CHAPTER EIGHT

THE UNIVERSITY ESTATE

The original site comprised one and a quarter acres generously
donated by the fourth Marquess of Northampton and his son hence the
name, Northampton Institute. The site was triangular with its western side
on St. John Street, its southern face on that part of Ashby Street now
named Wyclif Street, and its north-eastern side running from St. John
Street via the former Lower Charles Street to Northampton Square. This
site had been that of a former home of the Comptone, the Clerkenwell
Manor House, subsequently a school and then a lunatic asylum, later
becoming a school once more. The garden in Northampton Square, to this
day an attractive feature, was originally part of a botanical or “physik”
garden.1

Clearly of architectural merit and aesthetically pleasing, the first
building was designed by Edward W. Mountford, (1855-1908), well known
later as the architect of the Old Bailey. Charles Dorman, Chairman of the
Governing Body laid the foundation stone on 9th July, 1894. Completed
and handed over by stages, the building was heavily used from the outset.
With due sense of priorities, the Library and Reading Rooms, the Social and
Club Rooms, the Gymnasium and the Refreshment Rooms were the first to
be taken into use, on the 27th June 1896. It was not possible to start
educational work until the 19th October of the same year, and the official
opening was delayed until the 18th March, 1898.

The Mountford Building has its main entrance in the centre of the St.
John Street facade under a tower supporting a bracket clock with a peal of
bells, as befits Clerkenwell, the home of the English Clock trade. Indeed,
despite considerable additional building subsequently, this is still the
obvious and natural main entrance to the University. It is not anonymous in
the modern building idiom, but is clearly academic in function and, of
course, it opens from the historic thoroughfare, St. John Street, named
after the Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem of which only the
1504 gateway still stands near the southern end of the street. Mountford’s
building is in neo-Renaissance style faced in red Suffolk bricks with Monk’s
Park Bath Stone cornices, sills and dressings and has weathered well. The
tower is not a purely ornamental feature but is necessary to form the
junction between the varying features of the design upon either side.
Pevsner writes, of the building: "An exceedingly successful example of the neo-French sixteenth century style of the moment with its fresh and playful enrichments. The N.W. corner, for example, should be examined to get respect for this kind of picturesque composition in three dimensions, the pent little turret with its cupola, the big bold curved gable higher up, and the lantern tower as a final flourish." 3

Sir Walter Besant wrote of it as "a truly magnificent modern building. . . . The central entrance is very fine, with moulded arch and decorative frieze or panel above in high relief." 4 This frieze was executed by H. and P.R. Montford and represents, appropriately enough, the "Useful Arts". Besant continues, "the building encloses a courtyard with a cloister or arcade." 5

The design for the building was selected by the Governing Body with the assistance of one of its members, Charles Barry, F.S.A., Past President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, son of the architect of the House of Commons. It was based upon open competition, the designs being entered anonymously. Charles Barry's advice was accepted.

When the Lord Mayor of London formally opened the Northampton Institute on the 18th March, 1898, the event was marked by the publication of an illustrated guide of 27 pages, well printed with 13 excellent photographs, some of which are reproduced in this volume. Thus a very clear impression is conveyed of the buildings and, indeed, of the scope of the educational and recreational work of the Institute of that time. 5 To the north of the main entrance in St. John Street, was the great hall, designed to seat 1,400 persons. Also on the St. John Street frontage, to the south of the entrance is a four storied building in which the social and recreative work of the Institute was first conducted. The southern side of the triangle contained a five-storied teaching block and the north-eastern side comprised the swimming bath and the gymnasium, each 120 feet in length, by 50 feet wide, with more teaching accommodation in three stories above part of the latter.

These buildings were set around a courtyard that provided a triangular internal air and light space. On two floors the corridors ran completely round the buildings, but differing building heights prevented this pattern being repeated on all floors.

The Library was a room on the top floor fronting on St. John Street; it measured fifty-five feet by twenty-four feet and housed 1,700 volumes at the outset. There was also a Reading Room of seventy-four feet by twenty-four feet separated from the Library by a small room for the librarian, from which both rooms could be supervised. The swimming bath
was lined with white marble and the swimming area was one hundred feet by thirty-five feet. There were seventy dressing rooms attached. The Institute was provided with separate entrances for men and women and while both sexes used the swimming bath and gymnasium, careful time-tabling kept them apart.

The architect's estimate had, at first, been £49,511 being £31,809 for stage one and £17,702 for stage two. Two stages were essential as there were leased buildings on part of the site. The revised estimate before commencement was £54,850. W. Wollis of Balham was the selected builder and the actual cost of erection including heating apparatus was £60,824.4.3d. The capital account as at September 1896 shows £83,046 expended on building, furnishing and equipment.

The first building extension was a single storeyed building in the courtyard, for Metallurgy, in 1898. The second was a similar single storeyed building for Mechanical Engineering, also in the courtyard, in 1901.

In the session 1905-06 The British Horological Institute offered to lease most of the space in its building in Northampton Square. By the beginning of the following session the Technical Optics Department and part of the Horology Department moved across the road.

Early in 1908, having approved plans by W. Campbell Jones, the Governing Body authorised the construction of a five storied block in the residue of the courtyard. They accepted the lowest tender, that of Mr. Henry Kent of Lewisham, for the sum of £8,111. It was reported at the June 1908 meeting of the Governing Body that the contract had been signed, work had commenced on the 28th May and was to be completed by the 23rd of December. Obviously, we as a nation worked much faster in those days! The new extension was opened by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Halsbury on 6th February, 1909. The annual report of 1908-1909 records: "The additions consist of a five-storey building and the covering in of the remaining section of the large open courtyard. The basement of the new building and the covered-in parts of the courtyard provide for the extension of the mechanical engineering workshop and the mechanics and materials laboratory, for the rearrangement of the practical work in smithing, in moulding and in metallurgy, and in addition a large room which will be used as an experimental power laboratory. On the entrance floor the new building provides staff and club rooms which have been urgently needed for many years, and the three floors above are devoted to lecture and classrooms. The first floor contains a large lecture room capable of seating 280 students, and the other two floors smaller rooms, thirteen in all" . . . "It
has not been possible to assign any part of the additional accommodation to relieve the pressure on the technical optics department, and the necessity for pushing forward with the projected annex for this department, the land for which was acquired two years ago, has become increasingly urgent during the session."

The total cost of the extension was £8,341, with furnishing an additional £451. Among the furnishings were 350 oak writing tables purchased from the London School Furniture Company at six shillings and a penny halfpenny each, including branding with the name of the institution. The electric lighting and power wiring was carried out by the Electrical Engineering Department of the College at a cost of £278 and this pattern of using internal skills to enable necessary work to be done at a price that could be met continued for many years.

The acquisition of land for a projected annexe, referred to above, provides an object lesson in the growth of institutions. The resourcefulness of Dr. Robert Mullineux Walmsley, the first Principal, was the undoubted mainspring of later development, for in addition to the extensions we have outlined, he set about acquiring a further site in 1906. Indeed, in his Annual Reports for several years past, Walmsley had stressed the need for more accommodation. There is ample evidence in the history of other London Colleges of opportunities missed through their not having, firmly in their possession, a suitable site for development when financial resources for building became available. In this case building did not prove possible until 1932, after Walmsley's death, but it was clear at that time that possession of the site was the deciding factor in the allocation of scarce building funds between London Colleges and the Connaught Building was the result of Walmsley's foresight.

Acquisition of the first 10,560 square feet of the Connaught Building site, referred to above, involved the purchase of houses on the west side of St. John Street together with houses in Whiskin Street and Myddelton Street. Among the freeholders were the New River Company and The Skinners' Company. The City Parochial Foundation loaned the necessary £13,000 and contracts to purchase were completed in March 1908. W. Campbell Jones was appointed architect for the proposed new building; he was later to serve as Surveyor to the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities from 1913 to 1937. The architect's cost estimate of one shilling per foot cube was considered too high and money to build was not forthcoming for many years.

Considered chronologically, however, the next development of buildings, plant or equipment that should be noted is the opening on 12th
October 1910 by W. Whitaker Thompson, Chairman of the London County Council of the £6,000 “new generating station: a handsome addition to the equipment of the electrical engineering department” which recalls the earlier final decision to instal electric lighting in the original building in 1895. This decision was taken after very careful study by an expert committee. The lighting was to be carried to 788 points to a total of 24,000 candle power on 35 amphere circuits. The estimated cost was £3,265 to include all wiring and in-house generation with a second standby generating plant. The public supply mains of the County of London and Brush Provincial Company, it was then noted, “will shortly be laid in St. John Street.” It was considered that electricity could be produced more cheaply than the seven pence per unit quoted by the company. When the Hall was rewired in 1929 the electricity generating station was closed down and all electricity was thereafter supplied via the public mains.

The success of the Institute was such that Mullineux Walmsley and, indeed his successor, continued to reiterate the urgent need for more space, that first became really pressing in 1906. In 1911 he proposed the utilisation of the roof space over the library, for classrooms. Later thought was given to the excavation and utilisation of space beneath the large hall and the gymnasium. The real answer to the space problem, however, was obviously use of the annexe site purchased in 1908. Although the L.C.C. Education Committee approved a grant of £35,000 for the erection and equipment of a building for Technical Optics in 1911, the decision was never ratified by the Council. Delays were followed by the Great War and the Depression which imposed a total restriction on building, but the matter was kept a live issue. Meanwhile in 1916 the Artistic Crafts Department space was made available and Optics moved back into the main building. In the last year of the War, Walmsley was discussing with the L.C.C. Education Officer the exact use to which the proposed building would be put. In December 1919 the inevitable army huts were erected to accommodate the ex-service influx.

Another strong push came in 1924 with the Governing Body pressing upon the L.C.C. two alternative schemes, that is provision of £64,000 to build a six-storey building, or, £40,000 for the first three floors suitably strong for subsequent building up. The L.C.C. then used the death of the Principal as a reason for delaying once more for further consideration.

An Appeals Sub-Committee was set up and an Extension Fund opened in 1927. This got off to a slow start but achieved £7,854 by 31st July 1928. The Skinners’ Company offered £1,000 and the City Parochial Foundation offered a loan of £5,000, plus a special grant of £400 and subsequent aid
with repayment charges. The Brewers’ Company made modest annual donations and other donors included the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers. The College had been under attack from the L.C.C. about its high unit cost per hundred student hours. A very detailed reply was prepared that showed that such costs were dropping due to increased student numbers and that had a new building been provided during session 1927-28 these unit costs would still have been 10% below those for 1925-26! Sources of additional temporary funding were explored such as the staff provident reserve fund, the munitions profits suspense account et al.

Meanwhile cost cutting schemes were looked at in order to reduce the building estimate. These ranged from the quality of the finishes to the deletion from the plans of a lift, a pitched roof, and an underground subway to the main building (which alone would save £4,000). In September 1929 the L.C.C. and the Board of Education approved £30,000 for building and £5,000 for equipment against a revised request for £48,650. However, by November 1930 the lowest tender for the building alone, that of Dove Brothers, was for £48,925. More cuts were necessary before the tender was finally reduced to £41,600 and agreed. By then the College was regularly using rooms both at Golden Lane City Day Continuation School and at Hugh Myddleton Institute for overflow evening classes.

After final payments the contract cost was said to be £41,225, but other items including fees brought the total cost of the building to £47,660, financed as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
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<tr>
<td>London County Council</td>
<td>31,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Parochial Foundation</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinners’ Company</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Fund</td>
<td>9,882</td>
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</tbody>
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£47,660

By that time the building fund had been enhanced by £50 from the Marquess of Northampton and £2,000 from the City Parochial Foundation. Subsequently, the adjoining properties, 301 St. John Street and 42 and 43 Myddleton Street were acquired, in advance of the planned compulsory purchase orders, with the aid of a £3,000 loan from the City Parochial Foundation.

In place of the usual annual conversazione His Royal Highness Prince George, Duke of Kent, opened the Connaught Building on 2nd December, 1932. On six floors, including the basement, some 20,000 square feet of
usable space was added to the Polytechnic. The building occupied just over half of the annexe site and was constructed with the corridor on each floor connecting to an outside escape staircase in order to facilitate later extension. Following the well-established tradition of the Northampton of self-help, the electric light fittings in the entrance hall were designed by the Head of the Electrical Engineering Department, A.C. Jolley. Provision was made in the Connaught Building for Chemistry, Watch and Clockmaking, Furriery, Lens Workshop, Automobile Laboratories with lecture and class rooms for general Polytechnic use.

The annual report recording the opening of the Connaught Building, that of 1932-33, mentioned the need for more space! There was some rearrangement and extension of accommodation for those departments remaining in the main building, particularly Electrical Engineering and Physics. In 1934 a proposed continuation of the reorganization of accommodation was put to the L.C.C., it was to be a two-storey building above the gymnasiu and the swimming bath, at a cost of £65,000. The London County Council found itself unable “to consider proposals of so great a magnitude” at that time, but encouraged the submission of a scheme of the order of £10,000 mainly to provide more suitable engineering workshops. Such a scheme, they considered, “might prove to be within the range of possibility in a year or so.” It did take a year or so and in the meantime an effort was made to persuade the county council to pay over the balance of the £35,000 they had offered to finance the Connaught Building. This money, totalling only £3,200, they now desired to use to roof over the remainder of the courtyard to provide an additional temporary machine tool workshop.

Eventually £11,213 was approved to build and equip the Connaught extension and work was started in July 1938 and the first floor was in use at the end of the following March. It was built by Messrs. Henry Kent. At this time it was proposed to excavate under the Hall to provide additional basement space and to build two floors above the Hall. Two additional storeys on Connaught were again proposed. Added force was given to the Hall project by the collapse of the ceiling during 1938. The following year the District Surveyor served a dangerous structure notice, a turret was taken down and the roof was strutted in places by the old ceiling timbers, during 1940.

How the buildings fared during the Second World War has been recounted in chapter four, but at the end of that period there was a great deal to do. To the war damage, which was very minor by London standards, had to be added the results of six years of largely makeshift
maintenance and arrears of decoration. Then, as we have noted in chapter five, a college that had since 1925 achieved a fourfold expansion in educational activity, had but a 36% increase in its accommodation. Ministry of Education Circular 155, however, encouraged technical college building programmes and the Northampton Polytechnic had both a small site available and a building designed to carry two additional floors.

As it was a period of post-war shortage of building materials, speed was essential and within five months of the Governing Body discussing the matter in 1948, Dr. Richardson reported that a five phase scheme was submitted for approval. The five phases were to be:-

1) Acquisition of an additional site in St. John Street. (This was first proposed in 1945).

2) Rebuilding of the Great Hall to provide an examinations and assembly hall to seat 900, a refectory for staff and students, laboratories for high vacuum technology, x-ray technology, applied optics and electrical engineering, and workshops for advanced production engineering.

3) The rebuilding of the single-storey gymnasium block to provide five storeys for laboratories for aeronautics, mechanics of fluids and mechanical engineering, workshops for production engineering and instrument making, classrooms, staffroom, stores and library above the gymnasium.

4) Building two additional floors on to the Connaught Building as proposed earlier.

5) Building on the north-east corner of the Connaught Building site. (By 1954 the properties on this site were empty and the loan paid off).

Although all five phases were scheduled to be completed by 1955, the actual final completion date of schemes one to three was Spring, 1956. The sixth phase of development, proposed in 1949, was known to be long term. This was an additional group of buildings projected to fill a triangular site to the north of the main building. Thus, it was proposed that the main building group would be bounded by St. John Street, Wyclif Street, Northampton Square, Earlston Street and Spencer Street. The Ministry of Education rapidly approved the schemes I-V for implementation as early as possible.

The additional site in St. John Street turned out to be scheduled for housing and in its place a site in Spencer Street was acquired from Northampton Estates, Ltd. Thus scheme I became temporary ex-Ministry of
Works hutting on a Spencer Street bomb site, and on 10th July 1950 six classrooms and one drawing office were taken into use. The need was very great for from the session 1946-47 overflow evening classes were held in Owen’s School and the Chequers Street School. Later Hugh Myddleton School was used. The hutting was erected and equipped at a cost of £14,017. The L.C.C. was, however, anxious to know what the Governing Body would supply in the way of funding and so a private appeal was made to Livery Companies and firms with which the College was in regular contact. By March 1951 just under two thousand pounds had been raised. Sir Frederick Handley Page promised £500. The Brewers’ Company donated over a period of time and from funds under their own control the Governing Body found some £4,500 by that time.

Schemes 2 and 3, it was decided should be carried out together and economies made by retaining the existing north wall of the Great Hall, by omission of a gallery in the Great Hall, by omission of dome-type lights, by omission of panelling in the library, etc. The Ministry of Education let it be known that if the work were to start at all it must start before the end of March 1962. The economies we have noted reduced the lowest building tender from £389,211 to £313,605, that of an Islington firm Patman and Fotheringham. On 24th July 1952 an immediate starting date was announced and work commenced. By then the Governing Body was able to state that it could find some £19,000 towards the cost and the L.C.C. was asked for £20,000 for equipment and £27,000 for furniture.

There were delays, of course, caused by bad weather, shortage of materials, and defects in materials. Throughout the whole period, 1952-56, the work had to go on with noisy and dirty building processes disrupting normal academic life. Often long detours had to be undertaken to reach an adjacent room. In the end the College fell out with its architect and just as W. Campbell Jones had taken over from E.W. Mountford in 1908 so Richard Sheppard & Partners succeeded in 1957. Completed and handed over as it became ready, the new accommodation gradually changed the whole physical aspect of the College, providing a reasonable environment in which the academic development into College of Advanced Technology could be fostered.

In September 1954 it was reported that the new library was handed over and that the books were being transferred. The new refectories on the left of the extended St. John Street entrance hall, providing seating for about three hundred students and eighty staff were in use by summer 1955. Above this, connected by a new main staircase, was the new Great Hall, measuring 100’ x 66’ (including the stage), and seating 700, which was
finished just in time for the Carol Service on 20th December, 1955. In the same year the sculptured panels by Richard Browne of Kingston were put in position on the St. John Street elevation. The five plaques represent the main interests of the College at that time, Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Optics and Chemistry. The architects, Campbell Jones and Sons, achieved a highly commendable harmony with Mountford’s original building.

The basement of the Hall block housed new laboratories for high vacuum technology, spectroscopy, photometry, electron microscopy, x-ray technology, electrical installations, advanced optics and physics research. The new library block housed aeronautics, hydraulics and metrology in the basement, workshops for production engineering on the ground floor, instrument engineering, instrumentation and process control on the first floor, six classrooms on the second floor and the new library on the third floor. The former refectory space became staff and common rooms and there was reallocation of academic space.

Completed at a cost in excess of £397,000, including fees, the buildings of schemes 2 and 3 added 27,000 square feet, (excluding corridors, cloakrooms and stores) to usable space. Leaving aside the library furnishing of which an account has been given in chapter five, donations toward the cost of furniture included £200 from the Old N’lons for a notice board and furniture for the Students’ Common Room and £50 from the Institute of Metal Finishing (originally the Electro-Depositors Technical Society), for a Chairman’s chair and gavel for the Board Room.

The official opening was marked by the issue of a commemorative brochure and was carried out by Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education, before four hundred guests on the 7th May 1956. The Minister referred to the Northampton as “the senior engineering institution in London.”

This development was marked by the replacement in the main entrance area of the College of the bronze plaque commemorating the laying of the original foundation stone. Articles recovered from behind that stone were replaced together with current Treasury notes for £1 and ten shillings and a twelve-sided threepenny piece, a copy of the Minutes of the Governing Body meeting of 20th September 1954, a current copy of “The Times”, current prospectuses and details of the rebuilding and extensions scheme. The original artefacts replaced were a half-sovereign, a half-crown, a florin, a shilling, a sixpenny piece, a penny, a halfpenny, a copy of “The Times” for Monday, 9th July, 1894 an artists drawing of the anticipated front elevation of the Mountford Building and a hand written scroll detailing the provenance of the building.
When, early in Dr. Tait's time as Principal of the Northampton College of Advanced Technology Schemes IV and V were resubmitted to the L.C.C., approval for an immediate building start was expected. The L.C.C., however, made no such provision and the expansion schemes had to be justified afresh. Perhaps it was considered that the College had had its share of scarce resources, for the revised final cost of Schemes II and III was £400,332 including £31,933 from College funds. At this period development was expedited by meetings at the College between representatives of the Ministry of Education, the London County Council and the Governing Body.

Scheme IV involved the erection of two additional floors on the Connaught Building, allowance having been made for this in the original structure. Scheme V involved the demolition of the small property on the Connaught corner site and the erection of an extension to round off the building. The cost of these two schemes was estimated to be £117,055, including fees, plus £17,222 for furniture and equipment. The College put up the idea of growth in student numbers from 754 full-time and sandwich students and 1,200 part-time day students in 1957-58, to 1,764 full-time and sandwich students and 900 part-time day students in 1960-61. Thus, it was urged, a 14% increase in accommodation was needed in 1958-59 and a further 30% in 1960-61. Other space-consuming developments, apart from mere numbers, were said to be final year Diploma in Technology projects and choice of subjects in second year sandwich courses. The Ministry representative agreed that Schemes IV and V should have top priority in the 1960-61 building programme and this was subsequently approved.

The Ministry required cost cutting and deleted one lift from the plans. Richard Sheppard Robson and Partners were the architects. Work started at the end of August 1959 on demolition of the corner property. The structural engineers found soil problems and the District Surveyor insisted that the foundations must reach the blue clay. Piling added £4,000 to the cost. Although the original structure was then not deemed to have suitable foundations to carry the two additional floors that it was designed to support, the new related piling was arranged to do so instead. Thus on 11th November, 1960 the first part of the extensions was in use and on 22nd March 1961 Lord Fleck, K.B.E., F.R.S., opened the extended Connaught Building. There were new laboratories for chemistry, industrial, organic, inorganic, and a lecture theatre, classrooms and staff rooms. The net additional space was 14,340 square feet.

With regard to Scheme VI, that for an additional group of buildings to the north east of the main block, a longer time scale was known to be
involved. The buildings taken into use in the 1970's were very different from the bare proposal of 1949 for extension in that direction. Development from polytechnic to college of advanced technology to university occurred in the intervening period. Such extensive additions inevitably came by stages. The Electrical Building, High Voltage Laboratory and Refectory Block became known as Stage I and the University Building comprising the Library, Students' Union, Lecture Theatres, New Hall and Caretakers Flats became known as Stage II. Stage III was the Civil and Mechanical Engineering Building and the large lecture theatre.

The Ministry of Education requested details of enrolments for 1958-59 and estimated enrolments for 1964-65, together with the total College area existing, and gross additional needs. 250,378 square feet gross additional space was said to be required for a proposed enrolment of 3,777. This was revised and agreed at 3,350 with a peak daily student load of 2,200. Subsequently, by March 1962, this peak daily student load was again revised to 2,750 students and building planning was on this basis.

A team was appointed to co-ordinate plans prepared by departments and to work out the details; its members were C.W. Trow, Vice-Principal, N.P. Roberts, senior lecturer in Civil Engineering, E.J. Shove, Works Superintendent and E.J. Taylor, Chief Clerk, and the University owes much to them. They are said to have met on more than four hundred occasions over 16 years, co-opting others such as M.H. Heppenstall and D. Jenkins at different times. In order to cope with the numbers proposed, the L.C.C. agreed that, in addition to the Main Building and Connaught Building, extensions of 257,330 square feet gross were necessary; a figure almost identical with that requested! The only land available to the College was the site of the temporary hutsments in Spencer Street and so the L.C.C. suggested compulsory purchase of land and properties in Ashby Street, Spencer Street, Goswell Road, Northampton Square, Wallasey Street and Earlston Street. This area was zoned in the London Development Plan as residential and not programmed for development. Thus, involved in the project, was a change of use, a closure of the two streets last named, compulsory purchase and demolition of houses, twenty-five of them on the supplementary list of buildings of special or architectural interest (16 in Northampton Square and 9 in Ashby Street). George Baxter, the inventor of an oil-colour printing process that revolutionized art publishing lived at and worked from 11 Northampton Square, 1844-67, adding number 12 in 1851. He is commemorated by a plaque on the University Building.

As the site would provide for the required expansion and additionally for a further 80,000 square feet of floor space, it could therefore be acquired
in two stages. The L.C.C. was willing to act to acquire the site and rehouse the dispossessed people. In return, an assurance was given that the College would remain on the Clerkenwell site, as extended, for a further ten to fifteen years, the L.C.C. to be given the first option to purchase the freehold if the College were to move. The extended site would total four acres and could house a 2,750 student load. It was agreed that further sites in the neighbourhood, aggregating two acres, might be available in due course and thus 3,250 students could be a reasonable target figure.

The Governing Body resolved: “That after full consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of transferring the College in its entirety to a location outside the London area, the declared policy of this Governing Body is that the College shall remain in London, centred on its present site, and that accordingly the plan currently under consideration for the extension of the College on a site bounded by Spencer Street, Goswell Road and Ashby Street should proceed without further delay.” The Ministry of Education agreed with this decision on receiving an assurance that the L.C.C. would co-operate in extending the site.

In 1962 a contract was signed with the architects, Richard Sheppard, Robson and Partners, for three large blocks of buildings linked by covered ways together with a circular refectory block. There was a Major Extensions Scheme Committee set up composed of Messrs. Thompson, Kapp, Kerensky, Wright, Chellingsworth, Tait and Trow. Quantity Surveyors were appointed; E.C. Harris and Partners, also Structural Engineers, Hajnal & Myers and Mechanical & Electrical Engineers responsible for heating and ventilation, Zisman Bowyer & Partners. The architectural partner in charge was Gordon Taylor and the associate in charge was Alexei Marcoff. The aim was to complete the first stage, of Electrical Engineering Department, Refectories and Boiler House, by 1966 and stage two by 1968.

Inevitably these dates represented far too sanguine a view of the possible speed of action. The Compulsory Purchase Order was not published by the London County Council until the 26th July 1963 and then objections were lodged and a public enquiry was held at Finsbury Town Hall on 19th January 1964. The delay gave time for more mature thought about the plans. The absurd idea of a circular refectory was now rejected and a rectangular building was decided upon. It was known that the planned Library space was too small and ideas of building additional floors were explored. A high plot ratio had however already been agreed upon (2½ to one, that is 365,000 square feet on a plot of 144,000 square feet) and there was a height limitation of 45 degree angle from the road centres. Strengthening for additional floors was thus unnecessary.
Temporary additional space was acquired at this time. There was the Angel Cafe, the former J. Lyons & Co. Ltd. building at the Angel, that was leased to the College from 4th July 1960 for £1 rent per annum for six or seven years when it was thought that it would be required by the L.C.C. for a road improvement scheme. Then there was the “Vogue” Building, 223-227 St. John Street, leased in 1962 for fourteen years. This was 12,500 square feet on three upper floors, and later the ground floor and basement were also leased. Earlier, in 1959, part of the Ophthalmic Optics Department had been moved to Laystern School, Cranwood Street, E.C.1, and in 1963 the rest of this building became available. With “mixed feelings on the part of the staff of the Ophthalmic Optics Department, who feared that the department might become isolated from the rest of the College”, extensive adaptations were made to enable the whole department to be housed there from September of that year.

The space vacated by Optics was adapted, with a new concrete floor and rather incongruous square dormer windows in the roof facing St. John Street, enabling the provision of 20 tutorial rooms of 120-200 square feet each.

On the 27th July, 1965, plans for expansion received a temporary set-back with the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s statement on the deferment of capital expenditure. Starting dates for all projects were to be deferred for six months. Exemption from deferment could be gained only for projects, either of immediate benefit to the national economy, which obviously did not apply in this case, or of up to £50,000 cost if a substantial number of additional places could be provided. Fortunately, the College had such a limited project planned and this was the purchase and adaptation of the building, 214-222 St. John Street, that became known as Walmisley House. Purchase was completed on 1st October, 1965, for £185,000 and a change of use order, from light industrial to educational purposes, was made by Islington Borough Council initially for ten years. The University Grants Committee provided the purchase money and £50,000 for adaptation.

The happy direct relationship with the Ministry of Education had ended on the 1st April 1965 when responsibility for the College was transferred to the U.G.C. Direct contact with officials responsible for the disbursement of public money for higher education was replaced by indirect contact via a quasi-autonomous national governmental organisation. Queueing for funds for building replaced reasonably direct response, and national financial stringency delayed a start on the main extensions scheme.
In November 1965 the Ministry of Transport had issued the necessary order closing Earlsote Street and Walmsley Street and sewer and power supply diversions were put in place. By March 1966 the Greater London Council was reaching the hard core of resistance from people needing to be rehoused, two years and nine months after the signing of the compulsory purchase order but, of course, the order had not been effective until 15th January 1965. When tenders finally came to be invited for the main contract, the lowest proved to be between £50,000-£60,000 above the U.G.C. grant.

A contract was signed with Marshall Andrew and Company for stages I and II to be built together in order to provide economies and work begun on site on the first of August 1966 with the aim of completion of stage one by 31st August 1968 and stage two by the following August. Dewatering of the site was essential and caused delays as the water reappeared. The water table proved to be some eight feet higher in places than the trial holes had indicated and extra piling added to the cost. Whilst excavating the twenty feet deep basement, the contractors found wooden pipes as used for London’s fresh water supply from Roman times, and of course in the early seventeenth century Myddelton’s New River Company used bored-out elm tree pipes and these were known to have been laid along St. John Street. Some of the finds were presented to what is now known as the Thames Water Authority for their museum in Rosebery Avenue.

Stages I and II were handed over from 4th March 1969 to 31st March 1970 as they became ready. The Chancellor, Col. Sir Ian Bowater opened stages I and II on 9th November 1970. Stage III had William Moss and Sons Ltd., as contractors. It was begun in May 1971 and delays, including a five-week building strike took the handover date into 1974. Named the Tait Building, it was opened by Dr. O.A. Kerenksy, C.B.E., F.R.S., in the presence of the Chancellor, Sir Lindsay Ring, G.B.E., and Sir James and Lady Tait on 19th March 1976. Costs have not been mentioned here because of their constantly changing character and of the necessity to use the Development Fund to meet the entire cost of the very fine 350 seat Oliver Thompson Lecture Theatre. Stages one to three have provided, Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering departments of a spaciousness that must be the envy of other universities. Mathematics and Computing have also been appropriately rehoused. The new Skinners’ Library, whilst small, wrongly shaped and inconveniently sited, has the pleasant features of the tree tops of the square and a fine view of St. Pauls Cathedral to the south. The new Student Union was received with acclaim and the Refectories and conference facilities are most adequate.
The Architect's Journal survey of the buildings was remarkably complimentary about the total scheme; the only criticism being the predictable one about the positioning of the library, which was not the architect's fault. The pedestrian terraces were noted but in reality they are not used and facilitate vandalism. The major modern range of the University's buildings, then, was first designed in 1962, commissioned in two phases and erected over a period extending from 1966 to 1974. The north side of Northampton Square being closed to traffic in 1971-72, a distinctive university precinct has been attained.

Residences

Northampton Hall, the first hall of residence, is remarkable, not only for its size, but also for the locality in which it is situated. Bunhill Row, just outside the boundary of the City of London borders the most famous non-conformist burial ground in the country, replete with names important in our history, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, George Fox and William Blake, are examples and Keats was born nearby and Milton lived for his last twelve years in Bunhill Row. When the foundation excavation was made to a depth of twenty three feet, Roman artefacts were found. Being a massive building it was built on a mild steel reinforced concrete raft 2' 6" thick resting on the London clay.

This L.C.C. planned building was to provide five hundred study bedrooms in eighteen storeys. The site of 2 1/2 acres was to accommodate the hostel, a "satellite" 500 student college, a two storey dining hall to seat 350, kitchens and a covered way to link the hostel to the dining facilities. The "satellite" College was to house inter-alia, the Northampton's Ophthalmic Optics Department and there was delay whilst this problem was resolved. The new college, it was decided, should be exclusively a maintained technical college of the L.C.C. with its own catering facilities. The resolution of the Ophthalmic and Dispensing Optics problem is outlined in chapter six.

The Hall of Residence structure finally cost about twice the original estimate. M.J. Gleeson, Ltd., were the contractors.

Brigadier D.V. Henchley, O.B.E., B.A., M.I.MechE., M.B.I.M., A.D.C., then Deputy Director of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, H.Q., Eastern Command, was successful, among 389 formal applications for the post of Warden. He commenced in his new post on October 1st, 1963, but the first hundred study bedrooms were not ready for occupation until the sixth of April, 1964. Heal's furnished the dining hall and balcony common room. The administration procedures of the Hall were initially laid
down by a committee set up in 1962 consisting of Messrs. Thompson, Franklin, Pearson, Trow, Tait, Heppenstall and the President of the Union, and they proposed the name, Northampton Hall. Dr. Douglas Inman, Reader in Chemistry, was appointed Senior Tutor and Mr. F.L. Litchfield as Hall Manager. The Hall was officially opened on 27th July 1964 and by March 1965 there were 422 men and 30 women, the warden and 16 Tutors in residence.

In October 1963 a one-and-a-half acre plot of land with warehouses, located at 122-128 Goswell Road was purchased at auction for £291,000 freehold. The vendor was British Road Services and part of the property had been a pre-war multi-storey stable for Carter Paterson's horses. Sir James Tait and T.H. Holmes recount with pleasure their discovery of this most suitable site and their appreciation of the assistance and flexible interpretation of Ministry rules by the officials concerned. Plans were soon drawn up, by Richard Sheppard Robson & Partners for a building complex of a central podium of four floors surmounted by a tower of twelve or thirteen floors to be constructed on stilts, which were then unaccountably fashionable. The accommodation proposed was 240 study bedrooms, each of 220 square feet, with flats for wardens and tutorial staff, teaching space, dining room and kitchens.

Very soon the plan was deferred pending consideration of the changed needs following the proposed university status. The first building erected on the Goswell site was the ANONYMOUS DONOR'S FINSBURY HALL OF RESIDENCE. Having a suitable site was once again a key factor. The first offer was £300,000, and this was later raised to £400,000 and after allowing for the U.G.C. payment for furniture the actual cost of £405,619 was within the generous donation. Work began on 3rd January 1969. The official opening on the 28th February 1972 was performed by the Chancellor. The University architects planned the Hall, A.E. Symes, Ltd., were the contractors and M.H. Heppenstall, M.B.E., Senior Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering became Warden.

When, in due course, the Anonymous Donor gave a further sum of £450,000, HEYWORTH HALL was built adjoining and sharing dining accommodation with FINSBURY HALL under the same warden. Together these halls provided 325 study bedrooms by January 1977 to add to the 490 at NORTHAMPTON HALL. The London accommodation situation makes a further hall or halls a priority. Also the increase in student demand for married quarters will influence the type of accommodation provided in future.

HEYWORTH HALL was in fact the third building on the Goswell Road site. The second was the Saddlers' Sports Centre, so named after its funding
and continued support by the Worshipful Company of Saddlers and opened on 14th June 1974 by R.W. Snowden, Master of the Company in the presence of the Chancellor, Sir Hugh Wontner. From the beginning the Goswell Road site was also intended to be the location of a new Optometry Department Building. The U.G.C. in due course approved a schedule of accommodation but financial cut backs have continued to defer the commencement of this building. Meanwhile, as we have noted, Dame Alice Owen Girl’s School Building was leased and adapted and the Department moved to this larger, but still temporary, accommodation for the beginning of the 1977-78 session.

A site for a Hall of Residence at the Minories, immediately north-east of the Tower of London was first offered to the University by the Corporation of London in 1966, in an approach made to the Pro-Chancellor. The Corporation was building a multi-storey car park and had planned to build an office block on top. By January, 1967, the University had accepted liability to pay £56,000 for strengthening the roof slab of the car park, on which a Hall for four hundred students would be built, and for provision for a plant room for the Hall. Later, the planned roadworks made available a triangular island site immediately in front of the proposed Minories Hall of Residence and this was offered with the prospect of building thereon, a sixty thousand square feet gross, Graduate Business Centre.

Both schemes were impracticable for several reasons. The major one was that the twin-towered Hall of Residence plan was very properly turned down at a public enquiry in 1970 on the grounds that it seriously harmed a national heritage in that the Tower of London skyline seen from the south bank would be intruded upon. The high-rise was, however, necessary in order to secure the density required for economic viability. Finally, the site is on a very noisy major road and the buildings would require total double glazing. Eventually both projects were seen to be too expensive and were abandoned.

Other Buildings

Mention has been made in chapter seven of the University’s presence in the centre of the City of London in Gresham College. Two floors and the Hall of this building were leased to the University by the Gresham Grand Committee in 1966-67, initially for 12½ years. The growth of business studies led to the leasing of 23 Goswell Road, named Lionel Denny House on its opening on 17th May 1971. Pressures for development of The City University Business School await the completion of the Barbican
Horseshoe Building where two floors will house the School in a few years time. 40 Gloucester Way, behind the Connaught Building, was acquired on lease in 1967-68 to provide urgently needed space whilst the new buildings were awaited. This became known as the Gloucester Annexe and has subsequently been invaluable in providing space for new developments. Details of the Moynagh Health Centre appear elsewhere, this building being financed from the Development Fund and in use by 1972.

**Future Sites**

As to extension of the University estate in the future, earlier plans for the designation of eight additional acres for university purposes in the area bounded by Rastwick Street, Goswell Road and Central Street did not gain U.G.C. support. However, Council was informed in July 1970 that the London Borough of Islington had granted in principle to 100,000 square feet of space for academic purposes on the whole of the sites requested in the area bounded by Sebastian Street, Goswell Road and Northampton Square, except the listed houses in Northampton Square (number 18a, 19-25) and 137-157 Goswell Road and La Sebastian Street. There was no objection to the closure of Sebastian Street in conjunction with such a development.
References


5. Northampton Institute Formal opening by . . . the Lord Mayor, on the 18th March, 1898. Details of buildings and work . . . 1898. 27p. illus.
