M. Imperial at that time was being significantly more chaste. The merger would have landed us with a massive debt obligation. Our discussions with UCL managers left us with a strong impression of incompetence, and bad news being hushed up. We developed a view that the merger would be financially disadvantageous to Imperial, despite the academic benefits Sykes was after. Fortunately, the initiative was eventually dropped.

But within Imperial we began to discuss longer term opportunities for the campus real estate. One area that needed urgent attention was student halls of residence. In recruitment terms it was an important boast of the college that first year students would all be housed within a short walk of the campus, yet the 1960s blocks around Prince's Square were in deplorable condition. Not only were they uncomfortable, but they were also ruinously expensive to upgrade. Several had been designed by Richard Sheppard, of Sheppard Robson, (colleagues from my Baghdad University of Technology days in 1975). Their buildings were in a full on brutal sub-Corbusian style, and had been listed as architecturally significant. We soon reached a view that these blocks needed replacement, and Nigel Buck took up the cudgels of persuading the authorities that this should be allowed, with the help of architectural

historians. There was vigorous resistance from the Twentieth Century society, and other heritage enthusiasts, but in the end planning permission was granted to demolish the halls and replace them, leaving Weeks Hall, the smallest and least problematic, as the souvenir of an epoch at Imperial. The architectural commission was advertised in the *European Journal*, and response was strong. I was a strong advocate for the American practice Kohn Pedersen and Fox; they had recently done a well-received building in Oxford, and I felt that they would be more responsive to our actual needs than more famous British architects. I knew Gene Kohn quite well from my time in America, I admired the way they were building an international practice, and I knew several people in their London office. They interviewed well and were selected. The result has been the successful recreation of a London square with sober well-designed buildings; a real success.

In March Leo called to suggest I keep 10 November free because he was marrying Renata Sacramento, a Brazilian cocktail waitress. This was a very modern way to proceed but I congratulated him. Renata had come to London with her little daughter Sara from Belo Horizonte in Brazil, a large city about 200 miles north of Rio. Leo did not offer much in the way of detail, but it was clear that the relationship made him very happy, and that was important.

At some point, I believe in 2003, I was approached by Paul Finch, who had been editor of *Building Design*, to join a panel of design reviewers for CABA, a successor organisation to the Royal Fine Art Commission, that had been increasingly poorly run by the camp Lord St John Fawsley, a ghastly Tory throwback to Disraeli. CABA - Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment - was an attempt to ginger up the review of significant projects at a national scale, and government funding was secured. The first chair of CABA was Stuart Lipton of Stanhope, so our paths crossed again. The panels were made up of an eclectic mix of architects, planners and academics, supported by a lively secretariat of young professionals. Review panel comments were fed back to developers, who often modified their schemes as a result. To proceed against CABA recommendations would generally be a red light for local planning committees. I enjoyed the process and hopefully contributed in a useful way. We probably met about once a month to review four or five schemes in a session. Occasionally we'd travel to the location of particularly sensitive projects, and I remember an eye-opening visit to Newcastle, a city I had never been to, a heady mixture of historic beauty, Grey Street and the Grainger Market; engineering hubris with the magnificent curving station and the Tyne Bridge; and recent interventions like the 1950s Civic Centre and the Sage centre across the Tyne in Gateshead.

Angela Landels with whom I had visited Cornwall with Sandy and Chester, had been married to Willie Landels, the founder of *Harpers & Queen*. Angela said she'd like to try a portrait of me. I thought that might be fun, so I sat for some sketches. Angela had been an illustrator at the magazine when she'd met Willie, and although they were now divorced, she remained very fond of him. She lived in a nice little house south of the river filled with her rather good portraits, paintings of vegetables, and her adored whippet Loulou. Angela chose to paint me 'leaving the frame', explaining that she had the impression I was somehow always on the verge of leaving. It was not until some years later that the portrait was completed.

Leo's wedding took place on November 10 at Camden Town Hall just off the Euston Road, followed by a reception at the Perseverance pub in Lambs Conduit Street. It was a sweet occasion with excellent food and my sister came from Paris. Renata's work did not allow a lengthy honeymoon, so they settled for a long weekend at the nice Dorset Square Hotel. At the time Leo was 'on the knowledge', studying to become a London taxi driver. I was unsure about that as a career path, but he seemed to like it and he became phenomenally knowledgeable about London geography.

In the spring of 2004 design work on the design of Southside progressed, as did the struggle with Kensington planners to get the earlier brutalist version demolished. Construction was well ahead, meanwhile, on a grand new business school on Exhibition Road, designed by Norman Foster that would serve as a new 'front door' to Imperial, with a huge, glazed lobby, and a separate Faculty Building to house senior managers close to Sykes. The idea of a business school was very much Richard Sykes brainchild. Until then, many brilliant graduates from Imperial had found their way into banking and the City quite informally, using their maths skills to model the new financial instruments so in demand after 'big bang'. Sykes had hired David Begg, an engaging Scottish macro-economist from Birkbeck to head the new school, experienced in getting funding from banks for academic research. Nevertheless, to my mind the whole idea ran against Thorstein Veblen's stern warning about mixing the academy and business.¹²³ The culture of Imperial College was to change forever.

Of course, a reason Sykes was so enthusiastic about the new business school was a gift of £27m from Gary Tanaka, an alumnus and technology investor, later jailed for securities fraud, leading to a name change for the business school from 'Tanaka Business School' to "Imperial College Business School". In any event the school was opened in June by Her Majesty the

¹²³ <https://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2012/11/veblen-on-universities.html>

Queen, and we went to shake her hand in the lobby. I was struck by her cheerful demeanour and ability to engage with all sorts of people, even me. In March Amy C and I went to Madrid for a spring break and to visit Uncle



Philip, whose birthday I shared. Amy's hip replacement was playing up so, I bought an adult sized folding pushchair, and we used it to get around the Prado and the Retiro. The visit was most agreeable; we stayed at the beautiful Hotel Reina Victoria with a room overlooking the Plaza Sant' Ana, managing even a visit to the opera, as well as meeting several of Philip's close friends.

On our return from Madrid, I quickly went off with Sandy and Chester to Cornwall for another short visit to the White House and Prussia Cove. The long walks along the grassy coastal path from St Ives to Zennor were truly spectacular. Rushing back to London, Amy and I drove to Waddesdon on April 9, to visit the Rothschild manor. It was a beautiful day, I recall. Then the next day I went back West to go fishing on Blagdon reservoirs at the invitation of Jason Parker, a young architect working for Ken Shuttleworth whom I had met on my work for CABE. Coincidentally, Jason's delightful American wife Jennifer had been hired to work at the RIBA by Amy, and they had become good friends. Ken, who had been the principal architect for Foster's Hong Kong and Shanghai bank in Hong Kong, had just broken away from Norman Foster to set up his own practice, *MAKE*. I met Jason's parents who lived near

Bristol, and I was impressed by Jason's fishing; he was experienced in lake fishing and did well, certainly better than I.

Then, in June, I was contacted by Julian Evans, a journalist who was preparing a programme about Anton Chekhov, whose centenary was to be in October, for the BBC. He had been put onto me by Harvey Pitcher a British Chekhov scholar, who knew I had the copyright to Uncle Lev's memoir about the death of Chekhov.¹²⁴ Evans planned to use the memoir as a radio tribute to Chekhov. Lev and his brother Artemy had been on holiday in Badenweiler, Germany as a reward for sitting their university final exams. They already knew the Chekhovs from Stanislavsky's Moscow Arts Theatre where Lev was active, but their meeting was quite by chance. Soon after their arrival Anton's health worsened, and he started spitting blood. Olga Knipper, Anton's wife was glad of the support from Lev and Artemy, who stayed with her until Anton's body had been returned to Moscow by train. Julian Evans' radio programme, *Chekhov's Death; Fact and Fiction*, included interviews with a historian in Badenweiler, Heinz Setzer, and me reading from Lev's memoir. It went out in June.¹²⁵

In September Harvey Pitcher alerted me to Julie Solovjeva, a retired physicist living in Moscow, and a keen local historian, who had written an account of the Rabenecks in Russia - Rabenecks, Moscow Manufacturers. She'd done this because some of her own antecedents came from a branch of the Rabeneck family. She'd done a lot of basic archival research into births, marriages and deaths, as well as into real estate transactions. She knew that Krot and Olga, with my father Leo, had escaped to London in 1919, but she was unaware of family memoirs of life in Russia in my possession, written by Krot, Edouard and Lev in the late 1920s.

I had never been interested in genealogy or family history; I suppose I simply reflected my grandparent's willingness to forget history, common to many refugees. But something about Julie's valiant efforts, and her *samizdat* publishing, using the photocopiers at Moscow University to produce her book, aroused my curiosity. I suggested to her that we produce an English language edition of her book, with the memoirs I had attached as appendices. This would be economical to produce, and we could simply re-use her illustrations. In January 2006, she sent me ten copies of her book in Russian. It took us the better part of a year to get the project under way. Unable to find an affordable translator, we decided to use Google Translate which was, at the time, quite

¹²⁴ Lev's memoir was originally published in Paris: *Vozhrozhdeniye* (La Renaissance), vol.84 (Paris, December, 1958), pp.28-35.

¹²⁵ [http://design309.s3.amazonaws.com/je/Chekhov's%20Death %20a%20matter%20of%20life%20and%20fiction.mp3](http://design309.s3.amazonaws.com/je/Chekhov's%20Death%20a%20matter%20of%20life%20and%20fiction.mp3)

primitive. However, Julie and I started exchanging sections of her book, polishing up the English and doing some editing thanks to the materials in my possession. It was not until March 2008 that I was able to send copies of the English edition to anglophone relatives, and to the Loos in Germany.



Rabenecks - Moscow Manufacturers in English finally arrives, from Moscow

Stimulated by the translation I began to work on a family tree, reeling in data from relatives who had received copies of the book, and relying on the family chronology in Julie's book that started with the arrival of Rabeneck brothers Franz and Ludwig from Germany in the 1820s. I discovered a daunting world of enthusiasts and many technical challenges. I ended up using MacFamilyTree software, because it suited my computer and was quite intuitive.

But in July 2004 Amy C and I went to Claviers, which was most relaxing, stopping at a Relais et Chateau in beautiful Grignan on the way back. The following month Felix asked me to come and have a look at a cottage he was thinking of buying in Oddington in the Cotswolds. It was a charming house, and a sure mark he was beginning to do very well at Savills, where he was part of a commercial investment team, buying and selling whole office buildings, rather than just leasing space. In early September we went by car to visit a friend of Amy's near Reims. It was a chance not only to revisit the cathedral, but also the Simon family home in rue du Marc, as well as the country house at Jonchery, between Reims and Soissons. I had not been there for about thirty years.



Simon family country home at Jonchery-sur-Vesle

Although hard on the main road, the house had a huge walled orchard and intriguing stables. I had loved to visit there as a youngster.

Earlier in the year Frank Duffy and I had been asked by Peter Murray to contribute chapters for a book he was editing, to be called Architecture and Commerce.¹²⁶ This was to be published by his marketing consultancy, Wordsearch. It was part of a clever promotion of the City of London, that included a big exhibition of new London architecture held inside the Broadgate development, together with several conferences organised by the Architecture Foundation. The invitations for the book launch were sent out by Alderman Robert Finch, then the Lord Mayor of the City of London. Finch was a charming and brilliant lawyer at Linklaters, who had advised me on the purchase of Victoria Plaza when I was at Salomon. He had always been ambitious for this sort of ceremonial position and was enjoying every moment of it.

In October I headed for California, stopping this time in LA to visit Chris and Linda Finch. They were renting a house with their daughter Chloe in the suburb of Woodland Hills to the North of the city. It was a bit ramshackle, not helped by their pet, a great big Doberman who took up a lot of space. Chris was beginning to do quite a bit of painting, mostly allegorical and narrative subjects, as well as starting to write ‘thrillers’. Fishing on the Fall River with

¹²⁶ Peter Murray, Ed., Architecture and Commerce, Wordsearch, London, 2004

my old pals was a delight, even though we had to contend with the run up to George W. Bush's imminent defeat of John Kerry, in November. The highlight of the trip was a dinner I gave for about twenty people at Moose's Restaurant on Washington Square. They did us a great supper and the drink flowed, but it was the last such event I hosted, having become a bit too big. Also, Moose's shut down the following year, so we'd be bereft.



Ed Moose's Restaurant, successor to the Washington Square Bar and Grill

Back in London I planned a big December party for all my old pals at Hyde Park Mansions, to be hosted by me and Amy. I still had not really redecorated the flat, apart from putting down wooden floors and fixing the plumbing. It had a grand seedy feel that most visitors found charming, and the party was quite a success. Then at Christmas I abandoned Amy, going to Norfolk for a family get together at Chloe's father Jeremy's house at South Creake, just behind some sensational beaches. I loved the vast scale of the flat North Norfolk landscape, and above all the boundless sky.

I managed to make it up to Amy by flying her down to Clavier for a winter break right after the Christmas holiday. Exceptionally, it had snowed quite hard, and we went for long walks in the beautiful frosty landscape, particularly up near the ghostly village of Bargème with its beautiful ruins, way above Bargemon.

As 2005 dawned I was having trouble with my reorganisation plans at Imperial. I could not get reliable financial information about the actual true cost of the facilities services I was responsible for. I suspected that there was quite a bit of sharp practice that would be revealed by a properly transparent system. Fortunately, I had help from procurement consultants I had used at

Salomon, and I managed to get a contract in place for engineering maintenance, but a similar campus-wide contract for cleaning was more difficult, and it produced negative reaction from union representatives who feared loss of income through the new arrangements. Furthermore, the staff were often supported by their traditional departmental managers who anticipated a loss of authority. Nor could I get computer staff to contemplate moving the data centre, a source of serious vulnerability for the college, off site; they insisted on running it as a local cottage industry, despite the obvious risks. My day job was becoming stressful. Fortunately, I had another project Burlington Danes, which was fascinating. I had been asked by Leszek Borysiewicz, head of the school of medicine to look into his project for a joint venture with the Medical Research Council to build a large research laboratory on a site near Hammersmith Hospital's West London campus.¹²⁷ Imperial had been offered its part of the investment from a private middle eastern source. But when I investigated by meeting the source, I found it amounted to little more than an ingenious money laundering scheme. It was not something the College should consider. Furthermore, I thought that for this sort of joint venture there was no significant risk in self-developing, we didn't really need an expensive intermediary as 'developer'. Borys, as he was known, together Nigel Buck and me, went to argue our case with the Charities Commission in Liverpool, and we succeeded, so the project went ahead with the college as developer, a £64m state of the art immunology lab with a large research animal facility as well. Sheppard Robson were chosen as architects. Our £20m contribution came from our normal capital grant.

Borys had done a deal with Richard Sykes, becoming deputy rector of Imperial until Sykes retirement, when he would take over as rector, but Sykes reneged by staying on longer than originally planned. So, in 2007 Borys quit to become Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council, and later Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University. Borys was a joy to work with; brilliant, but also helpful and supportive of those around him, and a genuinely nice person. Quite a contrast with Richard Sykes' more abrasive style.

At some time in the spring, I was invited to a staff dinner in the rector's lovely Norman Shaw house on Queen's Gate, where I met David Edgerton. David was running a group called the Center for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine (CHoSTM).¹²⁸ This was the main component of a rather limited humanities offering at Imperial. David ran a one-year postgraduate MSc course on the *History of Science, Technology and Medicine*, as well as a handful of doctoral students in the history of technology. The doctoral students

¹²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leszek_Borysiewicz

¹²⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Edgerton_\(historian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Edgerton_(historian))

gave lectures to the Imperial science and medicine undergraduates in history and ethics, to lighten their heavy coursework. It was dawning on me that within Imperial the only people really enjoying themselves were the students. The academics were always complaining about lack of resources, whereas the administrators and managers struggled to provide those resources on the meagre funding available. Maybe it would be a good time to leave. David Wilson and Chris Towler were being unhelpful about the financial irregularities in the Estates department, and our local financial manager would not produce the figures I needed. I decided that it might suit them were I to leave, provided I could get out on good terms.

I went to see David Edgerton, asking him whether he'd consider me as a student. Before contemplating a doctorate, he told me I would have to do the one-year MSc course, the prospectus for which was extremely enticing; Imperial taught the technology part; University College taught the humanities, and the Wellcome Foundation took care of the medicine. It was an exciting prospect. I was now 63, and the prospect of a fruitful academic retirement was extremely attractive to me. My Citigroup pension would kick in in two years' time as well as a USS pension from Imperial. In the meantime I could live on a tax-free lump sum from Imperial, a reward for having the grace to resign, (albeit signing a non-disclosure agreement). With encouragement from David Edgerton, I decided to enrol in CHoSTM for the 2005-6 academic year.

Otherwise, 2005 was quite uneventful. In May we visited Eltham Palace in SE London, home of the Courtauld family in the 1930s. The 15C Great Hall was worth the visit, although the vaunted 'art deco' part was much less successful. The Courtaulds were clearly straight out of an Evelyn Waugh novel, and sadly any good furniture had been sold.

In Early June we went to Paris for a week's idleness and enjoyed the spring weather very much in the Jardin des Plantes, going to church at St Etienne du Mont, on the Panthéon hill above Place Monge, and generally relaxing. We cruised up and down the Seine on a Batobus, which had a stop at Jardin des Plantes.



Batobus had been running for several years between the Jardin des Plantes and the Eiffel Tower

Later in the month I went to Oddington to admire how Felix had fixed up his Cotswold cottage. Chloe and her father Jeremy were there, as well as her brother Simon from Vienna. The cottage was a definite success and within easy striking distance of London. Great for children when they arrive. On the way home I took Jenny to the remarkable Chastleton House, a magnificent Jacobean mansion set about with amazing topiary.¹²⁹ Late in June Susan Collier opened her garden to the public and I helped out by baking a cake and taking money at the gate, helped by Conrad, the sweet but autistic son of her daughter Sophie Herxheimer and Adam Unwin.

At the end of the month Nigel Buck and other colleagues very sweetly put on a terrific leaving do for me at Imperial. Nigel was aware that I had been a victim of financial skulduggery, unable to get straight answers on college running costs. My colleagues were touchingly warm in their good wishes, and I felt a pang of regret, although very much looking forward to my new life as a student.

On August 7 Uncle Philip died in Madrid, following his lengthy illness. He was 85. He generously left me some money and a charming pastel of Tsarkoe Selo Palace in St Petersburg by Paul Methuen.¹³⁰ Soon after, Amy and I left for Claviers where we had a great holiday, making a point of touring the nearby *crus classés* of Côtes de Provence, which I had never really explored. With François we had always had a penchant for Jas d'Esclans, which we first encountered at the grand Hotel Bain in Comps. The wine was made by the Lorgues-Lapouge family on the beautiful red soil *terroir* of Le Muy. The wine

¹²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chastleton_House

¹³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Ayshford_Methuen,_4th_Baron_Methuen

was organically certified from 1990. But the family got into debt from over-investing in winemaking equipment and were forced to sell around 2002. The business was bought by Mathieu de Wulf, a Belgian businessman. He sensibly hung onto the actual winemakers, including Robert Audibert, cellar master and beekeeper, although he has since developed the business very successfully, but with greatly increased prices. On this trip we also went to visit the Ile Port-Cros, a nature reserve reached from Hyères, smaller and less touristy than Proquerolles.

I put Amy on a plane to London and then made my way towards the Southwest to see the Donaldsons, Pat and Tony. It was my first crossing of the south from East to West. I drove across the Bouches du Rhone to Montpellier and then turned inland, staying at Florac in the Cevennes, a sweet town with many waterways full of large trout, rather like Stockbridge in England. The next day I drove to see the newly-built Millau viaduct designed by Norman Foster. It is indeed an astounding structure, at least as impressive as Eiffel's Pont Garabit that I was to visit a few years later on my way to Clermont Ferrand. From Millau I dropped down to see Albi, a city I had wanted to visit ever since Denise, François' sister came back one year with beautiful drawings of the mighty brick cathedral. It was duly stunning. I then dropped further down to Toulouse to join the main autoroute westwards, turning off at Orthez to Sauveterre-de-Béarn. I greatly enjoyed my stay with the Donaldsons in their beautiful house on the Gave d'Oloron, a swift salmon river below the ramparts of the town. Tony's mother had lived there for years with his stepfather whom Tony never really got on with, but now they had decided to make their permanent home in France.

In anticipation of my impending history of technology course I stopped in Paris to visit the Musée des Arts et Métiers which is completely wonderful - the chapel converted into a great hall full of planes and trains, and endless galleries of science and technology marvels.¹³¹ I got back from France on the Sea-Cat catamaran to learn that Auntie Cath had taken a turn for the worse. Amy was in Scotland at her parents' house in Alness, so I drove down to Cornwall to find a very diminished Cath, who soon died, on the 30th August, after I had returned to London.

Then in early September I went to see Frank and Jessica Duffy at their lovely Edwardian house in Walberswick, Suffolk. The event was a reunion of the founders of DEGW, Frank's office consulting firm.¹³² It was also the centenary of their house. This proved to be the last time they were all together.

¹³¹ <https://www.arts-et-metiers.net/le-musee>

¹³² <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/degw-archive/>



DEGW principals at Walberswick. L to R: Graham Parsey, Colin Cave, Luigi Giffone, John Worthington, Joanna Eley, Andrew Laing, Frank Duffy, Peter Eley.

I felt close to them because our career paths had run so much in parallel, although much of what they preached in the way of office planning I had serious doubts about. My closest affinity was with Frank because of our time together in Berkeley on our fellowships. He was certainly the intellectual motor for DEGW, and an architectural thinker I very much respected. Originally, the Duffys had lived on Liverpool Road in Islington a few doors away from where Janice Wainwright and David Cripps lived before I went to America. First, they bought a small terrace house in Walberswick, that I visited once or twice, before moving to the magnificent ‘Threeways’. It was a delight for their three daughters to visit, as well as for friends.

12. Back to College

In October my MSc course got under way at Imperial. There were lecture series, seminars and visits to UCL, the Wellcome, the Blythe House collection of the Science Museum. David even took us on a walking tour of the Science Museum, pointing out anachronisms and questionable assertions in the presentation. We were an eclectic bunch of students, a few older people like me, but mostly younger graduates embarking on a second degree. David Edgerton was very much the main animator, giving fascinating lectures based around his forthcoming book The Shock of the Old, a revisionist history of technology that features technologies that endure, rather than novelties. Other lecturers included Rob Iliffe, a specialist on Isaac Newton, Jane Brown on Darwin, Abigail Woods and Andrew Mendelsohn on medicine, the brilliant Hasok Chang for philosophy of science, and several others. I was saddened that Hasok was unexpectedly called to Korea early in the year, because he had a special place in Edgerton's scheme, and I was very interested in his subject. The replacement lecturer I found hard to follow and I did not stick with the topic. The culture of the course was very stimulating, but also demanding with formidable reading lists and endless essays to be handed in. One quickly learned how little one knew. The intellectual level was impressive. There was a fair amount of socialising after lectures, and David even invited several of us to his house in Kentish Town for drinks and a meal, put on by his wife Claire.

The next Spring, Felix and Chloe got married on April 1. They were living in Pimlico at the time, not far from a flat I had helped Felix to buy in Semley Place, on the ninth floor of a council-owned block of flats built above the Victoria coach station. That flat was now occupied by Leo and Renata. The wedding took place at the English-Speaking Union's Dartmouth House in Charles Street, Mayfair. Felix was keen that we look the part, so he arranged for us all to rent morning suits with smart grey waistcoats, and tails, from a little tailor's shop in Lower Sloane Street. It was a very jolly affair and many of Felix and Chloe's friends were invited. There was dancing into the evening, speeches, and more than enough to drink. The next day we were convened for lunch at the *Poule au Pot* in Pimlico, and then to see the young marrieds off on their honeymoon.

At the beginning of 2007 I needed to work on my dissertation for the MSc. I chose to compare British and American approaches to the rationalisation of school construction, using Hertfordshire County Council in Britain and Ezra's SCSD system in California as my examples. Luckily, I had first-hand experience of both approaches and access to good documentation, so I

managed to produce quite a respectable piece of work.¹³³ I got 74% for the dissertation, but only 65% overall for the course, so I missed a distinction by 5%. Nevertheless, David agreed to take me on as a doctoral candidate. I think he was genuinely pleased that someone was tackling construction as a subject, because he recognised it as a very important aspect of production.



I got off to a good start in my new capacity as a doctoral student at a conference organised by architect Ian Abley who had set up *Audacity*, a research company questioning the assumptions and limitations of the British construction industry. In 2004 he had written a polemic about the assumed backwardness of construction with James Woudhuysen that had really appealed to me.¹³⁴ The conference marked the 60th anniversary of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. I spoke about the myths that have stood in the way of real progress in construction, from *backwardness* to *industrialisation*, that treated construction as a sort of failed form of manufacturing, without bothering to understand its actual logic.

Ian's conference inspired me to think strategically about construction, about construction as a fundamental social activity. Accordingly, I prepared an

¹³³ The full dissertation is at: [https://www.academia.edu/35642022/Two Approaches to School Building in Britain and America](https://www.academia.edu/35642022/Two_Approaches_to_School_Building_in_Britain_and_America), but a shorter version, published later in 2011, in the *Journal of Construction History* can be found at: [https://www.academia.edu/32377085/Building for the future schools fit for our children](https://www.academia.edu/32377085/Building_for_the_future_schools_fit_for_our_children)

¹³⁴ James Woudhuysen and Ian Abley, 2004, *Why is Construction so Backward?* Chichester, John Wiley.

outline for my doctoral work that was impossibly broad “The transformation of construction during the twentieth century”, how a local craft activity gets turned into a capitalist endeavour accounting for over 8% of GDP. David Edgerton urged me to narrow my scope and to find a focus through study of, say, an essential construction material. Accordingly, I re-framed my work around concrete, as the most transformational material of the 20C.

Around the same time, I was encouraged by a headhunter I knew to apply for a job project managing the planned expansion of Tate Modern at Bankside, a £215m project being designed by Herzog and De Meuron. I prepared a statement and was selected to interview. Nicholas Serota, then Director of the Tate, chaired the panel, and there were several tough questions I had not expected. I was asked how I planned to interact with the artistic mission of the museum. I replied that I did not; my job would be to get the building up and theirs was to look after the art. This turned out to be the wrong answer! The job went to Vivienne Bennett, a V&A project manager who had worked on the War Museum North, possibly better prepared to flatter the art establishment.

In April I was invited by Laurie Koskela to present a paper at a *Symposium: towards the Formation of Theory for the Built Environment*, to be held at the University of Salford in June. I think my participation had been suggested by Richard Lorch, editor of *Building Research and Information (BRI)*, and/or Frank Duffy. It gave me a chance to reheat theoretical ideas from my BSD days, but now coloured by new academic insights from CHoSTM. Accordingly, I gave a paper “A Model of Social and Technical Change in Building”, before a distinguished audience of built environment theorists. I found this daunting, but exciting, and the following year my paper was published in a special issue of *BRI*, together with other contributors to the Salford symposium.¹³⁵ I also started to visit Cambridge, where I had been introduced to William Fawcett by Frank Duffy’s partner John Worthington. William was researching the concept of flexibility as part of Cambridge Architectural Research. John and Andrew Chadwick involved me in a sort of brainstorming club about construction and architecture that we called “Above the Parapet”. It was stimulating, and nice to be asked. I later contributed to William’s book on building flexibility.¹³⁶

On June 24, Susan Collier again opened her garden, and I was happy to contribute a cake. But right afterwards I left for Wülfrath, near Düsseldorf, in my little Fiat Punto to attend the 100th birthday of my Great Aunt Helen, Krot’s

¹³⁵ https://www.academia.edu/30737277/A_sketch_plan_for_construction_of_built_environment_theory

¹³⁶ William Fawcett Ed., *Activity-Space Research: built space in the digital world*, 2016, Cambridge.

sister, summoned by various Rabeneck family members. Helen lived in a retirement home run by Diakonie, a Protestant charity where she had worked for many years. I had been booked into a modest hotel, the Windratherhof, as had some adult children of Hermann Rabeneck from Vancouver, daughters Sonya and Linda, and son John. Also, we were joined by Jean and Anne Boscher, the middle-aged children of Marie Catoire, Sophie Rabeneck's daughter. Aunt Helen had spent many years before the war looking after Sophie's family in Paris. It was startling to meet so many relatives so suddenly. The birthday party on 29 June was a huge success; clearly Helen had the status of a living treasure, and Diakonie put on a terrific show for about a hundred guests with a special cake and singing.



Helen Rabeneck at 100, in her apartment at Diakonie, Wülfrath

After the party I went off on an expedition in my car, first South to Frankfurt then east to Bamberg, eventually picking up the beautiful Wiessent river, a trout stream meandering over lush meadows, overlooked by dramatic rocky bluffs. On one of those bluffs loomed the Schloss Rabeneck, and down nearer the river was the inviting Waldpension Rabeneck Gasthof, where I checked in. This is in the heart of Franconian Switzerland, so named by 19C romantics because of its semblance to Swiss landscape. It is in any event beautiful country and very popular with German tourists. The Rabeneck castle dates

from mid-13C.¹³⁷ I was aware that Olga and Krot had visited in the 1950s; it amused Krot to tell of the custodian's surprise when he signed the visitor's book. In 1975 the castle was bought by Norman Schiller who still runs it as a guesthouse with barbecues and historic reconstructions in the summer.¹³⁸ I have so far been unable to make a direct genealogical connection between our branch of the family and the original Rabeneck occupants. In any event it reverted to the Bishopric of Bamberg in 1742, when the Rabenecks temporarily ran out of male heirs.



Burg Rabeneck in its setting above the Wiessent river. The castle's mill, on a carrier of the river, is to the right.

I was able to repeat Krot's signing of the visitor's book, but Herr Schiller wasn't really interested in Rabeneck history much after 1300. After a pleasant stay in the hotel, I set off for Nuremberg, a city tragically destroyed towards the end of the war, but now rebuilt, showcasing the remains of what is Bavaria's second city after Munich. The city walls are remarkably intact, as is Albrecht Dürer's house, and the castle, but much else is pastiche replacement. The best thing about the city, though, is the marvellous Germanisches National Museum, Germany's equivalent to the V&A, full of Cranach, Dürer, Rembrandt, Riemenschneid, and wonderful armour and ceramics. For me it was a real eye-opener.

¹³⁷ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burg_Rabeneck

¹³⁸ <http://www.burg-rabeneck.com> A film of the castle in its setting can be found on the Schiller's website.

From Nuremberg I went to Munich to stay with Chloë's uncle, Kevin Garnett, working as a lawyer at the European Patent office, and who with his wife Susie occupied a magnificent flat in a downtown 19C building. This was a real treat for me; I wanted very much to visit Munich, and particularly the world famous Deutsches Museum of science and technology.¹³⁹ The collections are phenomenal, and I was even able to see a cotton weaving loom and spinning jenny such as the Rabenecks must have been using before leaving for Russia in 1826, plus lots of interesting exhibits about early cement and concrete, my new hot topic.

But apart from the museum, Munich is a great city with a magnificent cathedral, museums, churches and parks, Baroque architecture, and restaurants. There is even a fascinating museum on the city's murky Nazi past. On my last evening I took Kevin out for a treat to a fancy restaurant but, unfortunately, he got food poisoning which rather spoiled the moment. From Munich I drove down to Bregenz on Lake Constance, where I saw the remarkable floating opera set they use for their famous opera festival, before heading down to Milan, and thence to Claviers, where Amy came to join me, flying into Nice. After a good break with plenty of sea bathing, I put Amy on a plane to London and drove back up North, stopping at Vaison-la-Romaine to visit my old Salomon colleague Barden Gale and his wife Flavia. They had bought a very nice property to which they'd added a pool. We visited some of the lovely vineyards of Rasteau and Cairanne, and even had a delightful supper with the brothers Bruno and Vincent Delubac at their winery. The brothers had been helping Barden with his own extensive vines, and they exemplified the best of local Rhone producers. Not only was their wine delicious, but for several years I was able to buy it *en primeur* through the Wine Society.

Back in London I found an invitation to the wedding of Claire Cichy, elder daughter of my friend Alex. She was marrying a French wine trader Guillaume Gerard in San Francisco. Although I missed the wedding I did go to California in October 'as usual'. After a very enjoyable fishing visit with Alex to the Fall, with a good large group of enthusiasts, we visited Guillaume's new wine bar on Folsom Street, South of Market, where he was promoting *vin naturel* to a then innocent San Francisco clientele. Alex was excited to have a real French family connection, but sadly the marriage was not a success. Guillaume turned out to be a self-centred spoiled brat, and Claire eventually became unhappy.

When I got back to London it was to find a financial crisis in full swing. 20,000 jobs in financial services were lost between 2007 and 2009. In September 2007

¹³⁹ <https://www.deutsches-museum.de/en>

Northern Rock, a highly leveraged bank, was bailed out by the Bank of England, spooking the markets, and leading to a run on the pound. This happened against a background of increasingly violent market struggles in America throughout the summer, even though it wasn't until September 2008 that Lehman Brothers finally collapsed. Clearly the party was over.

Amy and I decided to avoid the market gloom, by travelling to an Italian city for her birthday in early December. In 2007, we chose Bologna, and we were not disappointed. We were dazzled by the city's calm beauty and history, from Giambologna's Neptune fountain to the crazy medieval towers. We loved our hotel on a small street leading from the Piazza Maggiore, with an endearing bar opposite for aperitivos and snacks. We walked a different quadrant of the city each day, first the university



Panorama of Piazza Maggiore, the 15C heart of Bologna. Town Hall to the left and Neptune statue.

area where we found graduates wearing laurel wreaths celebrating graduation by drinking prosecco in the streets. We visited the Morandi museum, the markets and many delightful restaurants. On our last day we went to a parmesan shop where the only product was pieces from the massive truckles. The owner skilfully cut exactly a kilo for me with no crumbs, precise to the gram.

13. Construction History in retirement

Following Christmas in Oddington with Felix and Chloë I went to Claviers, spending time with Claire. But in the Spring a school friend of Amy's, Alicia Yin, married Yee Woon Juen, an architect, at St Peter, Belsize Park, close to where they lived just off Haverstock Hill. Alicia and Yee are Malaysian Chinese. Alicia, a lawyer, was working for Deutsche Bank, and in fragile health, while Yee worked for WS Atkins on international transport projects, but their wedding was a joyful occasion. Then, still in March, we decided for a getaway to try the Landmarks Trust, a wonderful charity founded in 1965 by Sir John Smith, that fixes up and lets attractive minor buildings for holidays. For our first visit we chose Whiteford Temple in Cornwall, and we weren't disappointed. Beautiful light and long views, a very well appointed little 1799 folly decorated in Coadestone relief panels, plus restorative seashore walks. A great thing about Landmarks is that each is furnished with real taste, and all are really well equipped, usually including a jigsaw puzzle of the building, and logbooks recording earlier visits, to which one is expected to contribute.

At the beginning of May we visited Stowe School, alma mater of both Amy and Chester Jones. I had never seen it, and was impressed by William Kent and Robert Adam's masterpiece, and the beautiful grounds.¹⁴⁰ But we were also keen to try another Landmark, so we booked an apartment in a building overlooking the famous Ironbridge, an appropriate location given my interest in the history of technology. The apartment looked directly at the wonderful cast iron bridge of 1779 spanning the Severn. And again, this was a huge success. From the brick coke kilns to Abraham Darby's house including side trips to Shrewsbury, and a local canal-side pub boasting that it was "Unspoiled by Progress", we were once again thrilled by the richness of life outside London.

In September Amy and I went on a memorable visit to Claviers, spending much time in Nice, including visiting the Orthodox Cathedral, ambitious walks on the St Tropez peninsula, and preparing François' house for renovation works as a prelude to letting it out. In France, as elsewhere, an empty house continues to incur expense at an alarming rate with taxes and utilities, and it was important to save Claire from that burden by making some rental income. On my way to the south, I again stayed with Barden and Flavia Gale in Vaison, this time spending more time visiting the town with its marvellous Roman remains and museum. Leaving Vaison I drove over the

¹⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stowe_House

Ventoux mountain, a notorious climb of the Tour de France that had claimed the life



of British cyclist Tommy Simpson in 1967, a time when I followed such events. A shrine memorialises his death from heat stroke. I came to Claviers from the North, via Castellar and the Col du Bel Homme above Bargemon, a very pretty route.

Once again, I went to California in October, after a very joyful seventieth birthday party for Susan Collier, attended by Sandy and Chester Jones, among others. The fishing was good this year helped by our having a cook from the village.



2009 Fall River fishing gang at Circle 7 ranch. L to R: Woody Lowe, Andrew Rabeneck, Scott Buttfield, Jerry Andelin, Alex Cichy, Bob Mizono, Doug Patterson. Most had been colleagues of Alex in the advertising business.

For Amy's birthday instead of going to Italy, we went for yet another Landmark, a charming hunting lodge, Fox Hall, near Goodwood on the Sussex downs. We were cursed with very rainy weather but enjoyed drying off in a terrific pub, *The Fox Goes Free*, with comforting food and seats next a roaring fire. Fox Hall itself was a beautiful little classical box, in red brick, with a very pretty interior.¹⁴¹ In December I flew to Nice to spend some time with Claire and Manon, and to continue planning the renovation of François' house. I agreed to invest about £20,000 in the works.

Then, on February 25, 2009, Chloë gave birth to a bonny baby, Amber, my first grandchild, at St Stephen's Fulham Road, now renamed the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, a daunting new replacement building designed by Sheppard Robson. I bought flowers up the road from a stall outside the Queen's Elm, that had been one of our top pubs in the 1960s, a favourite of Peter Britton, now sadly repurposed as a bathroom fittings shop.

About that time I was working away on a paper about concrete, but I was unable to get it ready for an International Congress on Construction History to be held in Berlin in May. I was later consoled to learn that my 2007 Salford paper was one of the top downloads from the BRI site. So, I decided to go to the Congress despite not having a paper to present. I was still working hard on concrete research for my doctorate, getting encouragement from Davis Edgerton.

In February Alicia told Amy she'd won an *Evening Standard* reader's competition the first prize for which was a ride on the London Eye with five bottles of champagne for up to twenty people - a handsome reward. Alicia didn't want to take up the prize, but she offered it to me for my birthday, and accordingly I invited friends and relations to join me on the Eye, followed by pizza at Oliveto's. This was a great success, and we all enjoyed it, blessed by goodish weather and clear skies at sunset.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/fox-hall-7468/#Overview>



London Eye, 20 March, 2009. LtoR: Felix Rabeneck, Chloë Rabeneck; Amber Rabeneck (in cot); Andrew Rabeneck; Renata Sacramento Rabeneck; Paul Babb; Susan Collier; Jon Weallans (facing away).

In April I invited Doug Branson to come down to Claviers and help me do hard pruning of the olive trees. We had an enjoyable and energetic working break with fires inside and outside the house. But when I got back, going down to the Avon soon after the opening of the trout season I stupidly collided with another car while turning into a hidden parking place, and had to get a tow to Andover. It was clearly my fault, and an expensive mistake, despite the relative lack of damage to the other car. To get over it, Amy and I went on another Landmark holiday, this time to Paxton Tower in Camarthenshire, a comfortable cottage, set below the tower of 1811 built as a memorial to Lord Nelson. We were able to explore the beaches of the Gower Peninsula, probably one of the most beautiful landscapes in Britain, enhanced for us by a herd of cattle nonchalantly wandering on the seaside. On our return we visited Cardiff Castle, the incredible work of imagination by William Burges for John, 3rd marquess of Bute, expanding and elaborating the mediaeval original.¹⁴² We were very struck by the ostention of the castle, so strongly contrasting with the poor lives of the subjugated Welsh miners in the hills behind the city.

How did we get to Wales? Well, after the crash I called on Leo to come and help me try a new Fiat Punto at a garage in Epsom. They'd just come out with

¹⁴² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_of_William_Burges_at_Cardiff_Castle

an automatic gearbox, and I wanted to try it before buying. But neither Leo nor I thought much of the new car. Instead, he suggested I look at the demure Toyota Corolla sitting on their lot with a price tag of £5000. It was a delight and I immediately bought it. I've had it now for 13 years.

One use for which I valued a car was leaving London easily, to go walking in the Chilterns. We'd go most weekends, taking less than an hour up the M40, to be in beautiful rolling wooded hills or on the edge of the great chalk escarpment that overlooks Cambridgeshire. The villages of Nettlebed, Stonor and Fingest for example, each sported a pub where one could lunch, or during the summer we often took sandwiches. We bought Ordnance Survey maps and marked each walk with pink Magic Marker, commenting on pubs, or the walk's difficulty.

Then in Late May I went to Berlin for the construction history congress. It was held at Cottbus University, a modern campus in the suburbs of Berlin, and very well organised. The tours laid on for us were terrific, including the amazing early expressionist power plants of Berlin, the AEG factories of Peter Behrens, and the sensational concrete storage buildings of Westhafen, Berlin's river port established in 1923 to receive large ships from the canal systems linked to the North Sea. It was curious for me to be in Berlin as a visitor, rather than for work. I revisited the building where I'd installed Salomon twenty years earlier and took in the new Holocaust Memorial of sullen stone blocks arrayed near the Brandenburg gate in the Mitte, designed by Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold.¹⁴³ I was underwhelmed.

In August we went to Clavières and to escape the heat we went up to Lac d'Alos in the Alps above Clavières, a day out spoiled by torrential rain that came down before we'd completed our lap of the lake. I think this was the first year when one realised that August has become just too hot for an agreeable visit. I put Amy on a plane and went with Claire to IKEA in Toulon where we bought complete furnishings for François' house including a kitchen that I installed before returning to UK. The house looked nice, and we were sure it would attract renters. I then drove back North, stopping in Autun which has a magnificent cathedral, a medieval heart and great 19C shopping galleries.

On October 11, Amber was christened at St Gabriel's Pimlico, not far from Felix and Chloë's flat. I then went back to California for my annual fishing trip.

¹⁴³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_the_Murdered_Jews_of_Europe

For Amy's birthday we went to a Landmark in Lincolnshire, Le Chateau, a little folly in the French style, built in 1750 by a local lawyer who had bought the land but needed a weekend getaway. It sat on a hillock above the plain of the Trent River. The vast flat fertile spread of Lincolnshire was impressive, and we visited Louth with its very majestic church; we were proudly shown round by a local, Mr Alexander, aged 82. Louth exemplified the agricultural wealth of Lincolnshire, with four butcher shops, a covered market building, a beautifully appointed country clothing store and a bootmaker. In the distance on the plain, from all directions, one could see Lincoln Cathedral on its hill with the city huddled around it. With its mighty twin towered flat front plus central crossing tower the cathedral was magnificent. We heard a choral evensong, sitting in the East end, staring up at the famous 'crazy vaults', beautifully dynamic asymmetrical ribbing, looming over the exquisite misericords of the choir stalls. On the way home we stopped at Woolaton Hall, a sensational early renaissance grand Elizabethan house of the 1580s, with a massive reception room set at the highest part, between four turrets. Owned and maintained by the local authority, the house is endearingly unpretentious, with an amazing natural history collection, particularly of stuffed fauna.

After an uneventful Rabeneck family Christmas I flew to Nice to spend a bit of time with Claire and Manon. Around this time Claire had broken up with her friend Michel Toesca, and she was alone. Michel was always jealous of her relative success in films, meanwhile struggling to write scripts that could be produced. He was also cursed with an income from his father, that he welcomed/resented. On my return we undertook many sorties into the Chilterns hinterland, Cookham for the ghost of Stanley Spencer, Chatsworth for that of Christine Keeler, Hughenden for that of Disraeli. Then in April we went to Paris by Eurostar for a week where we toured the Bois de Vincennes on Velib rental bikes and went a couple of times to the *Verre Volé*, a natural wine bar off the Canal St Martin specialising in natural wines, where they produced an excellent lunch very ingeniously, using only a two-burner hob. We also visited some concrete landmarks, notably St Jean de Montmartre designed by Anatole de Baudot, completed in 1904 using the Cottancin system of slender concrete ribs and columns.¹⁴⁴

In early May we went to a Landmark I was keen to visit in North Devon, at Peppercombe, because it was an early prefabricated wooden structure set above Barnstaple Bay. The interior of the house was quite beautiful, with dark stained match-boarding and cosy bedrooms. The wooded coastal paths around were ravishing although we were disappointed by the picturesque little port of Clovelly, now so touristy you must pay admission even to enter. It was

¹⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Jean_de_Montmartre

diminished by its commercialisation, with lazy pubs not trying and the usual tourist trap retail. Physically, though, it was beautiful. On our way home we visited first the museum in Barnstaple, full of excellent early English pottery, then Wells cathedral with its astonishing West front and its extravagant structural screen closing off the nave.



Detail of the West Front of Wells Cathedral, about 1250, by Thomas Norreys - completely wonderful.

Through the summer I continued with my research into early concrete, then at the start of August I was summoned once again to the Chelsea and Westminster hospital where Chloë had given birth to a second lovely daughter, Sophie Helen. In August I drove to Paris, visiting for the first time Auguste Perret's 1923 church, Notre Dame du Raincy, in a Northeast suburb. For once, I found a work of modern architecture deeply moving. A simple basilica in plan, everything in it is moulded in concrete, and a dazzling array of stained glass windows are entirely framed in concrete. Although critics have carped about the design of the spire, the overall aesthetic experience of the interior is undeniably grand and original.¹⁴⁵ I drove on to Lyon, where I had an excellent lunch at *Leon*, in the old town, before dropping down to Claviers, where I found that several of the agaves planted by Norah forty years earlier had decided to flower, throwing up their 7 metre flower stems; truly astonishing. More worrying was that the fine lime tree, planted as a shade tree for the terrace when we built the house in 1970, was riddled with fungus, and clearly near the end of its life, although vines on the same terrace produced an abundance of grapes that year.

¹⁴⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Église_Notre-Dame_du_Raincy

I also drove over to Cotignac to visit mutual friends of Paul and Anne Babb, Monique and André, together with John and Jackie Jesse visiting from London.¹⁴⁶ Later I visited Jackie's house at La Motte, quite near Claviers. She was a local girl who had ended up spending most of her life in London, much of it married to John. The house at La Maurette was too big for her and John, but it served as a landing pad for her various children, who did not seem to do much to help her with the upkeep.

For Amy's birthday we went to Turin, a city I had always wanted to visit, but also partly to see the famous Fiat factory, that figured in my concrete history world. The city was magical, with its arcaded downtown full of great monuments, great cafés and mesmerising retail of all sorts. The Fiat building fully met my expectations and was now home to an 'Eataly' food mart, where we had a wonderful white truffle omelette. The public palaces and galleries of Turin were magnificent, particularly the Egyptian museum, although suffering from financial austerity. We'd often find them shut or lacking staff. But in fact, the city is so architecturally rich we didn't even have time to visit Guarini's cathedral. Students were on the streets, as they were across Europe, protesting cuts in funding of further education. Unable also to visit the opera, we settled for a football match - Juventus against Manchester City, on a freezing night. Thankfully the stadium was alcohol-free, as the supporters were quite boisterous.

In January 2011 Felix invited me to inspect a house he was thinking of buying in Richmond, just over the famous bridge on the Twickenham side. It was a handsome early 19C terrace house, the central one of three put up by a builder for himself and his two brothers. Richmond made a lot of sense, with its excellent schools, the river and great recreational opportunities. They had earlier moved to a fine lower ground floor flat in Eccleston Square, Pimlico. But despite its convenience and the charm of the Square itself, they went ahead and bought the Richmond house. In February Sophie was christened, again in St Gabriel's, Pimlico.

In early March I took a train to Mulhouse, for a remarkable exhibition of Soviet Russian printed fabrics. Mulhouse was a French centre of cotton printing and provided a great setting for the exhibition. The fabrics were remarkable for the sophistication of their designs and their vivid colours. The idea of my visit was that these cottons must have resembled what was being produced at the Rabeneck factories near Moscow, following the revolution. I used the trip to go on to nearby Basel, where I had hoped to see Anne Kriken, my friend from London, who had moved there following her marriage to

¹⁴⁶ John Jesse, see Pages 31 and 46

David Mann, but sadly she was in New York while I was there.¹⁴⁷ Also in March I was supporting Amy, now working for the Institute for Education, in her union action for the UCU. The government and the employers had been acting brutally to subjugate university teachers with cuts to funding and shrinking the education offer. I was impressed by the passion of the UCU members resisting the increasingly repressive Tory government under David Cameron.

Perhaps inspired by our earlier visit to Woolaton Hall we went in April to Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, the other great Elizabethan palace, home of ‘Bess of Hardwick’ a tough and rich businesswoman, designed by Robert Smythson. It’s a beautiful building, cleverly sited on a hill above a plain, and blessed with fine landscaping.¹⁴⁸ From there we went to another Landmark - The Pigsty - literally a converted pigsty built in the 1880s to evoke Mediterranean architecture. It is close to Whitby, once an important fishing port and home to romantic Whitby Abbey, and to Bram Stoker, whose Dracula is an important leitmotif of the town’s tourist efforts. We were disappointed to find the fish market in the process of closing forever, and mediocre offerings from the ‘fish ‘n chips’ industry. I was shocked to notice that herrings destined for a famous smokery on the path up to the abbey came in boxes from Norway. Still, the country around, the North Yorkshire moors, is beautiful, particularly Robin Hood’s Bay and Rievaulx Abbey. There is a fine 1860s church by G.E.Street, St Stephen’s, Fylingdales. And there is quite a bit of steam train nostalgia; it’s amusing to chug around the beautiful North Yorkshire countryside in an old-style coach pulled by a historic locomotive.



¹⁴⁷ Anne Kriken, see Page 129. Anne’s second husband was David Mann, son of Frederick Mann, a famous legal scholar who became a leading light in British jurisprudence, father also of Nicola Beaumont, founder of publisher *Persephone Books*.

¹⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardwick_Hall

Thriving railway nostalgia with trains from Whitby station.

On May 18 my friend Susan Collier sadly died of cancer after rapid deterioration, and despite some radical therapies.¹⁴⁹ Felix went ahead and bought his house in Richmond; also, in June I went to Claviers. Driving through Orange I stopped to picnic by the Roman triumphal arch, on the old N7 route which is now a quiet by- road, a phenomenal monument richly covered in bas reliefs of naval battles and triumphs.¹⁵⁰ It made me think how modern travel on autoroutes only distances us from the landscape.

Amy flew down to Nice, and we made eye-opening excursions, first to walk around Cap Ferrat, visiting the Villa Ephrussi and its gardens, home to some of the Rothschilds. Despite the manic overdevelopment of the Côte D'Azur, some spots remain quite magical. We then spent a couple of days visiting Toulon, a resolutely non-tourist place, but where François had spent much of his professional career in the French Navy. We toured the Bassin Occidental in a boat, where my straw hat blew into the sea, visited lively street markets and walked around the port, struck by the beautiful ordinariness of the place.



Les Atalantes, 1657, by Marseilles born Jean-Antoine Houdon, two allegorical figures representing strength and weakness, holding up the balcony of Toulon town hall. Mercifully spared in WW2 bombing.

August was a time for another Landmark, and we chose Cromford in Derbyshire staying in one of the millworker's houses built by Richard Arkwright in the 1770s. North Street is a terrace of stone cottages with

¹⁴⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Collier

¹⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triumphal_Arch_of_Orange

luminous upper floors for homeworkers. It was moving to visit Arkwright's mill buildings and the pretty church he built alongside the river, as well as to be in the town he created as the cradle of the factory system, with its canals, steam driven pumping stations, hotels and chapels, all built in beautiful soft Derbyshire limestone.¹⁵¹

On the way back from Derbyshire we took a walk along beautiful Dovedale in the Peak District, and managed to visit Lichfield, Samuel Johnson's hometown, with its magnificent cathedral which has an astonishing wrought iron rood screen by Francis Skidmore, who is one of my heroes of Victorian decorative arts.¹⁵² There was also a ravishing 1820 funerary sculpture by Francis Chantry, who rather morbidly specialised in monuments to children who died young, as many did in those times.

Back in London I helped Amy to document blue plaques and buildings of interest in Bloomsbury. Her new job at the Institute of Education involved developing the website as a recruitment tool, and she was keen to focus on things of interest that are local to the school, rather than more bland emblems of London life. I also bicycled out to Stratford East to look at preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games to be held in the desolate industrial wastelands at the foot of the Lea Valley. Stratford East station and the huge shopping centre, Westfield, had opened and various stadia and pools were nearly complete. Anish Kapoor's iconic tower was up, every bit as ugly and pointless as it had seemed in model form.

In October, I was once again in California. Fishing was delightful with beautiful weather. Later, in the Bay Area, I visited Chris Arnold, Ezra's partner, by local train to Palo Alto, where he lived in a fine old, shingled house on the same street as Steve Jobs. I also went to explore the newly-hip Dolores Street area of the Mission in San Francisco. There was a fabulous deli/supermarket, *Bi Rite*, that all my friends were talking about, small but making *Whole Foods* seem like mass market.¹⁵³ I went to Sonoma to see Judith Vaughn,¹⁵⁴ and we went to Glenn Ellen to visit Jack London State Historic Park. The park is beautiful, nestled between rolling Norcal hills, and there is still evidence of Jack's agricultural experiments, like prickly pear plants with no prickles, to use as fodder. The 'House of Happy Walls' Museum built by his wife Charmian, after his death is very beautiful, too.¹⁵⁵ I much enjoyed the usual round of dinner parties with old pals, and also went on a long hike on

¹⁵¹ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/north-street-9834/#Overview>

¹⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Skidmore

¹⁵³ <https://biritemarket.com/about-us/history/>

¹⁵⁴ Judith Vaughn, see P. 101

¹⁵⁵ <https://jacklondonpark.com>

the Tennessee Trail in Marin to Pelican Bay with Marie Cichy, Leon and Roz Sugarman and Barbara Maloney. We were met at the Pelican Inn pub by Alex and Bill Versace, so were able to enjoy an agreeable pint on the lawn and get a lift home.

Getting home to London, I found Amy knee-deep in more UCU demonstrations as the threat to pensions continued to bear down on university employees. But at the same time, I was embarking finally on decorating my flat, a mere eighteen years after moving in. Felix had found a decorator, Aaron Barker, and his Polish assistants, Janek Tudaj, and Roman Wnek, who had done a super job on his flat, and I was happy to take them on. They turned out to be a great find. Later Aaron married a Korean lady and went to live in Korea, but Janek and Roman have kept working in London and have done all my decorating work since that time, most recently in my house at Twickenham (See P. 238). I dream of visiting Janek and Anna, and their three boys, in Krakow, eventually.

For Amy's birthday we decided to go to Milano, where we found a cosy hotel deep in the financial district. We loved the busy urban quality of life in Milano, the magnificent fascist era bank buildings, the stunning food and retail shops of all sorts, and of course the great monuments like the Cathedral, the station, the Pirelli building, the Novecento architecture of Muzio and others. Once again, it had been impossible to get tickets for La Scala; they are all sold to agents within minutes of being offered online. Nevertheless, we had a wonderful traditional dinner at *Pesa*, unctuous risotto Milanese followed by scrumptious breaded cutlets. The original Prada store in the Galleria Emanuele II was full of Russians in blue jeans. But the museum in the Castello Sforza, designed by BBPR, that I had originally visited in 1960, continues to impress, particularly Michelangelo's unbelievably moving Rondanini pietà. The museum of modern art had been moved to the elegant fascist building overlooking the Piazza del Duomo, where we had cocktails in the swanky bar.

One special evening we went to dinner at home with Riccardo and Carlotta Fontana, whom I had met through Construction History, both teachers at Milan University. It was very cosy and Milanese, a real treat, with their friend Mercedes in her bright red specs. Carlotta cooked a delicious ossobuco Milanese. We talked about philosophy of science and such stuff.

Also in December, a paper I had written about how construction came to be understood as an industry, was published in English but in a Spanish history journal, *Artefactos*.¹⁵⁶ This was part of my increasingly broad brush look at

¹⁵⁶ https://www.academia.edu/30737282/The_invention_of_the_building_industry_in_Britain

construction that was taking over from the narrower study of concrete I had set up for my doctoral research. By now I had more or less given up on my dissertation, despite enjoying the research. David had noticed that I was more interested in the broad sweep of construction history, its political economy, than in the minutiae of the history of concrete. He encouraged me to keep writing, and when I had enough material, I could eventually publish a book. He reminded me that the paper certificate of a PhD was unnecessary for me at my age, and we remained friendly.

In March 2012 Chloë once again gave birth, this time to a lovely boy, to be named Frank, a male heir to our branch of the Rabeneck family. Amy and I went to a Landmark, Church Cottage in Cardiganshire, Wales, visiting the American Museum in Bath along the way. Our coastline and walks along the Teifi river were challenging yet beautiful, and Cardigan itself is a bustling town. In a colourful fishing port, Aberaeron, we bought an enormous crab that proved delicious.



In May there was a memorial service at St James's Sussex gardens for my friend Suzanna Roper.¹⁵⁷ She had been a wild child from my first London days, and her son Rupert gave a touching encomium.

In early June I went to Claviers. I had been warned by Julie Solovjeva that she and a troupe of Muscovite barefoot dancers would be coming to Nice to perform, and to place a marker on the grave of Helen Bartels in the Russian Cemetery. Helen had been married in 1909 to my great uncle Artemy

¹⁵⁷ Suzanna Roper, see p. 30.

Rabeneck. She was a celebrated dancer admired by Stanislavsky, who had studied in Berlin with Isadora Duncan, and who died in Nice in 1966. I went to meet Julie, Marina Bartels, and the twelve modern dancers in Nice, where they gave a charming performance in a communal theatre on Place Garibaldi. A glamorous Russian cultural attaché appeared to ensure all went smoothly, before being whisked away in a luxury chauffeured car. Then I took the dancers to the Café de Turin, a famous seafood restaurant on the square. They were poor as church mice, so needed subsidising. The next day we went up to the Russian cemetery, where several of my Russian relatives repose. The dancers had brought a handsome stone marker from Russia, complete with prongs to drive into the earth on Helen's tomb. I then took them to Chez Pipo, a famous *soca* restaurant off the *vieux port*, and on to visit Nice's beautiful Orthodox Cathedral. They were already very aware of Putin's ongoing grab of global church real estate, and keen to discuss it with the clergy.

Later I drove over to Aubrac in the Cevennes to meet Jean-François and Carol with Antony and Pat Donaldson at his family house, now his and his brother Jackie's since their mother's recent death. It was a fine rambling house in the village. We even went fishing on a local brook. The countryside is peppered with handsome crosses marking the pilgrimage route to Compostella. We went to lovely local bistros, one with a large photo of local legend, Jean-François' father, having just caught a large salmon. The countryside around, where Robert Louis Stevenson lived, is ravishing. Lush and unspoiled.

On my return towards Paris via Clermont-Ferrand, I visited Gustave Eiffel's stupendous 1884 Garabit rail viaduct. It remains amazingly delicate and sophisticated, with its rail track 124 metres above the river.¹⁵⁸

In Paris I attended the 4th International Congress on Construction History, held for the most part in the uncomfortable La Villette campus of the National architecture academy. I gave a concise paper based on my PhD research into concrete that was relatively well received.¹⁵⁹ The paper was later published in the congress proceedings.¹⁶⁰ There were also sessions at the school's Versailles site, as well as at Paris-Malaquais in St Germain, the old heart of the beaux arts. Also in July, my sister Claire's docudrama film, *Gare du Nord*, was being previewed to some critical success. It dissects the complex life in the station from various points of view.¹⁶¹ The film had taken her nearly two years to complete, an exhausting undertaking.

¹⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garabit_viaduct

¹⁵⁹ https://www.academia.edu/90183128/The_Transformation_of_Construction_by_Concrete

¹⁶⁰ "The Transformation of Construction by Concrete", *Nuts and Bolts of Construction History*, proceedings of the 4th International Congress on Construction History, Paris, Vol. 2, 627-635.

¹⁶¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare_du_Nord_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare_du_Nord_(film))

Back in the UK I went to Norwich to visit Wendy and Danny Keene. Wendy, Janice Wainwright's younger sister, had worked with me as our office administrator back in 1970, at Wigmore Street.¹⁶² Danny, a gifted chef and father of their three beautiful daughters, was retiring from running their hotel/restaurant to concentrate on his painting. The pretext for the visit was a Black History month event Danny was putting on with his friend John Bird, founder of the *Big Issue* magazine. There was food, drink, music and laughter. I was mightily impressed by Norwich Castle, the Cathedral, and the Art Deco town Hall from 1938 by Charles Holloway James, looming above the expansive market square. Later in October I went as usual to California to enjoy some fishing on the Fall River. It was an enjoyable trip for all our usual fishing gang. Later Marie and Alex took me up to Healdsburg where Marie had designed the interiors of the chic destination resort H2 Hotel. They were celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary that year.

For Amy's December birthday we decided to try a Landmark in Kent, Prospect Tower, a romantic hideaway designed for a cricket-mad landowner.¹⁶³ It was cosy, quirky and pretty, with great views. We were impressed by Rochester Cathedral and the urbanism of the town. We went for long walks along the Thames Estuary, reliving *Great Expectations* and getting lost at night on the marsh. We had a wonderful meal at the Michelin-starred *Sportsman* pub, remotely sited at Seasalter on the estuary. Local produce was exceptional. On the way back we were able to buy a tray of ripe local quinces on a rainy visit to beautiful old Faversham market, to make *membrillo* for Christmas.

During 2012, encouraged by Richard Lorch, editor of *Building Research and Information*, Frank Duffy and I worked up a paper on the theme of 21C professionalism in architecture. The article served as a keynote for a special issue addressing the marginalisation of professionals in an increasingly harsh economic world.¹⁶⁴ It became very popular as a download and was much cited by academics. The fate of architects in the modern world of construction became a theme in my researches.

In March I took a train to Ramsgate for the funeral of David Cripps, sadly dead from a long illness.¹⁶⁵ David's son Aaron was there with his family and many other old friends. I roamed all around Ramsgate, particularly Augustus Pugin's family home, The Grange, next to St Augustine's monastery, home to his moving tomb and astonishing font cover.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Wendy Wainwright, see P.79.

¹⁶³ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/prospect-tower-10687/#Overview>

¹⁶⁴ https://www.academia.edu/30737275/Professionalism_and_architects_in_the_21st_century

¹⁶⁵ David Cripps, husband of Janice Wainwright, see Pp. 38 and 56.

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/news-and-events/visiting-landmarks/visiting-the-grange/>

Soon after, Amy and I left for North Wales, to a delightfully remote Landmark property, Ty Capel. We went climbing in our wellingtons up Mount Snowdon in quite deep snow, which was scary and exhilarating, particularly being circled by a rescue helicopter looking for customers, but we were able to walk down safely. We enjoyed visiting Conwy with its remarkable early Anglesey bridges by Thomas Telford, an engineering hero of mine. The box section iron tunnel bridge for rail and the 1826 wrought iron suspension bridge are both wonderful engineering and aesthetic delights. Telford's wacky gothic detailing of the towers and entrances are an extraordinarily confident mixing of art and engineering.

In June I went alone to Clavier, stopping at the *Beau Rivage* in Condrieu for a serious bourgeois lunch.¹⁶⁷ At home the lime tree shading the terrace had been finally destroyed by fungus, and had to be replaced, an urgent undertaking. For €240 I bought a beautiful sterile mulberry grafted on a tall trunk. The nursery advised changing species to avoid more fungus. With the help of my Neighbour Robert Barbetti, I dug a vast hole, and we got the tree in. It is now ten years older and seems to be fine, providing essential shading. Later, I drove over to Sauveterre to see the Donaldsons, Jean-François Gaillard and Carol, where we had a very jolly time with dancing. Jean-François was on a charm offensive to persuade some of his rich Paris neighbours to come and buy houses in the southwest. His house was packed. On the drive over I went once again from Beziers to Carcassonne, via Capestang, a beautiful minor road that follows the Canal du Midi. Despite the loss to disease of too many magnificent plane trees along the canal there remain many beautiful spots to picnic.

In August Amy and I went to Carlisle in the North to stay in a Landmark, Coop House, a fishing lodge on the Border Esk river. It is a stunning little Gothic conceit and delightful to live in. I organised a day's salmon fishing, while Amy found a Buddhist retreat to enjoy. When she came to collect me, I had a fine ten-pound hen salmon, 'Frederica', that we enjoyed from head to tail for several days. An exciting day. There were many attractions in this remote corner of England. Carlisle cathedral with its vivid blue ceiling vault and rich misericords, and the railway station are both exceptional. Nearby at Wreay stands the strangest and most magical church in the land, St Mary's built in 1842 by Sarah Losh.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.hotel-beaurivage.com/en/>

¹⁶⁸ The historian Jenny Uglow has written a charming life of Sarah Losh, *The Pinecone*, 2012, Faber, London.



Fantastic gargoyle on Sarah Losh's St Mary's, Wreay, Cumbria

On our return from Coop House we crossed the North of England in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, dropping down to Bishop Auckland to see the famous Zurbaran paintings of Jacob's twelve sons, that had been recently rescued by Jonathan Ruffer, a financier, from sale by the Church Commissioners, now to be kept in a restored gallery at the Bishop of Durham's Palace. The Palace, Auckland Castle, a wonderful accretion of gothic parts was last lent coherence by James Wyatt at the end of the 18C.¹⁶⁹ Zurbaran's depiction of each of Jacob's sons in a huge portrait, are simply breathtaking. Ruffer has rightly become a local hero of culture.

In July I went to Angela Landel's house to see progress on her portrait of me. It was nearly finished, and I must agree it's an excellent likeness.



¹⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland_Castle

In September Leo let me know he wanted to divorce Renata. She was living apart from him, leaving him to look after Sara, now 17, all on his own, in the Semley Place flat. Sara had done well in her secondary education at the excellent Greycoat School in Victoria and was now thinking of university in Bristol. She was quite as difficult as any teenager can be. But Renata was gadding about town in a promiscuous way, making no contribution to her upkeep, nor to her education. My solicitor suggested a skilled divorce counsellor/lawyer James O'Connor, who would be sensitive and give sound advice, and he proved to be just what Leo needed. The divorce proceeded calmly and without great cost or disruption, although it was not final until 2019.

In October I finally persuaded Amy to come to California with me, and that made me very happy, to have her meet my longstanding friends she'd heard much about. We stayed with Alex and Marie in their lovely mid-century Eichler-like house in San Rafael. I had planned to launch our visit with time in Yosemite, but a federal shutdown of the national parks due to budget constraint put an end to that. Instead we went first to Sea Ranch, the Esherick designed coastal resort in Mendocino County, travelling up the coast road via Point Reyes, where we ate at the marvellous *Stellina* restaurant, since sadly closed as a victim of Covid. We were lucky to stay in the hotel at Sea Ranch as it originally was, since sold and doubtless suffering from "improvement". The coast was as captivating as ever, but after a couple of days we headed inland on a precarious small road to arrive at US101 heading down to Santa Rosa. We stopped at Jimtown Store, recommended by Alex for its sandwiches before moving down to a small winery below Saint Helena where we stayed the night. It was very modest and run by two old Italians who set it up after the war. Breakfast in a downtown eatery was a joy, and we rather liked the slightly louche local aesthetic.

On our way back to San Rafael we passed the Oakville Grocery, a fine institution I remembered from its opening as a pioneer in the local foods movement in the 1980s.

To compensate for missing out on Yosemite, we decided to go down the coast to Big Sur where we stayed at the Glen Oaks Motel, 'hip but laid-back', and it proved an excellent base from which to explore the fabulous coastline. We saw monarch butterflies and a lynx on one of our beach walks. On the way back, we skipped Monterey and the usual attractions in favour of the *Fandango Restaurant* in Pacific Grove, a pretty burg stiff with retirees, nearby.

Fandango belonged to Pierre Bain, the brother of Jean-Marie Bain, whose restaurant in Comps, near Claviers, I knew well.¹⁷⁰ Knowing I had worked in California, he often mentioned his brother Pierre over ‘en Amérique’, and here we were. Pierre was tickled to meet a fellow ‘countryman’, we had an excellent meal, and he gave me an inscribed copy of his book about the restaurant.¹⁷¹

In San Francisco we went to a memorial service at the Jewish Community Center for Irma Zigas, wife of Art, who had died that May. Irma was a wonderful woman, something of a mother figure for me, and actual mother to five children, most of whom I had met or worked with. Each spoke movingly about their mother at the memorial, but I was most pleased to see her husband, my engineer friend Art in seeming good health, as it turned out for the last time, because he died in 2016.

I could not resist taking Amy for a walking tour of the UC Berkeley campus, my alma mater of 1967-69. She was duly impressed but remarked on the lack of black faces on campus. We visited the new De Jongh museum in Golden Gate Park, designed by Herzog and De Meuron, and it was quite beautiful in its bucolic setting. In contrast to Tate Modern in London, the De Jongh clearly had enjoyed an ample budget; the materials and finishes were excellent throughout and the ethnographic displays magnificent.

We visited Judith Vaughn in Sonoma where we toured a couple of wineries, and Leon and Roz Sugarman who were in the middle of renovating their sweet house in Mill Valley. I then put Amy on a plane home, before heading up to the Fall River like a homing pigeon, for some fishing with Alex.

In early December we went to Genova, the next stop on our Italian city tour. We stayed in the Bristol Palace, a gently seedy central hotel with a stunning elliptical staircase rising seven stories to a glazed dome. Central Genova evidences the great richness of the city, with mosaic-floored arcades, magnificent public palaces, and the great San Lorenzo cathedral, home to Franco Albini’s magical housing in the crypt of its outstanding treasure. The sheer richness of the retail offerings of all sorts was almost numbing. Then there were the fantastic renaissance palaces strung along the Via Guiseppe Garibaldi, a street the narrowness of which just emphasises one’s proximity to riches. In one of the palaces, we were taken in hand by a facilities manager who took us up to the roof, whence we had an unparalleled panorama of

¹⁷⁰ Grand Hotel Bain, see P.136

¹⁷¹ Alan F. Shugart, *Fandango - The Story of Two Guys Who Wanted to Own a Restaurant*, 1993, Carmel Bay Publishing Group.

Genova and its port. After a quick tour of the Palazzo Rosso¹⁷² museum, also designed by Albini, we took a short walk to Café Cambi, which we liked a lot. Sophisticated and full of stylish Genovese, on our second visit there we talked to the owner, Marcello Cambi, a typically low-key charming Italian aristocrat. The restaurant was just a hobby; his real business was Cambi Auctions, a serious trading house. When he heard we were soon to leave Genova, he insisted we make a detour to visit his headquarters at Castello Mackenzie.¹⁷³

Before doing that, though, we took a suburban train along the coast towards Portofino. The colourful seaside fishing villages were charming, and the elevated walkway winding along above the sea is a beautiful way to experience the coastline.

I knew nothing of Castello Mackenzie, completed in 1905 for Evan Mackenzie, a Scot whose fortune came from marine insurance. It's architect Gino Coppedè enjoyed a fantastic imagination, a cross between Gaudi and William Burgess. He's sometimes also compared with Frank Furness, the Philadelphia architect who had so impressed me in 1964, on my first visit to America.¹⁷⁴ Marcello had been able to take over the castle in 2002, because no one really wanted responsibility for its upkeep. It makes a wonderful setting for Cambi's auction showrooms, which have frequent sales of modern Italian furniture, among other things.

On the morning of our departure, we took a cab to the Castello where Marcello met us for a tour. The Castello did not disappoint, it was a beautifully built romantic homage to medieval architecture, but with *art nouveau* flourishes. Marcello gave me a fine book about the Castello, and the cab waited to take us to the airport.

In London I enjoyed a family Christmas hosted by Chloë's father, Jeremy, with his wife Fiona, a horticulturist. They lived in a nice, terraced house in Putney, with a long back garden going down to the Thames. We were joined for Christmas lunch by my sister from Paris.

Soon into the New Year I went to Clavieres where I needed to get a terrace wall repaired by 'Manu' (Emmanuel Levavasseur), a skilled mason friend of my sister who disapproved of my original reconstruction of the wall. It is an important wall supporting a corner of the parking area near my house, beneath which lurks the old concrete septic tank, not to be disturbed. Manu later took me to see the work he had been doing at the chateau of Méaulx for Pascal, son

¹⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Rosso

¹⁷³ <https://www.cambiaste.com/uk/index.asp>

¹⁷⁴ https://www.culturalheritageonline.com/location-2072_Castello-Mackenzie.php

of Albert Lamorisse, who had inherited it after his father's death in a helicopter crash in 1970.¹⁷⁵ It was a very sentimental visit for me; I had not been back to the chateau since the 1960s. Pascal and his sisters were typical arty bourgeois kids, waltzing through life, but fortunately Lamorisse had made a lot of money from some inventions, the board game *Risk*, and a stable shooting platform for filming from helicopters.



Chateau de Méaulx in January, 2014, on my visit with Manu

I drove up as far as Lyon, where I had signed up for the second francophone congress on construction history, to be held at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon. An abstract for a paper I had submitted on 'The Idea of Construction as an Industry' had been turned down, but I still felt a visit would be instructive. The school was buried in a depressing suburb of the city and was an uncomfortable, overdesigned self-conscious building, a depressing gesture to de-centralise architectural education. But I was thrilled to visit Tony Garnier's Quartier des États-Unis, his only built housing project of some 1700 units finished only in 1933, although designed in 1917. I found the blocks of flats exemplary in a slightly austere way, well-proportioned and with generous interior spaces. The congress was helpful to me in that I met Cyrille Simmonet, author of the best modern history of concrete,¹⁷⁶ whom I much admire, and Robert Carvais, a senior French construction historian who had supported my proposed paper.

In March Amy and I went for a Norfolk Landmark break staying at the entrance lodge to Houghton Hall, the grand Palladian villa of Robert Walpole built in the 1720s. On the way we visited magnificent Ely Cathedral, where I

¹⁷⁵ For more on Lamorisse, See p.41.

¹⁷⁶ Cyrille Simmonet, 2005, *Le Béton: histoire d'un matériau*, Paris, Editions Parenthèses.

was thrilled to find wrought iron balustrading to the pulpit, clearly designed by Francis Skidmore, a personal hero of mine in decorative art.¹⁷⁷ The lodge was sweet and comfortable, and we greatly enjoyed roaming over the mighty beaches of Houghton, with the flat sea and huge sky hanging above - very Norfolk. On the way home we went through Walsingham, home of many shrines to St Mary, and even more shops selling religious bric-a-brac. The actual shrine was disappointing.

On April 4 we went to Peter Murray's seventieth birthday, celebrated with a big party at the Building Centre in Store Street. It was very jolly, with Morris dancers and lots of music, including Bob Maxwell playing eclectic jazz on a Yamaha keyboard.¹⁷⁸ *Le tout Londres* in architecture was there. Then, a few days later, I went to Cambridge for a Construction History Society conference, staying in hall at Queen's College, in Powell and Moya's 1967 residential court, Cripps Hall. I gave a paper about how control of knowledge in architecture has recently been taken over by the supply side of the construction industry, leaving professionals exposed.¹⁷⁹ It was quite well received, but I am increasingly conscious of the conservatism of the construction history fraternity; they seem reluctant to take on big contemporary issues in construction.

In June I was in Clavieres on my own, repairing the concrete roof of the rainwater cistern beside the house, finishing it in handsome refractory tiles, that were spare from the original building of François' house. I met Felix and his family at Clavieres, together with Jenny, on her first visit since we were together. I had paid for her ticket, and I think she enjoyed the visit with grandchildren. I put her on a plane in Nice, then went over to the Southwest to see the Donaldsons and the Gaillards at Sauveterre. I found Carol particularly cheerful. Three years earlier, Jean-François had become restless in Sauveterre, complaining that Mailhos was too big to look after. I even went with him to look at alternative properties. Ironically, before they married, I had warned Carol that J-F, as an incorrigible fidget, might always do something erratic, even illogical. And that was to put Mailhos back on the market after living there for only about five years. They were close to selling when J-F became disgusted with the haggling antics of the Paris lawyer trying to buy it. They cancelled the deal and decided to stay, which was a sort of triumph for Carol, and seems to have finally calmed J-F down.

On my return from France, it was time for another Landmark, and we chose St Peter's Tower at Lympstone in South Devon, which was delightful, on the

¹⁷⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Skidmore

¹⁷⁸ <http://robertmaxwellarchitect.com/biography>

¹⁷⁹ https://www.academia.edu/30231811/The_Place_of_Knowledge_in_Construction

estuary of the river Exe, but a lot less touristy than Exmouth.¹⁸⁰ We explored Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton, home to novelist, Hilary Mantel until her death in 2022. The South-West Coastal Path was breath-taking in its sweep.

In September John Jesse launched his memoir with a Party at the Fine Art Society in Bond Street.¹⁸¹ John was there with his wife Jackie and a crowd of admirers. His memoir was long on his early days, and particularly detailed on every girl he ever met including his first wife Sally Fleetwood, and his second Jackie Ryder, who was originally French and had grown up near La Motte, close to Claviers in the Var. I didn't rate a mention in his memoir despite having helped John with graphic design for the shop he opened on Kensington Church Street in in 1966. Sally Tuffin and Richard Denis who had a shop near John's featured heavily, however. John had sold up his business in 2006, with a grand sale at Sotheby's, rather pompously called 'The Pursuit of Style: John Jesse at Kensington Church Street'. It left him better off and mellower in his later years.

In October I was sad to learn of the death of my friend, the architect Robert Turner, in Paris. I had been aware of Robert's struggle with cancer for some years, and his trips home to West Virginia, where his doctor brother tried in vain to find workable treatments.¹⁸² Amy and I met him often for meals in Paris, memorably at Le Severo, a meat cookery specialist in the 14th Arrondissement.¹⁸³

Later in the same month, after a visit to the Duffys in Walberswick, and some vibrant union activism in London for Amy, I once again returned to San Francisco. This time renting a car from Art Soma's Quality Used Car Rentals in San Rafael, for a trip down to Los Angeles to see Chris and Linda Finch. I travelled down on the main valley highway US101, from which I could see the devastation of recent drought conditions; vast plantations of mature fruit trees uprooted and left to dry. Linda was very weak after long medical treatment, but I went on an exciting tour of the recently reanimated downtown with Chris, plus a visit to the wonderful Norton Simon Museum, where we enjoyed a Bass ale in garden. It was good to spend time with Chris, whom I was missing because we now lived so far apart. On the way home I stopped in Santa Barbara to see Tamara Asseyev, and her new (2010) husband Bertrand, an elegant old French bourgeois gent now working as a local agent for Sotheby's real estate. Tamara was happy and enjoying her beautiful house in Montecito. Having Bertrand around took a lot of the load off for her. On an

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/peters-tower-10451/#Overview>

¹⁸¹ John Jesse, 2014, *A Fridge for a Picasso*, Muswell Press, London.

¹⁸² Robert Turner, see P.145.

¹⁸³ <https://www.lesevero.fr>

earlier visit I'd found her rather overwhelmed by the practicalities of living alone in a large Arts and Crafts suburban house. I drove back up the coast highway, stopping at Big Sur, where Amy and I had stayed in 2013 at the Glen Oaks motor lodge.

In November I was invited to Newcastle for a conference *Industries of Architecture*, held at the university. I'd been invited at the suggestion of Linda Clarke, a labour historian at Westminster University, whose Building Capitalism had thrilled me, and whose seminars I continued to attend in London. The conference was a project of the *Architectural Humanities Research Association*. My paper was a rather fierce review of what was happening to architects under the lash of neoliberal economics, although it was well received.¹⁸⁴ I was pleased to find Robert Carvais and Adrian Forty at the conference. I had earlier helped Adrian with his important book on concrete that appeared in 2012, while I was still deep in my research of the material's history.¹⁸⁵ Newcastle was a joy, too, particularly the conference party at the magnificent North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineering.

In early December Amy and I went to Trieste, continuing our exploration of Italian cities. What a city! Magnificent palaces of industry and insurance strung along the edge of the limpid Adriatic, and a solid feeling of commercial wealth. We stayed in the slightly grand Duchi D'Aosta, with its Harry's Bar decorated in Murano chandeliers. A highlight of our trip was a walk to Prosecco, along the Strada Vicentina, the Napoleonic route high above the city on the Karst Plateau, with views of the bay below, that leads out into the countryside. Once in Prosecco, home of sparkling wine, we were hungry but could not see any open restaurants. A local pointed us towards an unpromising-looking café, where we enjoyed a really good meal prepared and served by a very jolly folk. It turned out to be the union headquarters for Prosecco wine growers. We were able to return by bus, via Castello Miramar, built on the sea by the Habsburgs in the 1850s. In Trieste one is frequently reminded of the Austrian influence and the nearness of Slovenia; it is very much a border town.

Back in town we climbed the hill in the centre to the cathedral of San Giusto and we visited the Museo Revoltello, a grand old mansion with an extension designed by Carlo Scarpa, full of references to James Joyce and Italo Svevo, heroes of Trieste culture. There were also good Italian modern painters in

¹⁸⁴ "The Place of Architecture in the New Economy", *Industries of Architecture*, Abingdon, Routledge, Chapter 18, 190-198 - published in 2016. PDF: https://www.academia.edu/30231810/The_place_of_architecture_in_the_new_economy

¹⁸⁵ Adrian Forty, 2012, Concrete and Culture, Reaktion, London.

abundance. On the waterfront there is a handsome 1953 gas station, an early design by my hero Ernesto Rogers born in Trieste in 1909, lovingly maintained by local architectural enthusiasts. We went by boat to the isle of Muggia, a separate community with pretty architecture. From the boat I had good views of magnificent early concrete warehouses on the moles around the bay of Trieste.



Typical Trieste waterfront inlet with Sant' Antonio Nuovo at its head

On January 7 news broke of the appalling massacre by Islamist terrorists at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris, just before I planned to go by car to Claviers. I found Paris in complete shock, although I managed to see Claire and her daughter Manon. It was good to be away in the countryside after that terrible event, even though the press made it hard to forget. Early Spring back in England was relatively calm in contrast, although the Paris events had elicited strong sympathy from Britain.

In early May I was ready for a Landmark, and we went to Holcombe Rogus on the border between Devon and Somerset, staying in the Priest's House next to the church, a sober 15C building with handsome old features including massive fireplaces. On the way there we lunched at Bruton where the gallery Hauser and Wirth have established an arty enclave including some exotic landscaping with a futurist pavilion. But, using Holcombe as a base, we explored North Devon, including climbing to the top of Dunkery Beacon

(426m). This reminded me of an earlier visit to the same place with my father on one of his rare visits to England from India.¹⁸⁶

In June I was once again back in Clavieres where I bought a new mower and Manu came to prune the olive trees. On my way back through Paris I arrived on the day of the Fête de La Musique, when the streets are full of every sort of music making, a truly joyous event. But, wandering around St Germain I was sad to notice that *La Hune*, a great bookstore that had been on the Boulevard for years but had recently moved back a street, was to close definitively - a tragic passing. The poster on their door announcing the closing was covered in scribbled appreciations.

In September Amy and I went to an open day at Charterhouse. The beauty of the setting and the souvenirs of my schooldays made a heady mix. We enjoyed a picnic on the lawn in front of the music school and my old house, Verites, inviting over an old boy who seemed a bit lonely. Touring some of the classrooms I was struck by today's shameless promotion of the school to overseas parents, and the rather obvious commercial drive of the place. The atmosphere was a bit creepy if I'm honest. Not a place I'd send a child now.

Then in October I went to America, stopping in Dallas to spend time with Bill Adams and his wife Ann, a property lawyer, a return trip since they had been to London in August. I had worked with Bill at BSD in Washington in 1968 and had remained friendly. He was a big, half-Cree Indian from Texarkana who had studied architecture at Penn with David Sheppard.¹⁸⁷ Bill and Ann live in lovely Highland Park, an inner suburb of Dallas, and they generously made sure I saw all the sights. Starting with the beautifully maintained Northpark Mall of 1965, an important early example of suburban mega-malls, well laid out and full of high-quality art and planting. Ray Nasher, the developer of Northpark later donated a Sculpture Museum to the city that is no less memorable, with a beautiful garden full of Moore and Maillol, although its extension by Renzo Piano was less successful. The older Dallas Museum of Art by Ed Barnes was great, too. Dallas has a new opera house by Norman Foster, and any amount of signature buildings. We visited a large gun supermarket, which was horrifying in its banality, but we also saw the Texas State Fairgrounds, an amazing Art Deco milieu where Comanche Indians are sadly made exhibits, tirelessly dancing all day long. But we also went to Fort Worth, with its famous Kimball Art Museum by Louis Kahn, as well as the notable 2002 Modern Art Museum by Tadao Ando. Despite all the art, Ft Worth is mainly popular for the restaurants of its Stock Yards area and western clothing stores, a sort of commercial safety valve for Dallas.

¹⁸⁶ Dunkery Beacon, see P. 14.

¹⁸⁷ William Adams, see P.62.

Once in California, after a trip down to Palo Alto to see Chris and Jodie Arnold, I had a quite a rich social round with Marie and Alex. We went to The Ramp, a bay side funky restaurant owned by their friend Arvind Patel, next to the Mission Rock Resort where we'd held the farewell party for the MX Missile planning team back in 1981.¹⁸⁸ Arvind kindly invited me to come on the Bay in his beautiful yacht, *Rampage*. That was an unforgettable experience, sailing out under the Golden Gate.



Mission Rock Resort, 1981, end of our job planning the MX Missile main operating base. Andrew Rabeneck front and centre of this picture.

Back in San Rafael, I went to an art exhibit at Madeleine Cichy's old school University High, whence she'd graduated in 2006. Maddie spoke convincingly about



Madeleine Cichy, 'Slight Incline' 2014

¹⁸⁸ MX Missile planning, see P. 101.

her slightly strange yet compelling gouaches, and Alex and Marie were rightly proud of her. I bought three of the smaller ones.

Maddie was being courted by a charming schoolteacher, David, and I was invited to a crucial dinner for the two families held at the chic Presidio Social Club. Marie was particularly keen on David, who was clearly going places in private schooling. But Maddie soon found him too conventional, falling in love the next year with Chris, a sculptor and art teacher, with whom she now has a daughter, and who seems to suit her very well.

Alex and I then went up to Fall River, staying at the Spinner Fall lodge because we couldn't round up any old fishing buddies to join us. This was just about the last year that Alex was able to cope without oxygen and the other paraphernalia of his creeping rheumatoid arthritis. It saddened me greatly to witness his decline via annual snapshots of his deteriorating condition. On returning to the Bay Area, I went to stay with Barbara Meacham, whose husband Bill Callaway, a well-known landscape architect, had died the year before.¹⁸⁹ They had been among my oldest friends, and it was good to be able to stay in their marvellous flat on Green Street with amazing views over the Bay. Barbara and I buzzed around town in her mini ending up with a fine lunch at the famous Zuni Café on Market Street.¹⁹⁰

2015 was the year of a birthday visit to Naples for Amy in December. And it was truly memorable, starting with getting a room at the Royal Continental Hotel on the Lungomare opposite Castel dell'Ovo. The hotel interiors from 1955 were designed by Gio Ponti. The hotel had recently changed hands, but local heritage enthusiasts insisted that one floor of rooms and the important public spaces be preserved. So, we were given a beautifully furnished Ponti-designed room. We explored tony Chiaia with its smart shops, the Gambrinus Café, the Galleria Umberto I, the narrow streets of the Spanish quarter, the *sfogliatelli* at Mary's on the via Toledo. The whole feel of the city was completely magical, plus the constant reminder of the bay with Vesuvius beyond. Having just read Elena Ferrante's Naples trilogy I was emotionally geared up for the place.¹⁹¹ We decided to skip side trips to Pompeii and concentrate on the treasures of the city, a good policy to have followed. The incredible Museum Reggione de Capodimonte, the Archaeological Museum, not to mention many palazzi and churches, were stunning. Our one rebuff was an attempt to visit the famous 1737 opera house, Teatro di San Carlo, closed ahead of the season's opener to be attended by the president of Italy.¹⁹² Instead

¹⁸⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_B._Callaway

¹⁹⁰ <https://zunicafe.com>

¹⁹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elena_Ferrante

¹⁹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teatro_di_San_Carlo

we went by bus to the smart suburb of Posillipo, whence the views of the bay are stunning.

Excited by our Gio Ponti experience we then decided to visit Sorrento, across the bay, to stay at Parco di Principi, a hotel completely designed by the architect in 1960. It's a symphony in blue and white, very well preserved, perched on a cliff above the azure sea. We took a boat from Naples and the arrival at Sorrento was spectacular. At the hotel a large wedding was in full swing, and at first we felt rather neglected, but staff noticed us and brought a delicious lunch. Somehow the wedding perfectly suited the summery aesthetic of the hotel, even in December. Restaurants were also good and festive in Sorrento, particularly *La Favorita 'O Perrucchiano*.¹⁹³

In January 2016 I was contacted by Robin Middleton, who told me he was embarking on what he called 'yet another history of modern architecture', provisionally called *Flashpoints* (nobody liked the provisional title) for Thames and Hudson to be edited by Robin with Mary McLeod and Joan Ockman, widely respected historians.¹⁹⁴ Would I take on an essay on 'New materials and Technology'? This was a flattering request, as I'd always held Robin in highest regard, even though he'd been off at Columbia for as long as I could remember. Covering a century of change in 5000 words was certainly a challenge. But at least we'd be paid, and a contract duly arrived as well as a cheque for \$750, half the fee for the essay. I'd have to get to work. As dialogue about the project evolved Robin kept asking me to do more 'bits and pieces' - flashpoints - and I found it hard to say no, despite no extra money. I ended up doing the Paris Exposition of 1889, Perret's 25bis rue Franklin of 1903, and Frei Otto, the German specialist of tension structures.

In February 2016 I drove down to Claviers for a winter interlude, enjoying the crisp light and evening fires. In Claviers there was a public meeting to hear the recommendations of a planning study, with a presentation by the planning consultants. When we first came to the village in 1955 it was still a largely agricultural economy. Men would leave the village in the morning to work the fields and olive trees, usually up to 3km maximum, because it was important to return each evening, and mules could not manage much more plus a day's work. Most smallholdings had a *cabanon*, or bothy, for storing tools and materials. Villagers thought we were foolhardy to live outside the village. Since that time young people now leave to work in Draguignan or on the coast and the economy has shifted to tourism and second homes. Sizeable suburbs now reach out from most villages. At the meeting the mayor agreed to allow expansion Eastwards from Claviers on the D55 departmental road towards

¹⁹³ <https://www.parrucchiano.com/en/>

¹⁹⁴ Robin Middleton, see P.63.

Grasse, the road on which the Ginestières is found. Fortunately, the limit set for development is over half a kilometre from my house. Nevertheless, the houses being hastily built in the new constructible zone are no beauties.

I went over to Sauveterre to see Jean-François and Carol, and their beautiful Béarnaise cattle, spending more time than usual exploring the surrounding countryside, on a rainy day. On my return I went through Angoulême, setting for Balzac's Lost Illusions, the first of his *Comédie Humaine* series. There were protesters in the streets, supporting Paris transport workers in what had turned into a national strike. I could see how the rich town of Angoulême attracted Balzac. It is architecturally superb, a regular grid street layout on an elevated plateau, with all its downtown buildings in fine ashlar masonry - no stucco. It also boasts a fine 1858 City Hall in French baronial style, and a lovely market building in iron and glass. In the evening I stopped at a small town with a famous castle that was being renovated, adjacent to a fine mill race. I stayed in a smart local hotel where I was the sole guest enjoying a nevertheless excellent dinner. Although only eight years before my writing this, I simply cannot remember the name of the town, why I chose to stop there, nor can I find it on maps or the internet, which is too bad. The next day I went on to Paris, via Chartres, where I was suitably impressed by the stonework, the great windows, and the massive inlaid maze on the floor of the nave. I was struck, too, by the richness of other buildings in the cathedral precinct, such as the fine Art Museum.

I was soon back in London and we were adventuring again in the Chiltern Hills. Then it was time for another Landmark, at Maesyronnen in Powys, Wales, not far from Hay-on-Wye. The cottage was attached to one of the earliest nonconformist chapels in Wales, restored in 1980, and with a ravishing interior.



Maesyronnen Chapel, Powys, founded 1689

I attempted to fish for salmon with a day ticket, but succeeded only in falling over, filling my waders, but luckily in shallow water. It was really much too early for the salmon run; the setting was gorgeous, nevertheless. We enjoyed the River Café in Glasbury, near Hay, now sadly sold and re-opened to be more down-market, as By The River.¹⁹⁵ It was the starting point for an exciting canoe trip along the river. We got stuck on a sandbank but were rescued by an attentive escort. Back in London we had a visit from Barbara Maloney, ex-wife of Bill Versace, an old friend from San Francisco days.¹⁹⁶ We took her around the London sights, including Marylebone's Saturday street market, St Paul's Cathedral and Daunt's bookshop.

Soon after that, I particularly remember a trip to South Stoke on the Thames near Wallingford. We visited Green and Gorgeous, a flower farm on the rich loam alongside the river. Run by Rachel Siegfried who specialises in wedding flowers, allowing clients to come and make their own arrangements. I loved the whole place with its 'green' ethos. Rachel gave us a bit of a tour, and we came away with beautiful blue and white anemones and fresh eggs.¹⁹⁷ Close by, the Great Western Railway leaps the river on a magnificent brick Brunel railway arch bridge. We enjoyed an excellent lunch at the Perch and Pike in South Stoke.¹⁹⁸

At Hyde Park Mansions, we were about to embark on exterior redecoration of the building, which would cost each leaseholder close to £20,000. We had exercised our right to manage the building and I was assuming the lead

¹⁹⁵ www.bytheriver.wales

¹⁹⁶ Bill Versace, see P.195.

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.greenandgorgeousflowers.co.uk>

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.perchandpike.co.uk>

responsibility for getting the work done. Fortunately, I had hired an excellent surveyor, Richard Williams, to manage the work on a day-to-day basis. We certainly saved a lot of money compared with what we'd have had to pay the freeholder's management firm. Soon after our visit to Wallingford, the scaffolding went up around the building, and stayed there until October.

As a relief from the practical world of construction I went to Cambridge for the third Construction History conference, giving a paper on the place of knowledge in construction, in which I argued that the control of intellectual capital has passed from the demand side to the supply side.¹⁹⁹ This was a bit of an eye opener for the historians, but the paper was well received, particularly by European delegates. Amy joined me for the rather grand but jolly dinner in the ancient hall of Queen's College.

Later in April my old friend and colleague Ernie Lowinger re-married Gill, another motorcycle (vintage Vincents) enthusiast, at a golf club near Tewkesbury where they now live.²⁰⁰ It was a very joyful event with a large turnout from both families. I nevertheless felt sorry for Hilary, Ernie's first wife, whom I'd always liked. They had lived close to Jenny and me in Highgate, and we were quite close, although Jenny later told me Ernie made passes at her after I went to the States.

In May I went to the University of Worcester for the opening of an exhibition of work by Angela Landels, who had painted my portrait. She was slightly daunted by all the attention, and appreciated having a friend in the audience. Worcester was full of very interesting buildings and a great cathedral with a breath-taking cloister and chapter house. There was also the Royal Worcester Museum of very fine porcelain. It really repays to visit provincial cities, and just to wander about with an open mind.

¹⁹⁹ https://www.academia.edu/30231811/The_Place_of_Knowledge_in_Construction

²⁰⁰ Ernest Lowinger, see P. 83.



Angela Landels, self-portrait. Oil on board.

At the end of May Amy and I went to Liverpool, which was a special experience. Amy was attending a UCU union congress at an ugly new convention hall, while I was free to explore the remarkable city. I was thrilled by the commercial ambition of the older downtown area; with mighty buildings I had known from books but never visited. Albert Dock with its majestic scale and brilliant restoration.

I was thrilled to see the buildings of Peter Ellis, especially Oriel Chambers, that had been held up as a precursor of modern architecture by Pevsner, but also The Holt Arcade running through the vast India Buildings, as grand as anything in New York. I crossed the Mersey on the Dazzle ferry to visit Port Sunlight where I admired the tombs of the William Lever and his wife Elizabeth, the Arts and Crafts housing, and the neo-classical museum full of pretty tasteless art. I went by bus to Allerton, where All Hallows church has astonishing Edward Burne-Jones stained glass windows. All of which is not even to mention The Liver Building, St George's Hall, the Anglican Cathedral, or a hundred other monuments. Liverpool is incredibly rich in architectural heritage, and it's sad that in recent years it has betrayed that heritage by allowing really bad new buildings on its precious waterfront, and corrupt new commercial development north of the traditional downtown, that has left the older part struggling for tenants.

No sooner returned from Liverpool we set out for Clavier, Amy flying, me driving. Paris was suffering flooding of the Seine, which I'd never seen before, the *quais* completely submerged. I had applied for an absentee ballot for the European Referendum on June 23, but nothing arrived in France. Still, the result at 52-48% in favour of leave, although slender, was catastrophic for Britain and for Europe, sold on the basis of lies and propaganda. Then, in August, I went back to Paris on Eurostar because Felix and his family were going for a break. They took a flat in rue Rollin near place Monge and with the grandchildren we did the Eiffel Tower, Beaubourg and a dozen other touristy things; the children adored it.

In the early autumn we made a couple of good excursions; first a walk on the Essex seashore followed by memorable fish and chips on the terrace at the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club, designed by Joseph Emberton in 1931, then a train ride from Nick Grimshaw's handsome new London Bridge Station to Abbey Mills, the mighty sewage pumping station built by Joseph Bazalgette, which has been redecorated and is opened for visits occasionally. It was simply stunning.²⁰¹

During October I made my usual pilgrimage to California, probably the last year we had any of our original fishing buddies, Doug Patterson and Tom Whitworth. We stayed at Spinner Fall Lodge, not having the numbers to merit a house at Circle7 ranch. The trip was uneventful, meeting up with old friends and visiting favourite places.

Then, in early December, for Amy's birthday, we went to furthest Pembrokeshire, to a Victorian artillery fort built to protect Milford Haven from a supposed attack by Napoleon III, now repurposed as a Landmark. It was an amazing building, redolent of Vauban fortifications, but quite snug because it was lined out in timber boarding.²⁰² The coastline of the Pembroke peninsula is spectacular, and long walks were in order. A bus took us to St David's to admire the tiny cathedral, and on our return, we stopped to admire Pembroke castle, and buy a seasonal wreath for the front door in London.

My sister Claire's film about the Bois de Vincennes '*Le bois dont le rêves sont faits*', came out in France, once again with a poster by Sempé. It dealt with the impromptu in the life of a great woodland on the edge of a city. It was quite charming.

²⁰¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Mills_Pumping_Station

²⁰² <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/west-blockhouse-13044/#Overview>

In January 2017, after a quick visit to Walberswick to see Frank and Jessica Duffy, I went to Clavier for a bit of solitude and to do some repairs to the terrace. I got absorbed by architectural projects, to enlarge my little house and to buy the neighbouring house for Amy, but neither project turned out to be feasible. On my way back I stopped in Paris to visit the new *Fondation Louis Vuitton* building in the Bois de Boulogne with my sister. I found it a really vulgar intrusion authored by the usual suspect, Frank Gehry. Pure commerce dressed up as ‘art’.

Back in London we went to see the new Design Museum, housed in what used to be the Commonwealth Centre, a relic of the 1960s, a hyperbolic paraboloid roof looming over a corner of Holland Park. Lacking the nerve to demolish, and encouraged by Stuart Lipton, the museum was an offset offering to allow massive and clunky ‘luxury’ housing on the rest of the site, designed by the Office of Metropolitan Architecture. The interior of the museum was underwhelming, too, except for the graphic work of Morag Myerscough, a designer Amy had worked with and enjoyed while she was at the RIBA. It’s director since 2006, Deyan Sudjic, used to write for Peter Murray at *Building Design* and *Blueprint*.

In March we went to Verona in the Veneto for my birthday, staying at the (not very) Grand Hotel on a major boulevard into the centre of town. It was quite sweet, and comfortable. The city is very beautiful, a centuries old accretion of good well-behaved building, with welcoming public spaces. Made rich by the della Scala family in the 12-13C, particularly ‘big dog’ Cangrande, a patron of Dante, the city has a beautiful coherence.



Panoramic view of Verona from the Castel San Pietro above the Adige river.

The Castelvecchio museum, designed by Carlo Scarpa, has a magnificent equestrian statue of Cangrande. During winter we could not experience opera in the Roman amphitheatre, but the local company were working from a rather utilitarian theatre built to replace a fine opera house bombed by the British during WWII. The performance of Verdi we saw was terrific, and the orchestra particularly brilliant.

The monuments and churches of Verona were magnificent, particularly St Zeno’s church with its amazing bronze doors that rival those of Ghiberti in

Florence. The Giusti Gardens, across the Adige River, were memorable with mighty avenues of vast cypress climbing a steep escarpment.

Back in England, I went to the Cambridge Construction History conference in April. I didn't present a paper, but I did visit Wren's chapel at Pembroke and his sensational library building for Trinity College, prudently built above an open ground floor in case of flooding on the Cam. The stern simplicity of the 1695 architecture remains captivating. In May I went to visit Leo in the small new house he bought in Erith, Kent, with Veronica, his girlfriend. Although far away, he could afford it, and that was important; they seemed very happy there. Nearby in Bexley, I visited the Red House, Philip Webb and William Morris' 1859 Arts and Crafts home. It did not disappoint in its charmingly modest decorations and furnishings. Pevsner was right to highlight it in his Pioneers of Modern Design, as a unique blending of tradition and originality.

In May Leo decided to buy a house in Erith, Kent, because he could afford it (including his commute into central London) with Veronica. I was happy about the independence it gave him.

Also in May Bill and Ann Adams paid a return visit to London for my 2015 trip to Dallas, although they stayed in a hotel at Queensway. We toured the new canalside developments at Kings Cross, and visited St Pancras, which had been restored and re-opened to Eurostar services to Paris in 2007. The upgrade successfully highlights the majesty of Barlow's great shed. Mawkish modern tributes to John Betjeman do not improve it. During June there was an Open Squares Day in central London, and we took advantage to visit Bryanston, Montague, Dorset, and Manchester squares, where musicians from the Royal Academy of Music serenaded us in deck chairs. In London Paddy Power were offering 2/1 on Trump's impeachment for Russian influence. He'd won the US presidency the year before despite being 2.86 million behind on the popular vote. Dark days for America.

On June 14 the tragic conflagration at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, that left 72 dead, lent credence to the paper I'd written in 2014 about control over construction knowledge having passed to the supply side of the industry, with consequential loss of control over the regulatory regime.²⁰³

In early July we were back in Claviers. Before Amy came down by plane, I went to an open day at my favourite *Canta Rainette* winery near La Motte. It's in the same bauxite-rich terroir as the *Chateau des Esclans*, *Jas d'Esclans*, and *Les Demoiselles*, but it's probably the last locally owned and worked estate.

²⁰³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenfell_Tower_fire

All the others have been bought by businesses from elsewhere. The Castellinis at Canta Rainette had just completed a huge investment in cellarage and equipment in a fine new building, all provided by an Italian turnkey company. It represents a huge gamble for them, but the quality of their wines promises to make it a wise investment. They are consistent winners of Gold at the annual French Agricultural Ministry's *Concours Général Agricole*.

I got the keys to my neighbouring house from Magali Mutti, our local realtor in the village, and made a visit to evaluate it as a possible project for Amy. It's quite sweet and could be made comfortable for not very much. But Amy was not too keen. John and Jackie Jesse came over for lunch from La Motte, which was nice. It turned out to be John's last visit to the South, as we'll see. Before returning to Paris, I went to Sauveterre to see the Donaldsons and the Gaillards, with memorable visits to the market in Salies.



Mailhos, home of the Gaillards. The magnificent gateposts are a gift from the Duke of Wellington for use of the house as a bivouac on his return from Spain, a way of keeping the locals friendly.

Back in Paris I made a point of visiting 25bis rue Franklin, to take photographs for my article in Robin Middleton's book. I also visited most of Auguste Perret's Paris buildings which confirmed for me his reputation as the finest modern French architect. The buildings demonstrate great subtlety and refinement, something LeCorbusier is unlikely ever to be accused of.

At the end of August, we went to Canons Ashby, another Landmark Trust property, in Northamptonshire. It was an apartment at the top of a quite grand 16C house belonging to the family of the poet Dryden, now managed by the National Trust.²⁰⁴ After the visitors go home guests have the run of the

²⁰⁴ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/tower-canons-ashby-12639/#Overview>

beautiful gardens. The house was lovely and unpretentious, giving a good impression of life alongside an abbey.

Back in London it was time to visit the V&A, to see the serious re-vamp designed by Amanda Levete, who I had known when she was married to Jan Kaplicky and living not far away from me.²⁰⁵ Her client had been Moira Gemmill, the V&A's Head of Projects, who had demonstrated a great gift for opening up the rather stodgy Aston Webb building, before her tragic death in 2015 in a cycling accident. The opening up of a new entrance from Exhibition Road has been very successful, and the member's dining room in a reclaimed attic space is one of the most luminous rooms in London. Gemmill's projects included the silver galleries, Ceramics, Sculpture, and many more that have given the museum a new lease on life.

In October I was back in California. I took Alex a jigsaw I had made of one of his catches. I also took the Barbaras, Meacham and Maloney, for a getaway in Marshall, on the Tomales Bay, where we stayed right at the water's edge in a converted feedbarn. Very romantic, and with plenty of delicious oysters.



Our time that year on the river was particularly beautiful, and we were able to stay in the Circle7 ranch dairy, our favourite house. Alex's dentist, Steve Loy, joined us not for the first time. But it was to be Alex's last visit to his beloved river; the medical obstacles to travel were becoming impossible. He sadly died, but in a peaceable way, in September 2018. Before leaving California I went to see UC Dean Dick Bender and his wife Sue in their terrific newly refurbished penthouse flat in St Paul's Tower, on Lake Merritt in Oakland. They had lived since arriving in Berkeley in a beautiful Arts and Craft house

²⁰⁵ Jan Kaplicky, see P.73; P. 136.

in the Berkeley Hills, that they had wisely sold. St Paul's is a purpose-built retirement high-rise, very well designed by Victor Gruen, of shopping mall fame, in 1966. It was a typically original move by Dick, and it made them happy to be nearer to good commerce, but still with a good view of the Golden Gate.²⁰⁶

To round out the year we went to Kent for a landmark at Obriss farmhouse, a beautifully simple brick building set in lush rolling farmland, with long walks from the house. There was something elemental about the simplicity of the place, and it was decidedly restorative. We visited local churches, among them St Paul's in Four Elms, a famously early concrete gothic building, yet with a beautifully carved wooden pulpit, and Holy Trinity, Crockham Hill, where Octavia Hill the educator and housing reformer is buried.²⁰⁷



Obriss Farmhouse, December 2017

On the way home from Obriss we stopped at Squerryes Winery on the North Downs near Sevenoaks, one of a growing number specialising in white sparkling wine, as climate change makes Kent increasingly resemble Champagne. The wine and food weren't bad, but the ostentatious décor of the winery was disappointing.

In February 2018 I made a brief visit to Claviers where Claire announced that she had bought the fine olive grove between our two houses for her daughter Manon, cheaply because it has no road access except through our properties. I had been against the purchase because it meant mainly annual additional

²⁰⁶ Dick Bender, see P.66.

²⁰⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavia_Hill

expense of looking after 100 trees and mowing a lot of grass, but I understood her desire to control it. I also opened a discussion about separating our properties, left to us by François in ‘*indivision*’ under the French regime of succession. I could see only difficulties for our children if we did not legally separate.

In March the UCU went on strike at 64 universities over changes to the pension regime despite a severe cold snap in the weather. it was the largest revolt among staff in many years, largely backed by students. Amy was very active on the picket lines, and I tried to help.²⁰⁸

In March we had a visit from Anne Halsted, my landlady from San Francisco days, and her husband Wells Whitney since 1988. They were on a curated theatre tour of London. Wells had been a development scientist at Raychem for most of his professional life, and I had not known him before they married. He was dry and witty, perfect for Anne. They visited Hyde Park Mansions for lunch, and we took them on a walking a tour of recent Paddington Basin developments along the Regent’s Canal.

Then, as an antidote to grim London, we stayed at a North Wales Landmark, Plas Uchaf, in Denbeighshire. On the way we visited Chirk Castle, a stunning 13C fortress owned by the Myddelton family, complete with a handsome later wing designed by Augustus Pugin, who also installed beautiful gas lighting throughout. Plas Uchaf itself was a ravishing timber framed farmhouse with large rooms and plenty of light. There was plenty to see, including Rug Chapel at Corwen, an extravagantly painted 16C private chapel, but most important the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Shropshire Union Canal, Thomas Telford’s masterpiece of engineering, sending narrowboats high above a valley in an iron channel. I attempted to fish the Dee, and more successfully we visited Oswestry, birthplace of the excellent comic novelist, Barbara Pym, Amy had introduced me to.²⁰⁹

In June we were in Claviers for a holiday marked by rail tourism. Amy found that we could park at Grasse station and get a train to San Remo, stopping wherever we wished along the way. We visited the extravagantly romantic English Hanbury Gardens near San Remo, where we also lunched and shopped in the market. On our return we stopped in Monaco to visit the *Jardin Exotique*, a fabulous experience; the strange plants lovingly cared for by wizened gardeners on a precipitous landscape.²¹⁰ On a second trip we stopped

²⁰⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018–2023_UK_higher_education_strikes

²⁰⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Pym

²¹⁰ <https://www.jardin-exotique.mc/en/>

in Beaulieu to see the beautiful gay fantasy Greek *Villa Kérylos*, built in the early 1900s.²¹¹

I drove over to Sauveterre, from where I visited San Sebastian for the first time with the Donaldsons. I found the city completely captivating, particularly when we ate at the wonderful pinxos restaurant *Gandarias*.²¹² Despite being burned to the ground in 1812 by the British, it has a beautiful regular downtown grid filled with sober elegant buildings and a magnificent square given over to bull fighting (but no longer). Then, in July I went with Amy to Brussels for the 6th International Congress of Construction History. My paper on the recent geopolitics of construction had been accepted, despite its unusually broad-brush approach.²¹³ It was well received by Carvais and Becchi, my stalwart supporters from earlier conferences. I had been particularly keen to visit Brussels because the long-awaited re-opening of the *Africa Museum* was due, but we didn't get to see it because of construction delays. Instead, we got glimpses of King Leopold's home empire, staying at the classy Stanhope Hotel. We admired the grandiose art museum, Palace of Justice, and Victor Horta houses. Because Donald Trump was in town bus drivers had to be creative to avoid security details. We realised that most of the *art nouveau* houses in the Palmerston area must have been built with new money from Leopold's rapacious colonialism. But the older glories of the town hall and the Grande Place were reassuring. Our visit also coincided with the final of the Soccer World Cup in Moscow, between France and Croatia, for which we visited a sports pub, *Chez Bernard*. France won 4-2. The pub had no food, but one could queue at a famous frites stand nearby for delicious sustenance, to accompany the rich Belgian beers.

In October I went to California to be with Marie. Alex had died recently, on September 18, and we went to stay at Sea Ranch where her friends Rob and Jana have a house. She was inconsolable, yet gamely came to Marshall to eat oysters and walk on the shore with me. Later, I went up to Fall River with Steve Loy, his son, and Alex's friend Woody Lowe, where we committed his ashes to the river.

²¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Kerylos

²¹² <https://www.restaurantegandarias.com/en/>

²¹³ https://www.academia.edu/36374575/Recent_Geopolitics_of_Construction_origins_and_consequences



Circle7 Ranch houses from the river. We stayed in the white converted dairy.

On this visit I also went to see the magnificent Richmond wartime factories in the North Bay, designed by Albert Kahn, now re-purposed as the National Parks *Rosie the Riveter Museum*. In City Lights bookstore I was thrilled to find Jean-Baptiste Fressoz's *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, an academic book that had been recommended by David Edgerton. It successfully shakes up most complacent thinking about the environment.

In Britain, in the wake of the disastrous 2016 Brexit referendum, a weak Conservative government led by Theresa May repeatedly failed to win agreement to a Brexit settlement. There was a national mood of disgruntlement among all voters, and the Conservatives were dominated by the European Research Group, a far-right faction. Infighting became increasingly vicious, and the press behaved despicably. Furthermore, life in central London was becoming ever more stressful. At Hyde Park Mansions we were plagued by rough sleepers who would camp in the roof spaces, and who would be discovered by our faithful Ghanaian cleaner Albert Fofie. Albert was poorly supported and usually just rang me when that happened. I had to spend more and more time rousting them. Amy was resolute in getting the police to respond, but the offenders were very persistent. Eventually the police took the main offenders to Westminster Magistrates court, where I attended as a witness. I fitted CCTV outside my door to keep an eye on intruders and provide evidence in case of a break in.

To escape the unpleasantness we enjoyed a quiet November week in Paris visiting favourite haunts, but in December it was time for a remote Landmark

getaway rather than an Italian city, and that turned out to be Cowside in the Yorkshire Dales, a beautiful remote stone farmhouse in ravishing moorland covered in sheep.²¹⁴ Walking to the church at Hubberholme, in the beautiful Langstrothdale valley, we found a memorial to Lorenzo Langstroth, American inventor of the eponymous beehive, which the churchwarden was pleased to learn I knew about.²¹⁵ The church receives pilgrimages from American beekeepers. I knew about the hives because when François was serious about beekeeping at the Ginestières in the early 1960s, he had insisted we use Langstroth hives, then coming into fashion among French beekeepers. With their bee-friendly spacious interiors they could be stacked four or five high, making skyscraper hives.

As 2019 opened I was putting the finishing touches to a paper about Thomas Edison, nothing to do with his most famous inventions, but his integrated cement plant at Stewartville, NJ, that became a model for subsequent cement plants worldwide. I had been in touch with Edison's biographer Paul Israel, custodian of the Edison Papers at Rutgers, who helped my story. He shared my enthusiasm for Edison's lesser-known achievements, the results of painstaking and expensive trial and error, rather than flashes of individual genius.

In January the V&A put on a big show about Christian Dior in the new temporary exhibit space designed by Amanda Levete. The space worked well, and the show included some wonderful original models, as well as fashion illustrations by René Gruau. But because of sponsorship by Dior far too much emphasis was given to recent work by the industrial luxury brand it has become, with hired-in designers of often dubious talent.

In March we went to Paddington to take the night train to Penzance in Cornwall. The empty station at night was magical, especially the moving Charles Jagger war memorial to 2,500 Great Western Railway workers lost in both wars. It was put up in 1922, but now commemorates the first and second wars. In Penzance, we walked around the port and then to the extraordinary Egyptian House in the centre of town, where Landmarks Trust has an apartment. The Egyptian House was built by a mineralogist as a shop to attract mineral hunters.²¹⁶ The town had many attractive buildings, but what we really enjoyed was taking the excellent local buses all around the Lizard peninsula for wonderful coastal walks. We particularly admired the tin mining buildings perched at the edge of precipitous cliffs. They are beautifully built from

²¹⁴ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/cowside-5807/#Overview>

²¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._L._Langstroth

²¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_House,_Penzance

dressed granite blocks, of a nobility that matches the great harbour walls. A visit to St Michael's Mount was inevitable and did not disappoint.



St Michael's Mount at low tide.

Back in London on March 23, we joined hundreds of thousands on a People's Vote march from Hyde Park to Parliament Square, futilely petitioning the government for a second referendum on Brexit. Then in early April I went to Cambridge to give my paper on Edison at the Construction History Society conference.²¹⁷ Soon after, on April 15 we learned of the horrifying fire at Notre Dame in Paris, complete with the video real-time collapse of Viollet-le-Duc's rooftop needle. It was a solemn moment that gave President Macron the opportunity to make a 'jupiterian' gesture to rebuild immediately.

Soon after news came through that Leo had been granted his divorce from Renata, lifting a great load from his shoulders. In addition, Sara was away at Bristol University doing a two-year graduate law degree. At the time Leo was no longer working as in-house facilities manager at the Paddington Great Western hotel, now a Hilton franchise run by a tough Indian lady. Instead, he had joined a facilities management business specialising in maintaining trading floors, based in a city skyscraper. He had a lot of responsibility, but little control over the direction of the company.

²¹⁷

[https://www.academia.edu/38449912/Thomas Edison and Modern Construction the longue durée of the long kiln](https://www.academia.edu/38449912/Thomas_Edison_and_Modern_Construction_the_longue_durée_of_the_long_kiln)

In May I was in Oxford giving a paper to a workshop of the British Society for the History of Science about the place of consultants in construction, at the charming *Maison Française*.²¹⁸ I had not properly visited Oxford before. I was able to walk around town to see the Ashmolean, the Radcliff camera, the beautiful indoor market, and best of all the Pitt Rivers ethnographical museum, inside Woodward and Deane's Museum of Natural History, which I found completely wonderful.²¹⁹



The exuberant wrought iron structure of the Oxford Natural History Museum's roof.

Earlier in the year Felix had persuaded my wife Jenny that she should down-size, sell her house in Highgate, to which I had earlier given her full title, and move closer to him and his family in Richmond, nearer to the grandchildren. He'd found a development on the edge of Ham Common, a Georgian convent being converted into senior housing, including some new-build houses. By May construction was well advanced, although planning objections had caused attractive sunrooms to be demolished on what were already quite small houses. Jenny nevertheless committed to buy one of the houses.

In June I drove to Claviers. Amy flew to Nice, and we spent an agreeable week before setting off for the Southwest, Amy's first visit. Amy went by train from Les Arcs and I went by car - a race - I was able to get to Orthez 40 minutes

²¹⁸ https://www.academia.edu/39136816/Construction_Consultants_in_the_Globalised_Economy

²¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University_Museum_of_Natural_History

ahead of her arrival. She greatly enjoyed the journey, and her fellow passengers. We swam in the Gave d'Oloron and went to San Sebastian with the Donaldsons for a meal at *Gandarias* and a swim on the wonderful municipal beach, wonderful because spotlessly clean and enjoyed by all ages. Amy took a plane home, but on my drive home I went to the Petit Palais in Paris, the 1900 museum of art built for the city. I was keen to see Hennebique's astonishing concrete staircases, that I knew from my Concrete research. The museum and the stairs were wonderful.



François Hennebique, 1900, concrete stairway in the Petit Palais, Paris.

After a summer barbecue for the church of St John's Hyde Park, where I had been coming with Amy for some years, we took a train from Waterloo to Polesden Lacey, a grand Edwardian country house in Surrey, in an attempt at low-impact tourism.²²⁰ It was a memorable expedition; the house was quite good, the setting on the North Downs was exceptional and the countryside ravishing. We underestimated the walk back to the station and ended with very sore feet after a steep descent.

Then, later in July, we went on yet another march by Remainers, begging for a second Brexit referendum. Theresa May had already resigned as leader of the Conservatives, and Boris Johnson had taken her place, immediately banishing all his opponents and putting nonentities into ministerial positions.

²²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polesden_Lacey

As May's attempts at a Brexit settlement continued to fail, a General Election was announced for December.

To enliven our summer, we picked a Landmark in Derbyshire, Swarkestone Pavilion, a ravishing 17C folly overlooking an enclosed bowling green.²²¹ The bathroom is reached by crossing the roof between two little towers. An expedition to Leicester revealed an art museum rich in Ernest Gimson furniture, as well as a fine market, a magnificent Galleria and some excellent urban planning. Provincial cities are frequently eye-opening for jaded metropolitans, as I had found in Worcester, and Liverpool.

One Friday evening back in London I had a call from Jean-François Gaillard. Would I like to join a group of keen salmon fishermen in Northern Scotland? J-F had invited me earlier in the year, but I had demurred over the price tag. Now one of the party had fallen out, and he was inviting me as his guest, provided I did not reveal his largesse to the others! It was beyond generous. The next day I booked an Easyjet to Inverness, and on Sunday evening I was meeting J-F and Carol in Helmsdale, after an eventful bus ride up the East coast. We stayed in the fishing lodge on Sir Michael Wigan's Borrobol estate, and enjoyed an exciting and productive fishing week, crowned by a dinner of lobster fresh from the Helmsdale quay. It was an incredible experience. Our gracious ghillie was Glen Macdonald, and in our party was Pierre Affre one of France's best-known game fishermen, who made salmon egg caviar from a hen fish caught by Jean-Francois. Over the week I caught two fine salmon and a grisle, as well as losing a couple through over-excited clumsiness.



13 September 2019. Celebrating a great week's salmon fishing at Borrobol on the Helmsdale, Sutherland.

²²¹ <https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/swarkestone-pavilion-12474/#Overview>

The high of my visit to Scotland contrasted with the generally gloomy and desperate feel of London anticipating a general election. Additionally, there seemed to be nothing to celebrate about life in central London. Presciently, Amy suggested I think seriously about downsizing and moving to the suburbs while I was still strong enough to do so. The logical focus of a search would be near Richmond, close to Felix, Chloë and the grandchildren. It was an excellent suggestion, but where and how to begin looking?

I avoided confronting the issue by going to California for my annual visit, after a jolly 80th birthday party for Tony Donaldson, given by his son Matthew with his second wife Claudia at their West Hampstead home. Matthew's first wife Tiffany, with whom he had two daughters, was the daughter of John and Sally Jesse.²²²

In California I enjoyed several special experiences. First, I went to Stanford University to hear an inaugural lecture by Ronjon Nag, an artificial intelligence entrepreneur I had met at a Harkness lecture event at the Athenaeum.²²³ That lecture, on a crisis of confidence in Higher Education, was given by Sir David Bell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sunderland. Amy and I found the lecture appalling in its complacency, together with a lack of awareness of real issues resulting from the productivist approach to university education being adopted in the UK. Chatting afterwards to Ronjon Nag we mentioned Andrew Yang, then running for the Democratic nomination in the US presidential primaries, impressed by his grasp of vital modern issues - the large-scale erosion of work by automation and the need to balance it with a universal basic income. Ronjon got out his phone to show a picture of him with Andrew Yang! They were pals! So, we all went to supper with at Rochelle's Canteen at the ICA on the Mall after the lecture.²²⁴ Ronjon invited me to look him up at Stanford on my forthcoming California trip. His lecture there was a brilliant introduction to AI, given to a packed auditorium, and I learned it was the first of a two-term series of weekly talks. Ronjon was clearly a star in this new field.

Next, Marie organised a very moving memorial for Alex at their house, attended by many old friends. Claire, her daughter, and husband Will did much to make it a success.

Finally, in a symmetrical event to Ronjon's lecture, I went to a rally in Dolores Park, San Francisco, for Andrew Yang supporters, the Yang Gang. Yang is an

²²² Sally Jesse, see P.30.

²²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronjon_Nag

²²⁴ <https://archive.ica.art/rochelle-canteen/index.html>

inspiring personality and a brilliant debater, with a firm grasp of statistical data. Although Yang was not at the rally in person, the atmosphere was vibrant.



Andrew Yang Rally, October 5, 2019, at Dolores Park, San Francisco.

Eventually, despite attracting huge support among the young, Yang was aggressively side-lined by the mainstream media; he withdrew from the race following the Iowa Primary. I was very disappointed, left only with a union-made baseball cap bearing the motif M A T H (Make America Think Harder).

Fishing on the Fall with Stephen Loy was a slightly solemn affair without Alex, in the wake of his memorial in San Rafael. But on my return, I went to stay with Ann Halsted and Wells Whitney, at their beautiful house in Sonoma. Marie drove up and we visited the Jack London Museum in Glenn Ellen, a very inspirational place.

Back in London, the idea of moving from Central London gained momentum on 12 December as the Conservatives swept to an 80-seat majority in the General Election behind the charlatan Boris Johnson with his flippant approach to getting Britain out of Europe. The prospect was dire.

We escaped to Rome for Amy's birthday, staying at the Albergo dal Panteon, right in the middle across from, yes, the Pantheon. It was a sweet hotel and close to so many great Roman sights, whether the Caravaggios at Sant' Eustachio or the Piazza Navona. Amy, who was born in Rome, was keen to

find her parents' flat on the Piazza d'Aracoeli at the foot of the Capitoline. Other highlights were the Baths of Caracalla and the Castel Sant'Angelo. Queues for St Peter's were impossibly long because airport-style security had just been put in place for the first time. Our consolation was a visit to Santa Maria Maggiore.

After Christmas first reports began coming in about an unknown virus originating in Wuhan, China, and by January 30 the World Health Organisation declared a global health emergency due to Covid-19, a coronavirus. Fortunately travel restrictions did not come in immediately and I was able to go to France for a bit of winter gardening, including felling of some large acacia trees looming over my driveway.

On my return, as reactions to Covid became more restrictive, the impulse to leave Central London seemed more urgent, and we planned property visits to several estates designed by Eric Lyons of SPAN developments.²²⁵ I had long admired these paragons of intelligent community design with excellent architecture and landscaping. First, we went to see a flat at Parkleys, close to Ham Common, an early project of 1956. The flat was too small, but we were struck by the excellent layout, and the beautiful, landscaped setting with mature trees and well-kept grassy courtyards. A passing lady invited us to see her larger flat. She was a resident's committee member and clearly proud of the estate. Her flat was exceptionally well planned, but she told us that three-bedroom flats rarely came to market. Next, we saw Fieldend in Twickenham, a smaller 1960 development of houses, each with a small walled garden and again very nicely landscaped. But the house felt rather cramped, even with an extension. Then Amy found a 1980s riverside house at Mallard Place, Twickenham, on the 'Purple Bricks' selling platform. We visited the house on March 13, and were shown around by the owner, Ava Regal. The house had a basement garage, an open plan ground floor with cloakroom, kitchen, and a small patio garden overlooking the river, a first floor with three bedrooms and two bathrooms, and a magnificent studio room on the top floor with a balcony on to the river. It was smaller than my flat, but ample.

²²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Span_Developments



First viewing of 80 Mallard Place on 13 March 2020. Heated swimming pool is behind the hedge.

I could barely believe that I might be able to buy the house. It was priced at ‘offers above £1,250,000’. I immediately offered Ava £10,000 over, and asked whether she’d be prepared to wait while I sold my flat which was not yet on the market. This was a gamble, entirely a matter of confidence, and I was thrilled when she accepted. Fortunately, she was in not in a rush.

A couple of days later we went to Birmingham for my birthday, another exploratory British city stay. I had never been, and was keen to see the cradle of industry. We stayed in an authentic 1830 back-to-back cottage in the downtown, rented by the National Trust. But Covid was closing in. On our first evening we had planned to see ‘The Book of Mormon’ at the Birmingham Hippodrome but were told to return later to see whether the theatre would be open that evening. After supper at Chung Ying’s dim sum restaurant nearby, we were told the show was off. Indeed, our visit suffered from several gallery and museum closures due to Covid.

Nevertheless we were impressed by the nearby Victorian architecture, the Post Office, the Art Museum, the 1883 School of Art by J H Chamberlin, the commercial palaces of Newhall Street, including Lethaby’s curious Eagle Insurance of 1900. We made a special trip to Pugin’s St Chad’s Cathedral, remarkable for its pure soaring Gothic. On a rainy day we walked along Birmingham and Worcester canal to Aston Webb’s astonishingly grand

Birmingham University campus, lunching in the modern student union. We also visited Centenary Square, a rather desolate plateau, home to the 1922 Hall of Memory war memorial, with remarkable stained-glass windows by local artist, Richard Stubington, but also to the much-publicised enormous new public library of 2016, designed by Dutch architects, Mecanoo. Disappointingly tricky in its design, and flimsily built, it is not a success, in my view.

We walked around the Jewellery Quarter and St Paul's Square with its fine 1777 church, before returning to London, locked down due to Covid from March 20. There were restrictions on movement and gathering that began to impinge on the lives of all. Television carried daily briefings on the numbers of deaths and the extent of contagion, with Boris Johnson frequently upstaging or undermining the scientific and medical authorities.

Back in London, it was time to get my flat onto the market despite Covid. Viewings of property were allowed despite lockdown. I placed the property with two agents, Chesterton's, a large national and a local agency specialising in the Regent's Park area whom I soon dropped. Dylan James at Chesterton's worked hard, but didn't manage to produce many viewings, despite a couple of price drops. I decided to get Knight Frank in as a second string, and eventually Daniel Sugarman there managed to get a firm offer from a Chinese woman working at Canary Wharf for Credit Suisse. It was a time of nervousness in Hong Kong with threatening noises from the mainland CCP, so her relatives decided to buy the flat for her, providing a bolt hole for themselves should they need it.

In June I went to a memorial service for John Jesse, who had died in October the previous year. His wife of twenty years, the beautiful birdlike Jackie, said how she would so miss driving down in the old Volvo to La Motte, her family home, where her daughters would be. We had last all been together in Cotignac in 2010 (see P.191), with Paul and Anne Babb, at Monique and André Renaudo's house. I volunteered to drive Jackie to the South in August, and she was excited to come on an adventure.

In Paris, I put Jackie up in the Best Western hotel on the Place Monge, around the corner from my studio, which wouldn't have been big enough for both of us. Collecting her next morning, she was bubbling with enthusiasm for the hotel - so clean, great beds, great coffee, nice staff. A huge penny dropped for me. Why was I still owning a flat in Paris, with its property taxes, service charges and utility bills, when I could stay comfortably in the Best Western for 100€ a night? Obviously, I should sell up and use the money to do up

Claviers and help with redecoration of Mallard Place in London. Encouraged by Amy, I resolved to act.

On the way down to la Motte we stopped for a delicious lunch at my favourite *Beau Rivage* in Condrieu, a paragon of bourgeois provincial cuisine, overlooking the Rhone. I was able to deliver Jackie to her daughters by suppertime, before heading up the hill to Claviers, only about 12km further along the road.

Later during that visit to Claviers, I drove Jackie to visit Monique and André in Cotignac, as we had done ten years earlier with John. Back in London I had to plan my move. A synchronous completion date for the sales of Hyde Park Mansions and Mallard Place had been agreed for 20 November, and there was much to plan. Amy had researched moving companies and recommended Anthony Ward Thomas, who sent a planner over to assess the job. I was particularly concerned to dispose of lots of books that would not fit at Mallard Place. Luckily David Tobin of Walden Books in Camden Town was a great help. I delivered several carloads, mostly of art books and museum catalogues. As for furniture, I decided to leave a large oval dining table that I originally had made by my trading desk joiners, two vast sofas from Conran, and eight dining room chairs. In the end all my furniture fitted perfectly at Mallard Place, and I needed to buy only a sofa and two Eames dining chairs to match a pair I already had. The sofa came from Heals, where the delightful Italian saleswoman coached me successfully to get an architect's 20% discount.

In October, with the move looming, we went to see Frank and Jessica Duffy at Walberswick and John Laflin at Stanhoe in North Norfolk. This included a delightful dinner with Nicole Fabre, John's partner in her furnishing fabric business. John seems to enjoy considerable social success among the ladies of North Norfolk, very much in demand, dining out on his renown as a director of Liberty's. After the frenzy of preparation for the sale of my flat, it was great to be away in stable settings with old pals.

My only regret was to be leaving my neighbour Olga Boskovskaya and her husband Peter to grapple with the intricacies of enfranchisement. Olga, a hugely amusing and interesting Russian composer and music teacher, had escaped the Soviets to marry Peter, a teacher of accounting at Regent's University in Regent's Park. We had previously reached the conclusion that our 'Right-to-Manage' company of leaseholders, which had taken over management of the building in 2010, should purchase the freehold of the 19 flats in 13,14,15 Hyde Park Mansions, a self-contained building for the purposes of the legislation. I was leading the initiative. We were close to pulling it off, but there remained much to do, corralling reluctant leaseholders,

fighting off freeholders, etc. I am pleased and relieved to report, that a few months after I moved away Olga called to say that they had succeeded, despite all sorts of bad behaviour by several of the leaseholders, buying the freehold for less than a million pounds. This was an exceptional achievement in the hot London property market.

Eventually on 19 November the huge red van of Anthony Ward Thomas parked outside Hyde Park Mansions. My furniture and belongings were packed and spirited away very efficiently, leaving just enough for a last night, after 27 years in the flat. The next day all was installed at Mallard Place, and that was where I laid my head for the first time.

14. Life at Mallard Place

The house had been little changed by previous owners. A WC and basin had been put in a corner of the studio room at the top of the house; that would have to go. Some door hardware had been replaced. The 'Pampas' coloured tilework in the bathrooms, more *sage* than *avocado*, needed repair, although most of the original bathroom fittings survive. Ava had entrusted kitchen renovation to an Italian firm that had done a commendable job I came to admire; the only things I needed to change were the stainless steel sink and the gas hob.

The most important element needed to unify the house in the spirit of Eric Lyons was the flooring. We quickly decided that cork would be ideal - warm in feel and colour - and that it should be used on all floors and the stairs. I calculated I would need 135M2, and went to Siesta Cork, the only British importer of Portugese cork tiles. I asked them if they could recommend a craftsman to lay the tiles and they simply told me Tony Yates was the best. Tony came by train to Strawberry Hill to see the house; I was impressed. Although he lives some way off in Leighton Buzzard, his mum lives in Clapham, quite close. Tony blessed my project, telling me what plywood underlay to get, and that I would need to find hardwood nosings for the stairs. He placed the cork order with Siesta, but we then learned that due to Covid the factories had been closed by the Portugese government, so there would be a long wait for delivery! It turned out to be over a year, but it worked out well, with the decoration completed before the floors were laid.

Ava Regal originally had a cat, Edgar, who had belonged to her son. He is a handsome long-haired black cat, perhaps a Rag Doll, aged eight when I bought the house. After she put 80 Mallard Place on the market, she bequeathed Edgar to a neighbouring couple, Grant and Sabih, who loved him and took very good care of him. However soon after I moved in Edgar came around to visit, using existing cat flaps in the two houses. He just hung about all day. Eventually, he preferred to move back in with me. One day Sabih turned up on my doorstep with bed, feeder and toys, saying Edgar had obviously made a decision. Although I'd never had a pet, I liked Edgar and we've become close friends. He's well known around Mallard Place and has many fans.

During 2021 I was mostly getting used to living in a suburb and meeting neighbours. Twickenham and Teddington are home to well off people, so hospitality and commerce are good, with plenty of independent retail. Public transport is excellent. I was visited by intrepid friends like Alex and Sian Reid in November, and Chester Jones. Chester liked the house, commenting that living here must be like being on holiday every day! He suggested using a

strong colour in part of the living room, also that I get some obtrusive bright red warning signs removed from the swimming pool, because they spoiled my view from the dining area (that was later done). In the end I decided to use the same colours as at Hyde Park Mansions, a greenish white for the walls, ‘Old White’ according to Farrow and Ball, to play up the river colour, and a spicy deep Indian yellow for an accent. These colours have been very successful, and I enjoy the evocation of HPM.

In June the sale of my Paris studio finally came through, following a zoom call with my agent Patricia Cariou, the notaire and the Moroccan couple buying the studio. I immediately contacted Magali Mutti, the Claviers real estate agent and an old friend, to recommend a roofer and a decorator. I also planned to resurface the driveway in limestone chippings as we had done for François’ house in 2009. It was a precaution because the car had got stuck before in rainy conditions. I popped down to meet M. Crezzini, the roofer, who completely replaced the roof tiles, alternating old and new, and sticking them all down with sealant which is the modern way of dealing with the *mistral*. I also met Olivier Moreau, the decorator, a fine artisan, and M.Laugier, the *terrassier* who laid the drive. Upgrade of the electrics were done by Magali’s husband Damien. Some window shutters had rotted with age and I ordered a new pair from Fred Valenti in the village, an excellent joiner. It felt good to be putting a bit of money into the local economy.

In September I went to a private provider to the NHS, SpaMedica, for a cataract operation. I had been referred by Joy Hynes, an optometrist recommended to me by Felix and Chloë. On an assessment visit to SpaMedica I had been impressed by their business-like industrialisation of such a fiddly procedure, and the cheerful demeanour of the staff. My alternative would have been more than a year’s wait for a surgeon at Moorfields.

In October I went with Doug Branson to a play about the Grenfell Tower tragedy given at the tabernacle in Notting Hill.²²⁶ Returning close to midnight I put my key in the door only to find it on the security chain, that could have been put on only from the inside. The house had clearly been broken into, so I made a lot of noise and rushed around to the garden side to find a large glass panel smashed, but no sign of the intruders. I had arrived just in time . . . Fortunately, although every space had been rifled nothing was taken. A lesson learned, to leave lights and radio on.

For the redecoration work I was keen to get Janek Tudaj and his partner Rafael. They had done HPM, Semley Place, Amy’s house, and lots of work

²²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenfell_Tower_fire

for Felix over about fifteen years. They were charming and efficient, and extremely accomplished. But Rafael had damaged his knees and needed therapy at home in Poland, so Janek was temporarily on his own, which very much limited the size of job he could take on. But eventually he was able to start by himself on my house in mid-November. While I installed the ply underlay for the cork floors, Janek was preparing and painting the rooms. In the evenings I would cook him supper before he went home to nearby Ealing. It was fun to work together, and we made rapid progress.

Chloë had secretly organised a fiftieth birthday party for Felix in Paris, but at the last minute the restaurant cancelled the booking due to Covid, so I was left with a hefty credit at Eurostar.

After Christmas I went back to SpaMedica for a second cataract operation, grateful to see the same Iranian surgeon for a second time. Later, Joy Hynes confessed that I was the first patient she had referred to them! But I was pleased she'd done so; my sight was much improved.

In March my 80th birthday loomed, so I organised a room for twelve at the *Mitre* hotel in Hampton Court. I had originally thought to hire a boat to take us from Mallard Place to the *Mitre*'s mooring, but the river was closed for a rowing race, so we went on the R68 bus. It was a great success, and they did us proud. My sister Claire came, as did Chloë's father Jeremy, as well as immediate family.

With most re-decoration of my house complete, I became concerned about window coverings. Many houses at Mallard Place seemed to have voluminous drapes at their windows, doubtless partly to offset the poor thermal performance of the brick shell. But these curtains block off lots of window space and are too 'present' in the room. The solution for me seemed to be roller blinds. Luckily I contacted Hillarys blinds whose rep, Kuljit, came round to measure up, bringing a perfect sample material - off white with a fine dark brown pinstripe to pick up the window frame colour. I placed the order and soon Kuljit was installing them throughout the house.

In late April we decided to visit Marseille and were able to book on Eurostar all the way using my credits from Felix's cancelled party. Although we had to cross Paris by RER, the second leg of the trip was marvellous; a mere 3 hours 40 minutes, the Vallée du Rhone flashed by. In Marseille we stayed on the Vieux Port at a beautiful independent hotel, *La Résidence*. The upgrade of the public space of the port by Foster and Partners in 2013 has done much to bring the city together and encourage people to use the Port for recreation.

On our first evening we found *Chez Etienne* up a little street behind the hotel, a fabulous pizzeria with no booking and accepting cash only. But while waiting for a table they offer wine, olives and anchovies. The pizzas were delicious and the eclectic clientele highly entertaining.

Early in the visit we were invited to supper at Jonathan Meades' flat in LeCorbusier's 1952 *Unité d'Habitation*.²²⁷ I had known Jonathan for several years, mainly through the Architecture Club in London. The flat was lovely, two units on a corner knocked into one. There was a tangible sense of being in an architecturally designed space. Jonathan and his wife Colette were fine hosts, and we had a jolly evening. Fortunately, he approved of our choice of hotel and restaurants. We did come away wondering what the future holds for Brits embedded in France, like the Donaldsons, without real French assimilation.

One day we visited the Ile de Frioul by boat, beyond the Chateau d'If of Dumas fame, where Amy bravely swam in the sea. But the island was rather desolate, covered in failed holiday camps with rusting fences and neglected plantings. There were no trees on the island. Trips inside Marseille were more rewarding, including a bus ride up to the spectacular basilica of Notre Dame de la Garde, and a trip into *Le Panier* to see the magnificent Vielle Charité almshouse built by Pierre Puget in the 1670s. We also rode to the top of the Boulevard Longchamp to see the Musée des Beaux Arts, an astonishingly rich and vulgar palace relieved by fine fountains, a good collection of Provençal painting and massive murals by Puvis de Chavannes. We took a bus out to Chateau Borély where there is a beautiful museum of decorative arts set in a magnificent park, returning along the seaside corniche to the Vieux-Port. We found excellent produce markets around Marseille, notably Avenue du Prado alongside which is *François Coquillages*, a magical small family fish restaurant where everything was perfect, especially the welcome. Fried baby cuttlefish, *supions*, were special. Amy had researched the restaurants before we left London, and each proved a great success.

After five exciting days we caught a train to Les Arcs, where I picked up a rental car at the Super U market, and we drove to Claviers for a few days. Back at Mallard Place I looked each day at my empty mooring. I had noticed that boats are really an extravagance; the bigger the boat, the more trouble it is in terms of maintenance, cleaning, insurance, and the effort needed to get it out on the river. I began to think of a small aluminium runabout like those I was familiar with on the Fall River. I found that the best are Swedish, made by Linder, so I went by train to Lymington on the Solent to see the UK

²²⁷ <https://www.jonathanmeades.co.uk>

distributor. Lymington is pretty and extraordinary in terms of the gigantic amount of money just sitting in its waterways in the form of boats. Quite an industry. I saw the boat, liked it, and negotiated a price of £11,000 delivered to Mallard Place, including a 20hp Yamaha motor and a set of cushions. It was delivered on a trailer to Teddington on June 9, and driven round to Mallard Place. I have no regrets. It's a real pleasure just to tootle around on the river; the boat gives a fresh perspective on one's surroundings and a great sense of freedom. The grandchildren also appreciate it.

15. Epilogue

I find it hard to think that what started as a harmless diversion during the dull days of Covid has turned into such a long account of my life. Yet there is a real pleasure in recollecting and reassembling one's life. The more one does, the better the memory. Names and events float back into the consciousness, frequently in the wrong place in the narrative, but nevertheless recaptured, to be properly inserted with editing. Even so there are bound to be errors, for which I apologise in advance. God bless.

