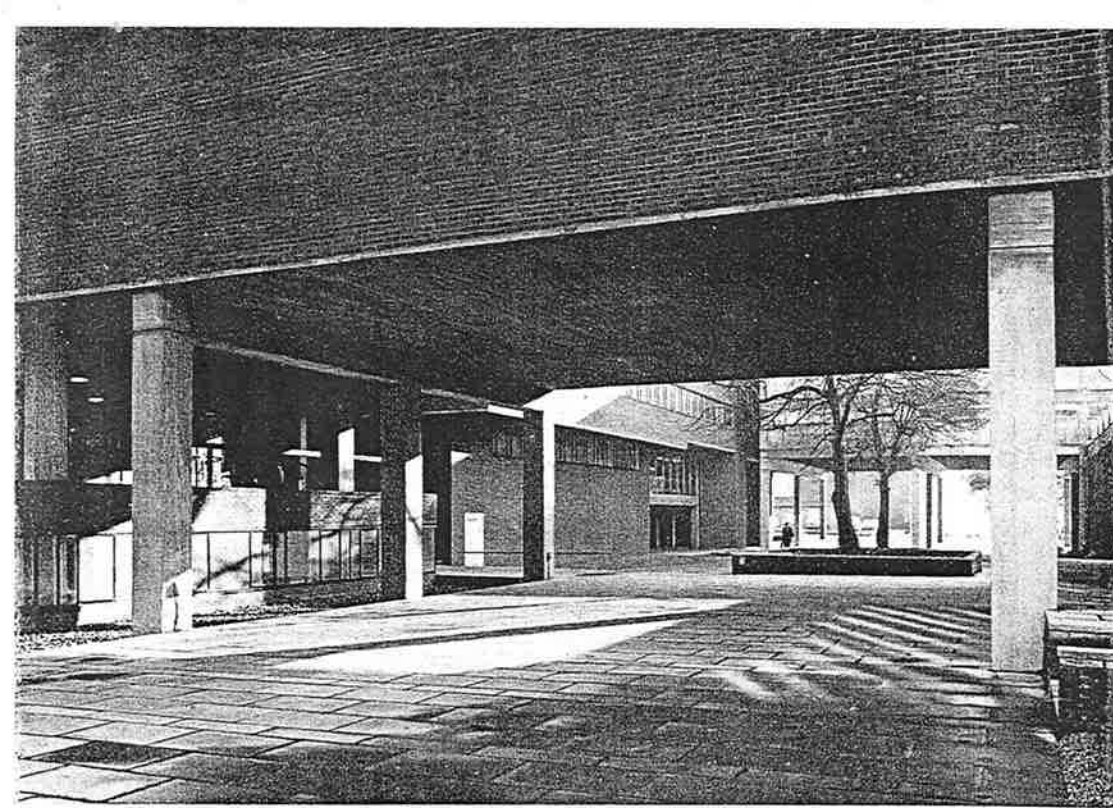


University of Newcastle upon Tyne



overleaf front Claremont Tower

above Pedestrian way from Merz Court to Haymarket

Claremont Tower

Claremont Bridge

Daysh Building

Fine Art Extension

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Dr C. I. C. Bosanquet
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The buildings which compose the complex to be opened by the Lord High Chancellor on 18 April constitute the largest single-building enterprise undertaken by this University since its first beginnings in 1834. The University has sought by the construction of these buildings to relieve two distinct forms of pressure. The first has been the need to re-house the many departments which have hitherto occupied space in the dwellinghouses in the Sydenham Terrace, Devonshire Terrace and Kensington Terrace areas. The second has been the need to provide additional space for the expanding teaching and research work of the thirteen departments which will occupy accommodation in the new buildings.

In the years immediately after 1945 student and staff numbers increased rapidly and it was essential to make use of any accommodation that could be found within reasonable reach. For this reason a large number of private houses were taken over for University use and since the late 1940's many departments have had to make the best of the drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and even bathrooms of former private houses. The plans of the City of Newcastle for the widening of the A1, the main road to Edinburgh, will involve the destruction of a great many of these houses, and the University's own needs to provide sites for new science buildings require the removal of other departments.

In anticipation of these developments, the University gradually acquired all the properties in the quiet tree-lined street known as Eldon Place, named after the great Lord Chancellor, John Scott, 1st Earl of Eldon (1751-1838). With the exception of the few houses immediately adjoining Barras Bridge these have been pulled down. In their place we now have Merz Court which houses Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Mathematics, the extension of the University Library, and the Claremont Tower complex of buildings. We regret the disturbance of so many houses with their attractive gardens, but have done our best to retain the essential amenity of a large tree-lined open space by limiting the floor area of the new buildings and providing for the careful landscaping of the resulting open spaces.

In order to ensure the most sympathetic treatment of the new buildings and at the same time to make full use of the experience already gained in constructing many University buildings, the design of the whole of the Claremont building

Foreword

by the Vice-Chancellor
of the University,
Dr C. I. C. Bosanquet

complex was entrusted to Messrs. Richard Sheppard, Robson and Partners, who had already been employed for the design of the Merz Court Building at the north end of the site. Their briefing invited them to provide space for thirteen separate departments together with their lecture rooms, computing and language laboratories, a large common room for students in the Faculty of Arts, and a specially designed store for the reserve material of the Museum of Antiquities. The original scheme contemplated the construction of a Tower building some twenty storeys high. This was not approved by the City Planning Authority because it would have dwarfed the new Civic Centre. They suggested as an alternative that the University should reduce the Tower building to a height of twelve storeys and construct a Bridge building crossing Claremont Road. This is what, in fact, has been done.

What is important from the point of view of University strategy is the care that has been taken in the grouping of departments to encourage close contacts between staff and students with similar interests. The arrangements of the whole complex are such that it will be natural for students of Economics and Law, Geography, Town and Country Planning and Surveying to associate and for the many language departments to make use of the Language Laboratory.

The complex will house some of the most valuable of the University's own possessions. I am thinking particularly of the collection of pictures and sculpture that has been built up in the Hatton Gallery, of the Brown Collection of Ethnographica from the South Seas in the Department of Social Studies, and of the resources in hardware and software of the Computing Laboratory.

In the design of such a building complex, very special facilities had to be provided for the needs of departments. Accordingly, there will be found large air-conditioned spaces in the basement of the Claremont Tower for the smooth operation of the giant Northumbrian Universities Multiple Access Computer Data Processing Unit with its multiple access units located in the Universities of Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne. We have provided both special studios and gallery space for the Department of Fine Art.

This group of buildings establishes yet more firmly the activities of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in the heart of the Tyneside conurbation. The University therefore

gives expression to the policies which the Robbins Committee regarded as being so valuable. They took the view that there was a special case for fostering further development of universities within large cities. They argued that this was desirable both for the universities themselves and for the cities:

'It is most valuable for the teachers and students in academic institutions to have convenient access to national institutions such as libraries, museums, galleries and other cultural centres and to learned societies. It is also important for them to have easy access to centres of industry, commerce, medicine and law, to institutions of central and local government, and to research institutions. Two-way traffic between such centres and universities is of great benefit particularly in the natural sciences, technology, medicine and the social sciences . . . There is also a benefit to the cities themselves. The presence of a university can stimulate cultural activities; it can improve the standing of the professions, in subjects such as medicine and Education, and provide through its staff and students a rich addition to the variety and interests of the population.'

The buildings

DESCRIBED
BY THE ARCHITECTS

The initial brief for this group of buildings set out to provide an extension to the accommodation of the Department of Fine Art and the associated Hatton Gallery, additional accommodation for the School of Architecture (Building Science), and a new building for the Departments of Geography and Surveying. A scheme was approved in 1963 that took into account the possibility of extending the Geography Building upwards by two storeys, and providing in addition storage accommodation for the Museum of Antiquities, sited in the basement areas of the original properties in Eldon Place.

At this stage in the design it became clear to the University that development to the east of Claremont Road and eventually to the east of the Great North Road could not take place unless a considerable amount of accommodation could be provided on the west side of Claremont Road for various 'Arts' departments such as Languages and Law, to clear the way for future development on the other side of the road. The only space available was a rectangle of about 350 feet in height to provide the required floor area. This was not accepted by the City Planning Officer for Newcastle and in order to provide the floor area which the University required, the suggestion was made that the Tower should be reduced in height and that the remainder should be built in the form of a block bridging over Claremont Road. This, in effect, killed two birds with one stone: it provided the necessary floor area and formed a physical link between the existing University buildings and the future development. A scheme was presented to the City Planning Officer and in view of its importance was considered by their Consultants, Professor Arne Jacobsen and Sir Basil Spence, who approved the scheme without reservation.

The group of buildings covering the site of Eldon Place contains the Departments of Building Science (School of Architecture) and Fine Art.

Building Science (School of Architecture): this accommodation is directly connected with the main Architecture building and although constructed as part of the Phase I contract, it was completed and handed over in December 1965 and was officially opened by Sir Donald Gibson on 26 September 1966.

The Department of Fine Art: this was housed in Edwardian buildings and included the Hatton Gallery. Both the Department and the Gallery urgently required

more space. The new buildings provide new studios and lecture theatre and administrative rooms and at the same time retain the close link with the Gallery, which is, in a way, the heart of the Department. The Gallery has been extended and planned so that a variety of exhibitions, small or large, can be staged in it. It has been equipped with temperature and humidity control and a lighting system giving a wide range of control over the direction and intensity of light, both natural and artificial. During the course of construction the Schwitters mural, complete with twenty tons of Westmorland stone walling, was acquired by the University and successfully transported from the Lake District to Newcastle and is now housed in a specially constructed bay in one of the side galleries. An inaugural exhibition was opened by John Pope Hennessey on 22 November 1967.

The Department of Fine Art forms a link between the Edwardian buildings and the new Daysh Building, leaving a pedestrian way open beneath the studios on the line of the old Eldon Place. This building houses the Departments of Geography and Surveying and provides studio/laboratory teaching rooms, a demonstration theatre, two lecture rooms, research rooms for Polar Studies, storage areas for the Exploration Society, survey instruments and a small workshop. On the third floor there is a departmental map and book library and there is the usual accommodation for professors and lecturers with adjacent seminar rooms. The basement of the building is occupied by a large store area for the Museum of Antiquities and is equipped with sorting and washing areas.

The two upper floors of the Daysh Building have a direct internal link with the Tower and these two floors are laid out as studios for the Department of Town and Country Planning. Both floors are fitted with demountable partitions to give flexibility in room size and arrangement.

The Tower block is eighty feet square, has eleven floors above ground level and extends into a basement twenty feet below ground. It is served by a lift and a 'paternoster' which is in effect a vertical escalator, formed by an endless chain of lift cars.

The requirements of the departments above ground level in the Tower block were met by planning the central service core off centre, leaving the southern half of each block for the larger rooms, i.e. seminars, libraries, etc., and

DAYSH BUILDING

CLAREMONT TOWER

grouping the small staff rooms around the three remaining sides of the core. However, the Computing Laboratory, which required a great variety of spaces ranging from the main laboratory of some 5000 square feet, which houses the University's KDF9 computer and the Northumbrian Universities (Durham and Newcastle) Multiple Access Computer, an IBM 360, model 67, to the visitors' rooms of 100 square feet, presented especial difficulties. Many of these rooms required air conditioning or mechanical ventilation and the Laboratory had to be completely independent of others, yet accessible at all times. It was decided therefore to use the space available below the ground floor entrance level where the Laboratory could expand underground beyond the limits of the Tower block. Wherever possible, small rooms have been planned so that they look through windows into the larger spaces and the main laboratory can be seen below through a double-glazed screen at ground floor level.

Above ground the Tower contains common lecture rooms, the Departments of Town and Country Planning and the Traffic and Highway Engineering Division of the Department of Civil Engineering, an expansion floor of Computing, and the Departments of Law and Economics.

CLAREMONT BRIDGE

The Claremont Bridge building contains three floors of various Arts and Social Science departments - French, Spanish, German, Social Studies, and Politics. The large rooms such as seminars, museums and libraries are in the central section, artificially ventilated, and the smaller rooms are along the external wall. Special consideration has been given to reducing the effect of the noise of the traffic below to prevent disturbance of work in these rooms.

At the second floor level there are two pedestrian ways through the Tower linking the older University buildings to the future developments on the east of Claremont Road, and giving access to a number of lecture rooms which will be common to all the Arts Departments. At the sixth floor level the Tower connects with Arts House, which is a large common room for all students in the Arts Departments, situated at the same roof level as the Daysh Building and Merz Court with magnificent views to the north and south. To the west the Tower is linked with the old buildings by another 'bridge' containing a large lecture hall, and the Building Science block.

Although the density of building on this restricted site is quite high, by raising several of the blocks on columns it

has been possible not only to preserve but to encourage pedestrian routes through the whole area, and to form interesting and exciting enclosures and vistas. Some of the existing trees in Eldon Place have been retained and the landscaping of the area between Merz Court and the new buildings has been moulded around them. The design of the buildings themselves has been controlled by the desire for consistency both in material and in proportion of window to wall so that it relates closely to the simple mass of Merz Court. The only exception is the Studio block of the Department of Fine Art, which was considered as a 'screen' linking the massive, horizontal blocks of the Daysh building with the Edwardian 'Tudor' of the Edward VII buildings and the University gateway, and having some affinity in material with the neighbouring buildings for the Students' Union.

Technically, the buildings are not revolutionary: they are all framed in reinforced concrete and clad in the same brick as Merz Court, which still appears to be the cheapest and most durable facing material. Most of the early problems arose from the fact that the site is split by the course of the old Pandon Burn, now culverted, which flooded the excavations during the winter of 1965-66. Apart from this, the problem of constructing the Bridge block over Claremont Road without dislocating traffic was solved by the use of large precast concrete beams to enable construction to proceed without closing this extremely busy road for more than a few hours. The emphasis has been placed on the relationship of the various blocks and the spaces between them rather than any spectacular *tour de force* in the individual buildings. Finishes throughout are simple but durable - vinyl floors, fairfaced block partition walls and natural timber. The area of glass has been kept down, to allow a reasonable outlook but to avoid excessive heat losses and, even more important, excessive heat gains in hot weather, and the standard of artificial lighting has been increased in accordance with current practice.

The entire group is heated by the central boiler house in Merz Court, but separate plant rooms deal with specialized requirements for ventilation and air conditioning in the Computing Laboratory and the various lecture theatres.