

EXETER COLLEGE OXFORD

A New Quad at Walton Street **Heritage Impact Assessment Including Statement of Significance**

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Introduction

This Heritage Impact Assessment assesses the proposals for the creation of a 'third quadrangle' for Exeter College against the significance of the building as assessed in the Ruskin College Buildings Walton Street Oxford Statement of Significance dated December 2012 and in accordance with the NPPF. This document is included in an appendix. The Heritage Impact Assessment analyses the impact of the proposals on the heritage of the site and of its setting in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, bearing in mind the overall presumption of the NPPF in favour of sustainable development that contributes to economic, social and environmental progress :

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

In preparing this assessment due regard has been taken to the advice contained in the English Heritage published guidance on 'Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment', 'The setting of heritage assets' and 'Seeing the history in the view'.

1 Historical significance and significance of use

Impact

Ruskin College is moving to Headington, and the Walton Street site has been acquired by Exeter College as a third quadrangle for Exeter College.

Justification

Exeter College is extremely constrained within its Turl Street site in the centre of Oxford, and this project represents a unique opportunity for it to satisfy its accommodation needs within a new campus close to the main site. It will represent an entirely new model for a College campus, not a residential dormitory, but a fully fledged third quad, complete with a meeting hall, meeting rooms, archive facilities, and a new learning commons, a unique student facility combining a social area with cafe, and a quiet space for private study. It lacks a student refectory, which will remain in the old College hall. Exeter College's use of the Ruskin College site will therefore enhance its significance as an innovative centre of learning. Moreover, Ruskin College will retain a base in the new building so as to be able to continue to offer teaching near the centre of town, to complement their new main campus in Headington. Ruskin College was significant for bringing higher education within reach of those who could not otherwise have afforded it. Exeter College is also committed to making higher education financially accessible to students of the requisite academic standard through scholarships and bursaries.

The sustainability of the main Turl Street site is enhanced by the new use of the Walton Street buildings, because it can provide new, fully accessible, facilities that cannot be provided at Turl Street, or that can otherwise only be provided through alterations harmful to the historic site.

Mitigation

Given that Ruskin College have moved, it is difficult to envisage a more appropriate new use than as a third quad for Exeter College. Nevertheless, Ruskin College retain use of a lecture room on the ground floor, in the position of the historic Buxton Memorial Hall. The memory of Ruskin College will also be perpetuated by the retention of the carved plaque over the main entrance, the memorial inscriptions on the aprons below the windows of the Walton Street elevation, and the bronze Buxton memorial plaque, which will be re-set in the entrance area.

2 Architectural significance: the site as a whole

Impact

The proposals involve the major remodelling of the 1913 building, and the demolition of the other buildings on the site.

Justification

Alison Brooks Associates were appointed as architects for the project following a major architectural competition between six architectural practices of national reputation for award-winning design excellence. Uniquely among the competitors, they envisaged a campus of two 3-sided courts linked by a major new level circulation spine leading from the main Walton Street entrance to the full depth of the site, the first court open on the side facing Worcester College, the second court open to Worcester Place, flanked by a new meeting hall. This architectural part offers three major enhancements to the significance of the site, firstly by creating for the first time a unified architectural rationale in place of the truncated 1913 project and its ad-hoc extensions; secondly in offering a generous sense of openness towards the street in place of the existing closed and inward-looking appearance, and towards the local community, who will be able to use the facilities that the hall has to offer; and thirdly making the whole site fully accessible, with all the major spaces at ground level.

The buildings to be demolished are of low architectural significance, as identified in the Statement of Significance. The 1936 extension is 'solidly built but of minimal architectural significance'. The 1967 building is 'a competent example of its period and style but not outstanding' and has 'a hostile appearance at street level'. The 1982 buildings are 'of no special architectural significance'.

Mitigation

The new buildings should prove to be of exceptional architectural significance, representing a major enhancement of the architectural significance of the site. The external elevations of the 1913 building will be retained as a memory of the social and architectural significance of Ruskin College. The impact on the significance of the 1913 building is considered in more detail below.

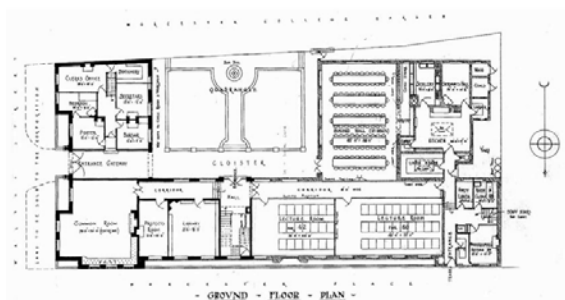
3 Architectural significance: the 1913 building

Impact: Ground floor level

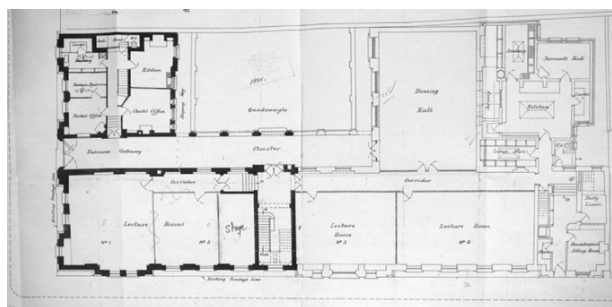
The whole of the ground floor will be rebuilt at the Walton Street level.

Justification

The competition elevations of 1907 show that Joseph and Smith originally intended to have the ground floor at the Walton Street level. However, as finally built in 1913, the whole of the ground floor was raised up by several steps, apart from the entrance corridor itself. The rooms to the left were approached up a flight of steps, and the only way into the Buxton Memorial Hall to the right was by doubling back via the main staircase. A direct way into the Buxton Memorial Hall was later achieved by inserting a flight of steps into the main entrance, immediately followed by another flight down again, with an ugly stair lift. The only acceptable long-term solution to the access problem is to rebuild the ground floor at the Walton Street level. This will also allow a generous entrance area and better Porters' Lodge facilities. The rooms that will thereby be lost are of little architectural significance, but the scale and position of the Ruskin Room will be recreated in the reconstructed floor plan.



1907 competition plan



1913 plan as built

The main staircase is of minor significance on account of the decorative ironwork of its balustrade, the only element of the interior that shows some architectural pretention. It has been altered by the addition of boarding to the walls. However, its width is inadequate to meet current Building Regulations (1100mm rather than 1200mm wide), and its replacement is therefore necessary. The south stair is of even less significance, as it is even narrower.

The Hall (former Buxton Memorial Hall) appears to have been a change of mind during or after the construction in 1913. The 1913 ground plan shows two lecture rooms instead of the Hall. The partitions have been scribbled over on the drawing to indicate their removal and the stage added in manuscript. Following rebuilding at ground floor level to make it accessible, the NE room will be retained for use by Ruskin College.

Impact: upper floor levels

The upper floors will be reconstructed to a new plan.

Justification

The size and type of the existing rooms is smaller than required to meet the College's current space standards, and the layout does not comply with Building Regulations in the following respects:

- No lift
- Corridor width inadequate
- Staircases too narrow
- No DDA compliant bedrooms
- No thermal insulation to the external walls

These shortcomings are fully identified in the Alison Brooks Associates' Design and Access Statement. A sustainable new use for the buildings therefore requires a fundamental redesign of the plan form. As set out in Stockley's 1913 Ruskin Building – Building Appraisal this cannot be achieved without rebuilding behind the retained façade, on account of the filler joist construction, which makes trimming for service risers and lift destructive, the requirements for structural support of the new partition layout, and the need to excavate at basement level.

The plan form is not architecturally significant, nor are any of the interiors. It is clear from the changes to the design between the competition of 1907 and the building of a truncated and reduced design in 1913 that there was a shortage of funds, as also evidenced by the contemporary fundraising appeal. The simplicity of the design is therefore a product of economy rather than having any particular social purpose. The exterior design rather presupposes the reverse, a wish to provide a traditional Oxford collegiate, rather than working class, ambience. Although apparently little altered, the rooms and corridors were small and narrow with little expenditure on finishes. The tiling to the walls of the corridor has been painted over.

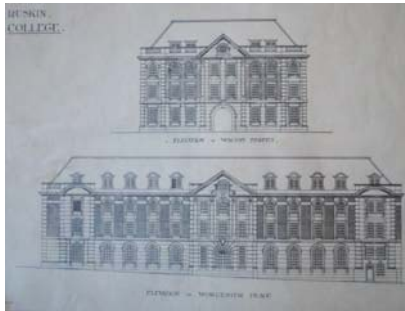
The rebuilding will not be apparent from Walton Street or Worcester Place, as there will still be cellular rooms behind the elevations, and the pejorative connotations of façade retention, associated with the creation of open-plan offices, will thereby be avoided.

Impact: Roof level

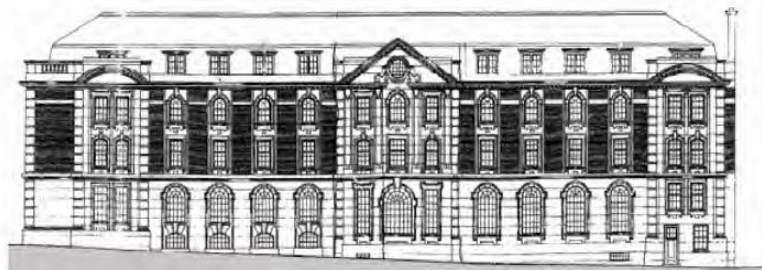
The required number of rooms can only be achieved by accommodating additional rooms in the roof. The intention is to do this by adding a single line of rooms at the rear of the site, accommodated within an asymmetric curved roof, covered by diagonal metal tiles.

Justification

Joseph and Smithem's 1907 competition design shows a tall, steeply pitched roof, almost as high as the brickwork of the upper floors, following the precedent of those magnificent buildings of the Wren period that have tall roofs (eg Coleshill and, in Oxford, 16 St Giles) and those buildings of the Queen Anne revival and Wrennaissance that emulate them (eg Bryanston and, in Oxford 27 and 29 Banbury Road by JJ Stevenson). In these buildings, as in the 1907 competition elevations, the height of the roof is more than a quarter of the overall apparent height of the elevation. However, in execution the 1913 building has a mansard roof with a steep and then a low pitch, having the peculiar property of making very little impact in nearer views, and a greater impact in longer views down Walton Street from north and south.



1907 competition elevations



1913 elevations with mansard roof



Coleshill by Roger Pratt 1660



Bryanston by Norman Shaw 1889



16 St Giles – front elevation



16 St Giles – rear elevation



5 Banbury Road



27 Banbury Road by JJ Stevenson

There is therefore good historical precedent for a roof of greater scale, proportioned to the whole height of the elevation (a quarter of the overall height in each of the historic examples). Alison Brooks stands at the forefront of the movement away from the Modern Movement's suppression of the roof, and the expression of the new roof is capable of adding a rich new layer of architectural interest and significance to the 1913 building, reflecting the new layer of use in the history of the site. Significantly, the height of the proposed roof is just over a quarter of the overall height, as seen in the longer views from the north and south along Walton Street.

The material of the roof covering will be of diagonal stainless steel slates, with an alternating colour-coated surface finish. The pattern will have a decorative quality inspired by certain Oxford precedents, such as the roof and spire of Exeter College Chapel, and the roof of the Oxford Museum. The surface will be slightly more reflective and lighter than the traditional roofs of Oxford, which are generally of stone tiles, clay tiles, slate or lead. However the effect of the lighter colour will be to dematerialise the appearance of the roof by picking up reflections from the sky. The surface coating, together with the curve and pitch of the roof, will avoid solar glare from reflections. A sample will be mounted at roof level on the Ruskin building to demonstrate the appearance.



Exeter College Chapel



The Oxford Museum

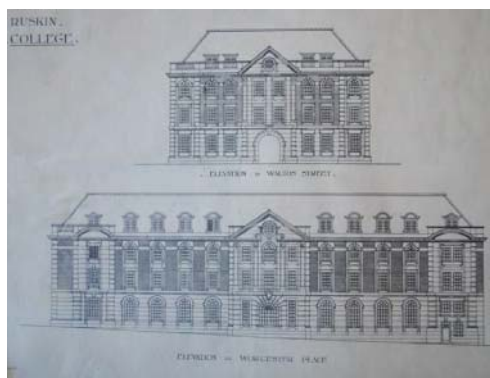
Impact: Street elevations to Walton Street and Worcester Place

The sills and aprons of the ground floor windows will be lowered to suit the new ground floor level, and the windows replaced to a new design.

Justification

The design of the new buildings will be carried out to the highest contemporary standards of sustainability, highly insulated, and with controlled ventilation and heat recovery. It is intended to increase the performance of the 1913 building to similar standards, as required by current legislation. This will be done by infilling the entrance archway on Walton Street with a glazed screen, and by replacing the windows by new double-glazed windows in metal frames. These will allow a much increased light levels within the rooms, and will be able to accommodate thermal lining to the outside walls more easily, without the cold bridging that would be the consequence of the retention of the windows.

This change will have a significant impact on the appearance of the building. However, the existing fenestration is an architectural compromise. The original drawing of 1913 shows similar thick timber glazing bars to all floors, but as executed the ground floor windows are of metal rather than timber, centre-pivot rather than double-hung sash, with a different pane size from those on the upper floors.



1907 competition design



Early photograph showing pivoting metal windows on the ground floor

There is a clear justification for the change in appearance, reflecting the change in use from Ruskin College to Exeter College, a highly significant development in the evolving history of the site. Many historic buildings are palimpsests, reflecting different layers of alteration and use, and there is every reason why this should be appropriate in the 1913 building, the significance of which lies more in its history than in its architecture. There are many other examples of buildings where the

replacement of the windows with new metal windows of larger pane size has added a new layer of architectural interest, particularly in the case of classical buildings where proportion is more important than detail. Examples of bronze-framed windows within classical masonry elevations can be found extensively in the City of London in buildings contemporaneous with the original Ruskin College building of 1913.



Edwardian offices in Gracechurch Street, City of London with bronze windows

Mitigation

The ground floor window surrounds will be extended to match the existing, and the existing inscribed apron stones reset at a lower level.

Impact: Structure, flank and rear elevations

The structure of the building will be entirely renewed, retaining the street facades, and the south flank wall and chimneys will be rebuilt in facsimile.

Justification

The engineer has demonstrated that rebuilding is necessary in order to achieve the desired changes to the floor plans (See Stockley's 1913 Ruskin Building – Building Appraisal), since the filler-joist floor structure cannot accommodate the moving of all the partition lines and numerous penetrations for new services. The new rear elevation will be built on a new line to accommodate the necessary size of rooms and width of corridor. The rear elevation was never part of the public realm, and its design was compromised by the partial realisation of the competition scheme, and by the later infills. Its loss will be outweighed by the gain of Alison Brooks' new integrated architectural conception.

The south wall, with its prominent chimneys, is important to the appearance of the building as seen from the south along Walton Street. However, the engineer has demonstrated the problems with retaining the south wall while the rest of the building is rebuilt. It is built of limestone and red brick using lime mortar, and it will be carefully taken down by hand, cleaning and setting aside the bricks and the blocks for rebuilding in facsimile, except for substituting a stone base to match those on the front elevation, rather than brick as inappropriately used at present. It has been noted that the brickwork has been repointed at some stage in the past, and in the event that it proves difficult to clean the bricks adequately for reuse, then matching handmade bricks will be used in the rebuilding.

Mitigation

A full record will be made of the fabric of the 1913 building in accordance with the level 3 standards of recording set out in the English Heritage publication *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

4 Evidential significance

There is possible evidence of the Civil War fortifications to be gleaned from the archaeology of the site. An archaeological desk-top appraisal has been carried out by Oxford Archaeology, who have identified the potential for archaeological remains to be disturbed in the undisturbed garden area, but that is not considered to be an area of high potential. Moreover, in view of the recent date of the buildings, there is little or no historic or architectural knowledge to be gained from a study of the fabric of the 1913 building or of the later buildings on the site. With regard to the 1913 building, since it is intended to rebuild the whole of the ground floor and of the roof, it will in practice be more appropriate to rebuild the whole building behind the retained street and south flank elevations. This will involve the loss of the plan form of the original building, but allow the creation of a new set of rooms fit for purpose, safer in the event of fire, better lit, better insulated, and more sustainable.

Mitigation

A full record will be made of the fabric of the 1913 building in accordance with the level 3 standards of recording set out in the English Heritage publication *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

5 Communal significance

The communal significance of the buildings of Ruskin College lies in their provision of higher education for working men unable to afford to study at Oxbridge colleges. However, the buildings play little role in the life of the local community, being sequestered behind walls. The communal significance of the site through education will be sustained through the new use as a campus of Exeter College. The College has a policy that no suitable student should be prevented from attending by reason of limited means, and scholarships are available for this purpose. The significance of the site for the local community will be enhanced through the enjoyment of the open-sided court and the meeting hall facing Worcester Place.

6 Impact on the Conservation Area

As outlined in the assessment of significance, Walton Street is characterised by a general grain of residential development, interspersed with larger institutional buildings – Worcester College, Ruskin College, the University Press, Somerville College. Because of the large overhang of the cornice of the 1913 building, the proposed new roof will be partly obscured in nearer views. In longer views along Walton Street from the south, the increased scale of the proposed new roof is screened by the tall chimney stacks of the flank south elevation.



Nearer view from opposite side of Walton Street



View from the south

As seen in longer views from the north, the roof will have a more pronounced presence than at present, but one that is nevertheless proportionate to the overall height of the elevation (slightly more than a quarter of the height of the building, as in the historic precedents quoted above) . The appearance of the roof will be enlivened by the proposed use of diagonal metal sheet roofing, and by the projecting windows , and the use of colour-coated stainless steel will dematerialise the roof by reflecting the sky. The roofscape and elevations along Worcester Place have been broken down to follow the vertical rhythm of the buildings of that street, the roof stepping down gradually from the larger scale of Walton Street to the smaller scale of the adjacent houses on Worcester Place to the west. This represents a great enhancement to the appearance and significance of the site.



View from the north



View along Worcester Place



The view from Carfax will not be affected

7 Impact on Worcester College and its garden

Impact on Worcester College buildings

The main buildings at Worcester College are grade 1 listed, including the north range and the Provost's lodging of 1773 by Henry Keene. The elevations face south overlooking the main court, and north towards the orchard, with views of the new 2006 range of Worcester College buildings and of the buildings of Ruskin College behind the stone garden wall. The west range of the proposed new buildings will follow the line and height of the Worcester College, albeit with the addition of further rooms in the roof. This follows a long-standing Oxford tradition of rooms added in a 'cockloft', as indeed found in the attic floor added in 1926 to the roof of the north range at Worcester College. It should be noted that the planning officers' report on the Worcester College building in 2006 noted that 'to some extent the permeability of views through the land to the north would be lost. However, officers are of the opinion that the proposal would not cause harm to the setting'. They also noted that 'the proposal introduces a modern architectural style, which is not considered to be at odds with other more modern developments nearby such as the Sainsbury's building or recently approved College development further north on Worcester Place. Neither is it considered overly large in height or massing in relation to adjacent buildings or views from the

adjacent park and garden'. The same considerations apply in the case of the proposed new range for the Ruskin College site.

It has been suggested that there may be some significance in the views from the Observatory towards Worcester College, on the grounds that both buildings were designed by Keene and that the meridian may have been sighted to a point on the terrace. If so, it is not documented, and must have been entirely fortuitous, as the siting of the Observatory was governed by other factors. The view to the terrace has in any case been blocked by later development, and the meridian in fact touches a point further to the east. As regards views towards the observatory from Worcester College, these are available currently only from rooms of minor significance at higher level in the north range and Provosts' lodging, and will still be available over the top of the proposed new building from rooms at top floor level.

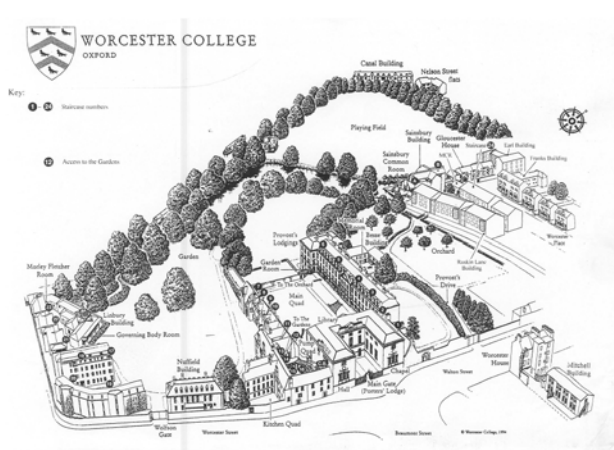
The Provosts' Lodging, together with its most significant rooms, faces west rather than north and south as the rest of the north range. The significant views from the Provosts' Lodging are therefore towards the historic landscape and lakes to the west rather than to the north. The only views towards the new building will be from secondary bedrooms on the upper floors.

Impact on Worcester College garden

The Grade 11* listed garden of Worcester College abuts the site to the south, the other side of a wall running alongside a track that formerly ran from Walton Street down to the lake. The garden is based on the grounds of Gloucester College of the 1280's, dissolved and reconstituted as Gloucester hall in 1451 and refounded as Worcester College in 1714. The grounds were largely remodelled between 1810 and 1820 around a crescent-shaped lake, with additional planting in 1827. According to the List description, 'by the mid C19 (Hoggar, 1850; OS 1876) the dramatic landscaping around the college had been accomplished, with the creation of the lake, bounded to the east and south by lawns with island shrub beds and specimen trees. The lake was enclosed by perimeter walks, and enjoyed views to and from the buildings surrounding Main Quad'. As Mavis Batey puts it in *Regency Gardens* 'The Fellows of Worcester College, in 1817, having skilfully contrived a would-be cottage orné with curly barge boards and trellis on the upper end of a monastic range of buildings, created a lake and a forest lawn with a perimeter Regency ornamental shrubbery in the college grounds'. The most significant parts of the garden are the south lawns, the Provosts' Garden and the lake; less so the cricket ground across the lake and the north garden, which has always housed maintenance buildings in addition to the Orchard. The most significant views in the garden are those to and from the lake from the College buildings and Provosts' Lodging.



The garden in 1850 (Hoggar)



The Garden today

Views from the Provosts' garden, south garden and lake

The 1850 map shows the belt of trees that separates the Provosts' garden from those to north and south. These have now grown to form a continuous belt of trees surrounding the perimeter walk

(unfortunately including along the lakeside), broken in only one position to the north. It is only in this position that views of the new buildings will be obtained, glimpsed as in incident on the perimeter walk and from the bridge linking the Provosts' garden to the south garden. The rest of the south garden is separated from the new buildings by two lines of trees, and they will therefore not be seen. The new buildings will be glimpsed in places along the perimeter walk around the lake behind trees in Winter, but obscured by foliage in Summer.



Ruskin glimpsed from the Provost's lodging



View from path to the south garden



View from the bridge to the south garden



View from the lake

Views from the Orchard and playing field

There have always been buildings beyond the north boundary wall of the garden, and the area to the east of the Orchard has always contained maintenance, garden outbuildings and carparking, which greatly reduce the significance of this part of the garden. A thick line of evergreen holm oaks obscures the length of the current 1913 and 1936 buildings, but the 1967 and 1982 buildings are visible between the end of the line of Holm oaks and Worcester College's own Ruskin Lane Buildings of 2006 immediately behind the wall. The new design has a range of buildings in line with, and following the precedent of, those of Worcester College, being of the same height in elevation, albeit with an additional floor within the roof, and set back from the site boundary. Being taller than the existing buildings, the roof of the new building will have a somewhat greater impact than the 2006 building on views from Worcester College, but it is considered that this will not adversely affect the significance of the Orchard and any significant views from the College, bearing in mind the carparking and maintenance buildings.

From the Playing Field to the west the view is entirely obscured by buildings.



View north past cars to Ruskin College



View NE towards maintenance yard

Justification

The new buildings, like those of Worcester College itself, lie beyond the walls of the garden, where development of different forms has existed for almost as long as the garden. Although the localised view within the Orchard will change, the historically most significant views from the College buildings towards the lake will not be affected. With the exception of the orchard to the north of the College, the views will be largely screened by the belts of mature trees that surround the south and Provosts' gardens, particularly in Summer, and in Winter the new buildings will be glimpsed as incidents in the view during a perambulation of the gardens.

8 Conclusion

The design proposals from Alison Brooks Associates have evolved from those that won the competition in the light of continuing research into the significance of the buildings, and in response to comments and feedback from the Planning Authority and English Heritage. The new buildings continue and enrich the social and educational significance of the site and the memory of Ruskin College through Ruskin's continued presence on the site and through the retention of the familiar street elevations. The architectural design combines the retention of the best of the old – the elevations of the 1913 building – together with the best of the new – the innovative new College parti for Exeter College by Alison Brooks Architects, providing a rich layering of history and significance on the site. The conclusion of this Heritage Impact Assessment is that the proposals sustain or enhance the significance of the site, and that where demolition is intended, the interior of the 1913 building will be preserved by record, for deposit in the local HER archive.

Appendix A
Statement of Significance



Ruskin College Buildings

Walton Street

Oxford

Statement of Significance

December 2012







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Introduction

In its published Conservation Principles, English Heritage defines conservation (in the context of the built heritage) as ‘the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values’. This definition places conservation firmly within the overall context of sustainability that lies at the core of planning legislation and the NPPF. Change must sustain or enhance the heritage values of a place for the benefit of the whole community. This Statement of Significance sets out to provide a baseline assessment of the heritage values and significance of Ruskin College, against which the emerging proposals for its transformation into a new quadrangle for Exeter College can be assessed.

This Statement of Significance sets out to highlight the significance of the site, in the light of which the impact of the Exeter College proposals can be assessed as part of an expanded Heritage Statement to accompany Planning and Listed Building Consent applications.



Ruskin College, Walton Street, c1950



Ruskin College

History

Ruskin College's roots lie in the British Trade Union and Labour movement, which sprung out of widespread social and political change, from the mid 19th Century. This period of social criticism saw the initiation of the Labour movement and education reforms as championed by figures such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, G.B. Shaw and William Morris. It was the epoch of promoting 'education for all'.

Ruskin Hall was established in 1899, with the aim of providing a residential college for working men (and from 1919, women) '*in order to achieve social change*' (Pollins, 1984, p9). It was the first college of its kind. The aim of the curriculum was to cover a broad spectrum of 'useful subjects', mainly in the social sciences. The story began with a well-supported public meeting held in Oxford on 22nd February 1899, organised by its founders Charles A. Beard and Walter W. Vrooman, Americans studying at the University (Pollins, 1984). Its initial funding also came from America, through the wife of one of the founders, but trade unions in the UK were quick to support Ruskin Hall. The Hall was initially based at 14 St Giles in Oxford, four years later a site on the border between the Jericho area and the City centre was acquired. This site, with its dilapidated buildings, served as the headquarters of the Hall for the next ten years.

The institution was named after John Ruskin, the prominent Victorian aesthete and critic on art, education and society. Ruskin's key influence on the College's founders was his theory of placing the working man at the very centre of society. The founders sent a postcard of 14 St Giles to Ruskin in February 1899, and it is said that he gave his blessing to the College, however, his biographer Joan Evans points out that near the end of his life he '*could take no pleasure...in the establishing of a college for working men at Oxford that bore his name*'. (Evans, 1954. p104) The Hall was renamed Ruskin College in 1907.

Supported principally by trade unions and co-operative societies, the Hall offered scholarships to students. Some of these students were directly sponsored by the trade unions, with the majority staying in residence for one or two years before returning to their respective industries. The Ruskin Hall Scheme quickly expanded beyond its residential college in Oxford, with local Ruskin Halls being established in Manchester, Liverpool, Stockport and Birmingham¹. The Scheme also taught by correspondence, enrolling 1,800 in the first two years. This aspect of the institution played a key role in the development of the College, as it sustained the College through difficult times².

The Ruskin Hall Scheme rapidly established a prominent role in the education of able and ambitious working men, many from the Trades Union movement, which provided the main financial support through scholarship. This funding was much-needed, as three years after its foundation, the founders of Ruskin Hall had returned to America, leaving the institution without endowment. Steadily funding was secured from individuals sympathetic to the scheme and trade unions.

¹ However, most of these activities were abandoned after 1903, apart from the correspondence courses.

² Until the TUC took over the Correspondence Course in 1963.



Above: The founders with members of staff. Left to right: Bertram Wilson, Walter W. Vrooman, A.J. Hacking, H.F. Hall and Charles A. Beard.



Above: The first home of Ruskin Hall, 14 St Giles, Oxford



Above: Ticket for the Ruskin Hall opening, 22nd February 1899



Above: Inaugural meeting, Oxford Town Hall, 22nd February 1899.



Above: The Ruskin College Strike, 1909. Students in the library at Walton Street c1905. The buildings already on the site were adapted to college

The contentious position of the College was highlighted in events of 1908-1909. A number of Ruskin students, who anticipated detrimental changes to the curriculum and control of the College, had formed the Plebs League in 1908. The following year, a dispute centred on the supposed forced resignation of the popular Principal Dennis Hird, the governance of the College and the content of the lectures. The students and Hird opposed the reforms set out in the 1908 *'Oxford and Working-class Education'*³, which aimed at aligning the College more closely with the University, and in delivering 'non-partisan' courses. The students revolted against both matters, and in March 1909 undertook a strike. Subsequently, this strike led to dramatic and fundamental reforms within the College, which shaped its role for the next 60 years. First and foremost, the strike had profound effects on the finances of the College, with a large number of trade unions and individuals withdrawing their support from the turbulent institution.

From 1910, the College offered the Oxford University Diploma in Economics and Political Science to its students and also revised its term dates to align with the University's. The College also altered its governance in order to better represent the Labour movement. The College's Governing Council henceforth consisted solely of representatives of working-class organisations. This change in control enabled the College to resume their support from Labour organisations.

Plans to develop the Walton Street site had been initiated in 1907. It wasn't until 1911, following the College's internal upheaval, that these plans were taken forward. The initial proposals show a collegiate quadrangle, based upon those found in Oxford. Due to lack of finances, the College Council intended the building work to be phased. On the 22nd February 1913, the new building on Walton Street was officially opened, this was the first phase of the building, which comprised 40% of the proposed plan. Even though an abridged version of the plan was completed, the building left the College in debt until after WWII.

From the outset, Ruskin distinguished itself as a different institution, but has maintained its relationship with the University through a number of links. Ruskin students attended University lectures and had individual tutorials with University dons. They also had access to the Bodleian Library. The students spoke at numerous Oxford Union debates and many were active members of the highly popular University Labour Club. The collaboration also saw University undergraduates attending Ruskin lectures.

College operations continued during WWI, despite its occupation by Belgian refugees and, later, nurses. The tutors maintained the correspondence courses and arranged the *'Reorganisation of Industry Series'*. When the College resumed its full operation in 1919, it did so with renewed purpose. This was the first year that women were allowed to attend courses at the College. After an initial post war 'boom', assisted by the ex-servicemen's grants and scholarships, the College suffered from a reduction in student numbers and therefore funding was scarce. The College turnover in the first decade after the war was low, and they were often in deficit. Despite these conditions, the College managed to raise the

³ Ruskin College representatives collaborated on the Report



Above: Students outside the original Walton Street buildings, during the March 1909 strike.



Above: A photograph of the newly-completed building, 1913



Above: Ruskin College, Walton Street, c.1950. Note the the original entrance, with ground floor access to the left, and the three-bay 1936 extension to the right.



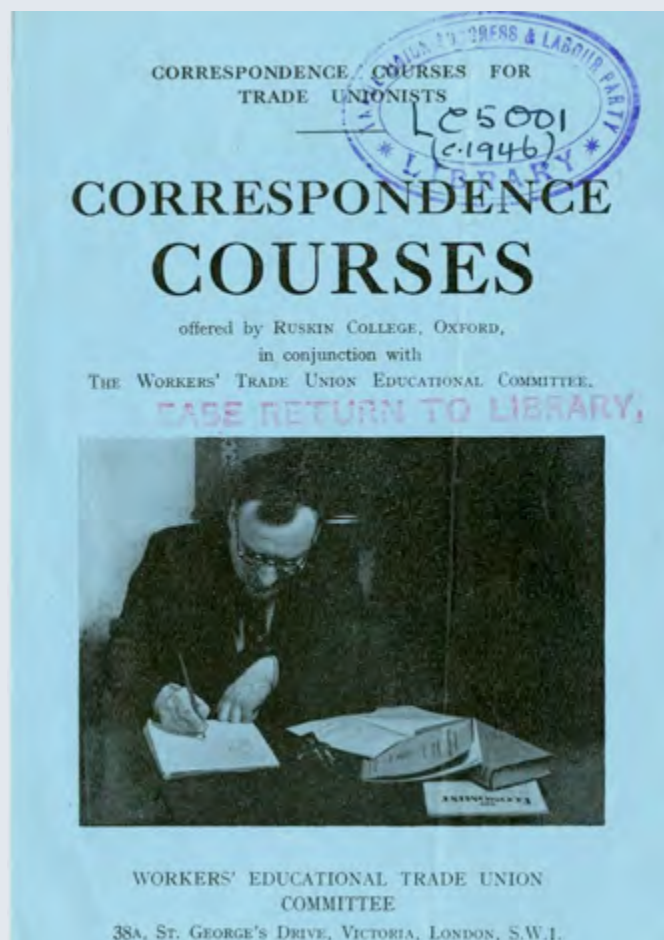
Above: The common room in the 1936 extension at Walton Street. Only the coffered ceiling of the original interior exists today.

funds for an extension at Walton Street. Money came from trade unions, co-operative societies, working men's clubs, as well as individuals. The largest single donation came from the Halley Stewart Trust. The extension was opened in 1936, containing a common room and library on the ground floor and three floors of accommodation above. However, space for a reasonable dining room, kitchen and games room was not provided until the 1960s.

During WWII, the majority of the College was used as a maternity ward, with the College again continuing solely with the correspondence courses, these maintained the College and enabled it to pay off some of its debt. It was after the war, in 1946-7 that saw a sharp increase in student numbers, with almost 100 in residence. This was due to the War Office Scheme, which enabled ex-servicemen to study for free. It was at this point that the College acquired The Rookery at Headington⁴. Initially this was used as a hostel, but within a few years it became the College's centre for first years, with all their courses being taught here.

1967 was a year of key changes for the College. Tutor Raphael Samuels initiated the History Workshop, the College proposed an internally examined Diploma in Labour Studies and the students of Ruskin put forward a series of demands, including the creation of a joint working party of staff and students (Pollins, 1984). Also during this year, the College completed a range of intensive redevelopments of their Walton Street and Headington sites, which alleviated the 'overcrowded and unsatisfactory physical conditions under which the College has had to work for many years' (Annual Report, 1963-4). These works were enabled by a 50% building grant from the Department of Education. At Walton Street, an extension was built containing accommodation, a kitchen and dining hall. A separate single-storey extension was also

⁴ The Rookery was the former home of Sir Michael Sadler, who had been secretary of Oxford University's Extension Programme from 1885-1895.



Above: A 1940s pamphlet advertising Ruskin College's Correspondence courses



Above: The Rookery at Headington, later named Ruskin Hall, c1965



Above: Students in the kitchen, which for a number of years was housed in the Principal's Study on the first floor of the 1913 building, c1950



Above: The Buxton Memorial Hall being used as games room in the 1950s



Above: The Dining Room in the 1967 extension at Walton Street



Above: On the left is Bowen House at the Headington campus, this residential block for 22 students was completed in 1967

constructed; this contained a sports room, student common room and a seminar room. At Headington, the College acquired Stoke House adjacent to The Rookery. This purchase enabled the College to increase its presence in Headington and to develop the site to suit the College's requirements. Stoke House was used for accommodation and The Rookery was extended to provide a new dining hall and lecture theatre, this extension was named Tawney Hall. At this point, the Headington site was renamed Ruskin Hall, thus reviving the original title of the College.

In 1970, the Trade Union Research Unit was established at Ruskin College as a separate institution. A few years later, the Trade Union International Research and Education Group was established, with the aim of disseminated knowledge to workers. In the 1980s Ruskin became the focus of the History Workshop, the movement which had been set up by Samuels 20 years before. The College continued to expand its offerings with additional internally-examined diplomas, particularly the Diploma in Social Studies (1974), which was established by a working group of the College Council and students. In 1993, the much-anticipated Women's Studies course was introduced.

Throughout its history, the College has hosted a great many prominent speakers known for their progressive views, such as Marie Stopes and her speech on contraception in the 1923 and Bertrand Russell's *'The Impact of Science on Society'*

lecture series. On the 1st May 1968, it held a one-day strike against racism, which included a lecture, entertainment at the College and a march through Oxford which saw 2,000 individuals participate. The same year saw the NICROC rally take place in November at Ruskin College. On February 27th 1970, around 500 women came together for the first UK Women's Liberation Conference, which was held at Ruskin College⁵. This proved to be one of the crucial moments in the 'second wave' of feminism, which transformed social life in the late 20th Century. Also in 1970, the Malcolm X Rally was held at Ruskin. Throughout the 1980s, the College supported the striking miners, showing their support particularly between 1984 and 1985 by hosting a strike. The subsequent 20th Anniversary of the Women's Liberation Conference was held at Ruskin in 1990. The College has also provided a stage for a great many key political speeches, such as those by Prime Minister James Callaghan in October 1976, Tony Blair's Education speech 20 years later and numerous other political conferences led by figures such as Arthur Scargill and John Prescott, many centred on the topic of education.

Today, now completely based at the Headington campus, the College continues to offer an alternative education centred on providing a second chance for adults to achieve qualifications and to nurture those who aspire to serve the wider community.

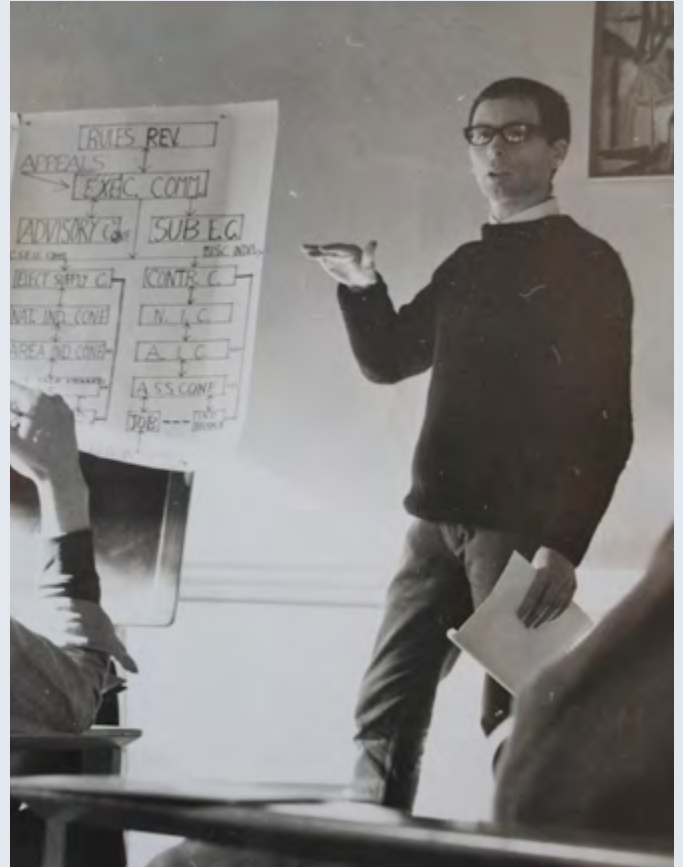
⁵ This conference initially met with hostility from the College and its male students.



Above: Ruskin College students at the 1968 anti-racism march



Above: Sue Crockford and Juliet Mitchell at the 1970 Women's Liberation Conference



Above: Jack Gannon of the Irish Plumbing and Electricians Trade Union, teaching at Ruskin College in the 1970s



Above: Jim Callaghan's 1976 speech, held at the Headington campus



Above: Tony Blair's 1996 Education speech

Significance

The following analysis appraises the significance of the site through the following values: Architectural, Evidential and Cultural. The significance of the Conservation Area has also been assessed.

Architectural

Development of the site

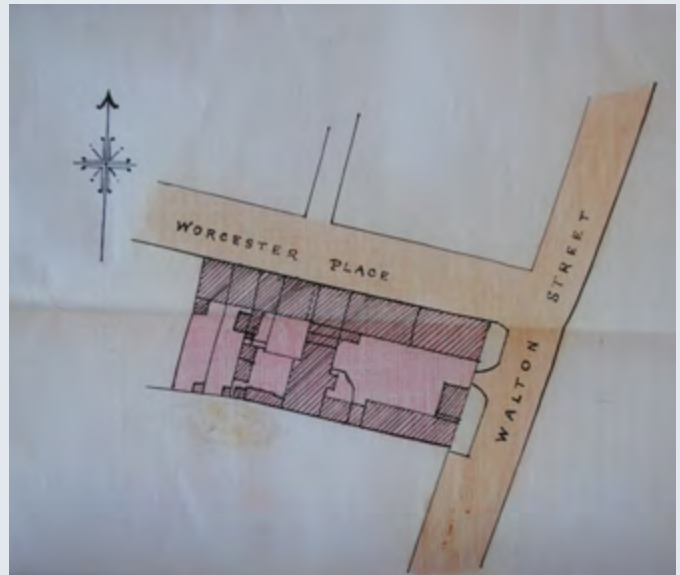
Initially, Ruskin Hall started life in property at 14 St Giles in 1899, rented from Bailliol College. Around 1902, this building was sold, and Ruskin Hall was asked to move. In 1903, it acquired a 40-year lease from St John's College on premises at 3 Walton Street – *'a private house at the bottom of a builders yard, a place roomy enough when the adjoining cottages were also rented, yet old and quite unsuitable for a college, yet the best that we could afford'* (C.W. Bowerman's foundation stone ceremony speech, 1912). The site was chosen as it provided an affordable option for the institution. The premises were adapted for college use and occupied in June 1903. After a delay caused by financial problems, steps were taken in 1907 to build permanent buildings. The freehold of the site, together with two cottages in Worcester Place, was purchased for £4,100 and an architectural competition was held. Joseph & Smithem of Cheapside, London, won this competition.

Internal reorganisation of the College delayed the project until 1911, when building started on the first phase of the project. Foundation stones were laid on the 8th February 1912 and the new building was opened on the 22nd February 1913. The resultant L-shaped building comprised about 40% of the complete plan. It provided a hall for 250 people, offices, and residential accommodation. The unbuilt part of the plan was intended for the dining hall, kitchen, lecture rooms and more residential accommodation.

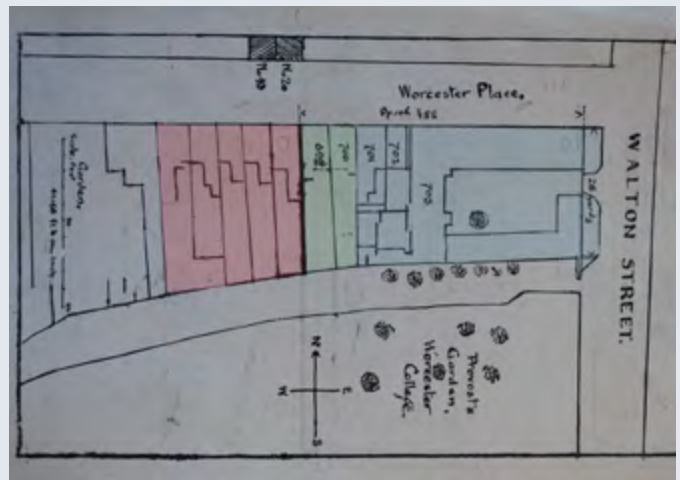
The view of the College's governing body was that *'the new buildings present a handsome frontage to Walton Street. They are Georgian in design, and are a worthy addition to the many beautiful buildings in Oxford'* (Report on the proceedings of the opening ceremony 22nd Feb 1913) However, whether the building represented the College's intentions clearly is a matter of contention – being designed to fit in with the University's buildings, specifically intending to form a traditional Oxbridge quadrangle. The objective of the design was to present a building which appeared to be part of the historic fabric of Oxford. The crest above the entrance also likened it to Oxbridge colleges, with one main difference; that the name of the College was inscribed on the crest, which recalled the practice of 19th Century mechanics' institutes.

During WWI, the buildings housed Belgian refugees and then a nurse's home, returning to College use in October 1919. Also during this period, the College initiated a series of conferences to discuss the ways and means of dealing with industries after the war⁶. As an excerpt from the *Ruskin Collegian* suggests, Ruskin College sustained some of its operations, even during its occupation:

⁶ The 'Reorganisation of Industry Series' was initially held at Ruskin College, then subsequently throughout the country. This was Ruskin College's way of 'taking the College to the students' (*Ruskin Collegian*, January 1918)



Above: A 1903 plan of the site



Above: A 1907 plan of the site. Blue denotes the 1903 lease, green the 1907 purchase and red the ultimate site.



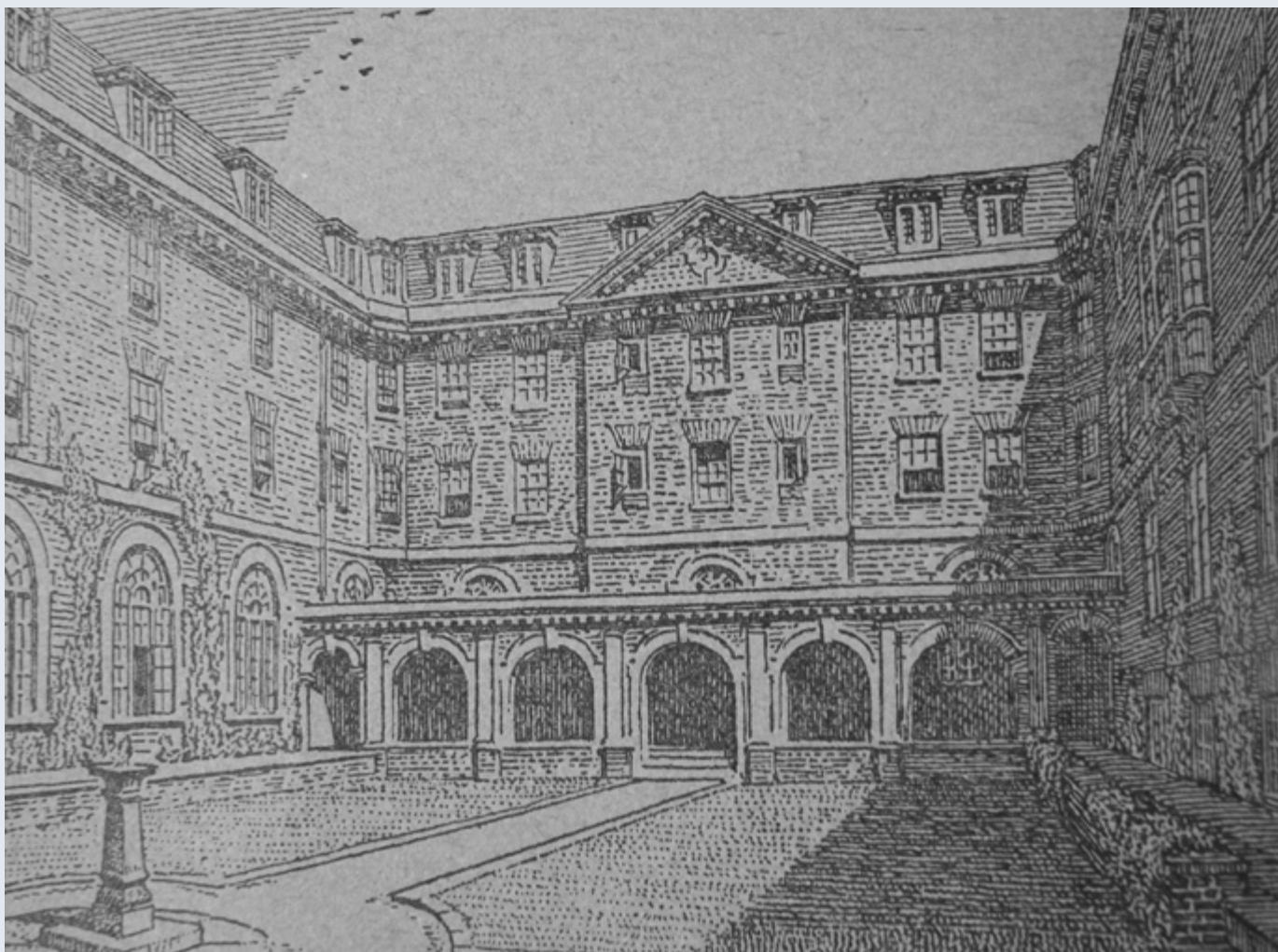
Above: The Walton Street site prior to redevelopment

'[The Buildings] The College is very much alive. The buildings of course, are still in the hands of the Government, and occupied by almost 80 nurses, who appear to be very well satisfied with their quarters. But a College is, of course, a much bigger thing than its buildings'. (Ruskin Collegian, January 1918).

Despite earlier optimism, the quadrangle was never realised and there were no extensions to the 1913 building until the mid-1930s. In 1936, three bays were added to the Worcester Place frontage, containing a library, common room and residential accommodation.

During WWII Ruskin College was used as a maternity ward. The College's correspondence courses were very successful during this period and the building debt was paid off. After the war the College acquired property in Headington which was developed in parallel with the Walton Street site. Five additional cottages were acquired in Worcester Place, extending the site to the

west. Two extensions were built at the Walton Street site after WWII, opening in 1967 and 1982. The remaining Worcester Place cottages were demolished to make way for the 1982 extension, leaving the site fully developed. Further expansion has continued at the Headington campus, and during 2012 Ruskin College transferred all its activities from the Walton Street site.



Above: The proposed Ruskin College quadrangle, as designed by Joseph & Smith in 1907

1913 Building

The 1913 building is the partially built result of a competition of 1907, won by Joseph & Smithem. Though not a household name, this firm undertook a vast number of projects, varying from Guinness Trust schemes to warehouses⁷. Some of their buildings are now listed, including the Samuel Lewis Trust Flats (1910) on Liverpool Road in London, and the florid French Renaissance of Crusader House (1893) on Pall Mall.

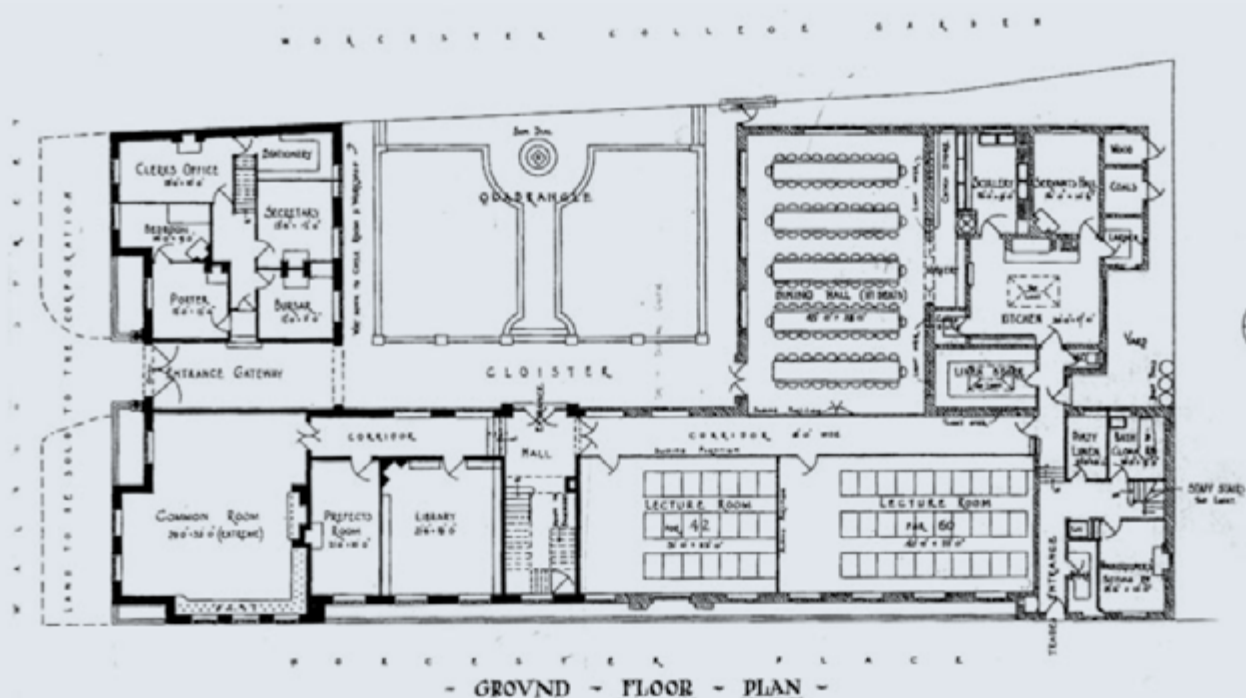
The full proposal was a U-shaped building around a central quadrangle, open to the south. The quadrangle was to be entered through a gated passageway from Walton Street and the building itself was entered from the quad. This is the typical arrangement for an Oxbridge college. The 1907 plan placed the College's public rooms on the ground floor – the common room, library, lecture rooms and dining hall. Three upper floors had double-loaded corridors for residential accommodation. However, it is clear from the competition plan that phased development was anticipated, the first phase comprising the east wing fronting onto Walton Street and part of the north wing along Worcester Place. This is the building that was opened in 1913. The plan was adapted, and the ground floor library and common room were combined to form a large lecture room which could be divided by a folding partition. This lecture room was named after the former Vice-Principal Charles Sidney Buxton, who had donated £5,000 to the building fund. Above this lecture room were

⁷ Jamilly, historian of Anglo-Jewish architectural practices, summed up the practice as 'not brilliant in design, but notable for sheer quantity and bulk, varying from Guinness Trust dwellings to LCC flats and from office blocks and shops to warehouses'.

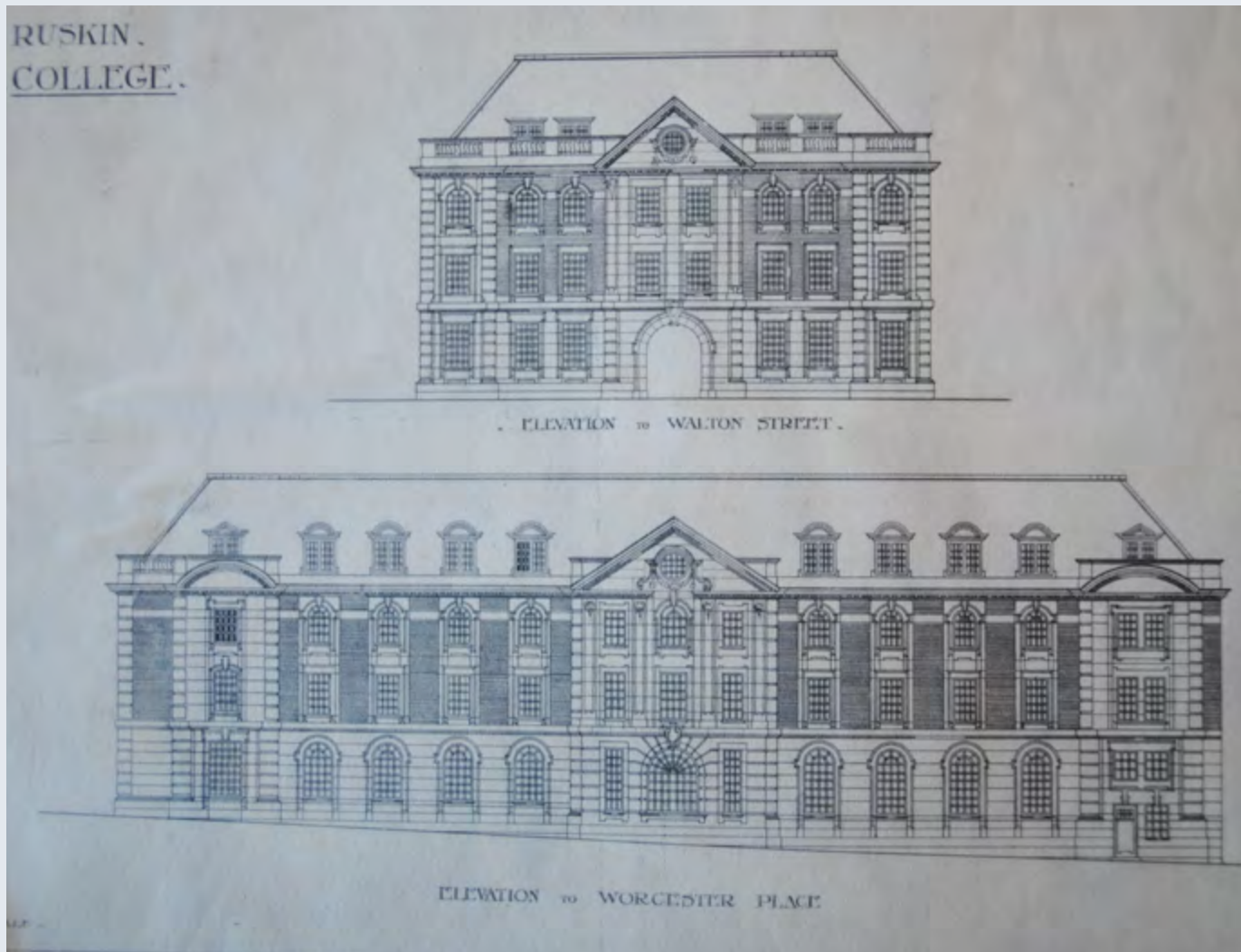
three floors of accommodation and shared bathrooms, arranged along a central corridor. The southern portion of the wing contained administrative space to the ground floor, the Principal and Vice Principals' studies to the first, and further accommodation to the second and third floors. Presumably the existing buildings on the site continued in use for the library, dining room and kitchen.

Ruskin College is in a fashionable English 'Wrenaissance' style, of red brick and stonework. Features accentuated in stone include surrounds, carved decoration to the pediment, inscribed aprons, string course, dentil cornice and the ground floor. The building shares many architectural features with, for example, the Royal Academy of Music in London of (1910-11) by the office of Sir Ernest George. Additional comparisons can be found in Oxford, such as Somerville College's Library (1903) by Basil Champneys, who in 1912 received the RIBA gold medal award for architecture. A Joseph & Smithem building that is comparable to Ruskin College in date and function was listed at Grade II in 2006, this is Ada Lewis House in Southwark, London (1913 – now Driscoll House), originally a hostel for working men, funded by a wealthy Jewish philanthropist.

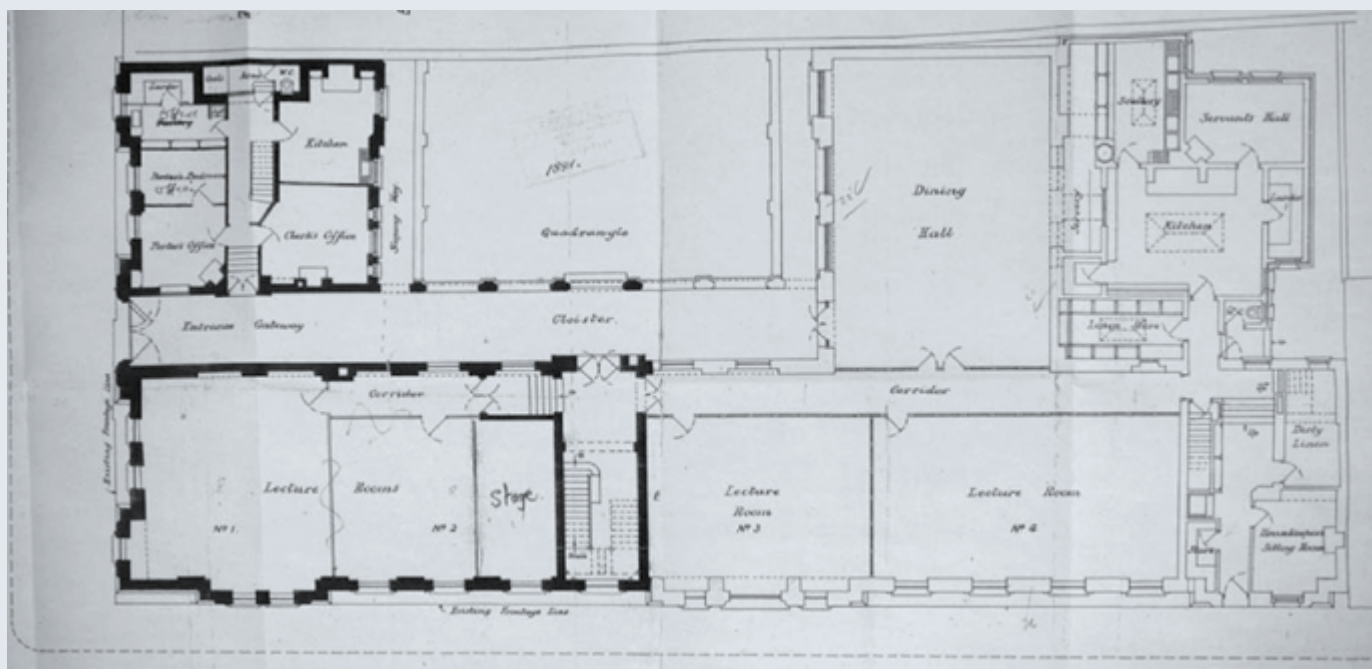
The building's style has no real connection to the radical mission of Ruskin College; in fact it modelled itself on the Oxford colleges, in order to create a sense of longevity. There was a suitably radical architectural tradition inspired by the writings of John Ruskin, whose books *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) had profoundly influenced the Gothic Revival fifty years earlier. In the later 19th Century the Gothic



Above: 1907 Competition plan, showing the Ground Floor. Note the phasing of the construction, indicated by hatching.



Above: 1907 Elevations



Above: 1912 Ground Floor plan. Areas in solid were built, the remainder of the plan was proposed, but never completed.

Revival evolved into the Arts & Crafts movement, in which William Morris and the architects Philip Webb and William Lethaby were central figures. The Movement grew out of a concern for the effects of industrialisation: on design, on traditional skills and on the lives of ordinary people. At the Passmore Edwards Settlement in London (1896) the architects Smith & Brewer used an Arts & Crafts style for an institution devoted to educational reform, similar to Ruskin College. Other examples include the Belgrave Children's Hospital, designed in 1910, by Charles Holden. Generally, the Arts & Crafts movement was largely restricted to domestic architecture and made little impact on institutional buildings apart from some interesting buildings designed by Charles Harrison Townsend. The Ruskin College building disguises its intentions by its very design. By this token, if the building were to be analysed by John Ruskin himself, by his criteria⁸, it is doubtful that it would pass the 'test'.

The proportions of the 1913 building leave much to be desired, the stone ground floor being over-tall in proportion to the brick body, particularly where the ground falls away down Worcester Place. There is an uncomfortable sense that the Walton Street elevation is squashed, its length unable to contain the projecting bays at each end and in the middle, one bay and two bays wide respectively. The two bay pedimented centrepiece is an architectural solecism, with a pediment of exaggerated pitch. It is interesting to note that, in their competition scheme, Joseph & Smithern proposed a similar parti of projecting end bays and centrepiece for an elevation more than twice as long, having a degree of grandeur suitable to the length, but somewhat inappropriate for a narrow side street. Only the eastern part of the Worcester Place elevation was completed, and the design is compromised as a consequence. The balustrades intended for the Walton Street elevation were never built.

A peculiar feature of the 1907 competition-winning plan is that the ground floor level is raised above the surrounding street level by several steps, although the entrance corridor itself is shown level with the street. The entrance was raised up by three steps, possibly during the intensive redevelopments of 1965-7, a timber platform was inserted to raise the entrance to the full height of the Hall adjacent, with a platform lift to circumvent the change in level. Thus the entrance is highly compromised, both architecturally and in terms of accessibility.

The rear of the 1913 building is compromised by the fact that the intended cloister was never completed, and even the one side of the cloister that was built has been obscured by modern accretions. It cannot be seen from Walton Street or Worcester Place, and the view from Worcester College is largely obscured by the line of trees planted close to the boundary wall.



Above: The Passmore Edwards Settlement (1896), by Smith & Brewer

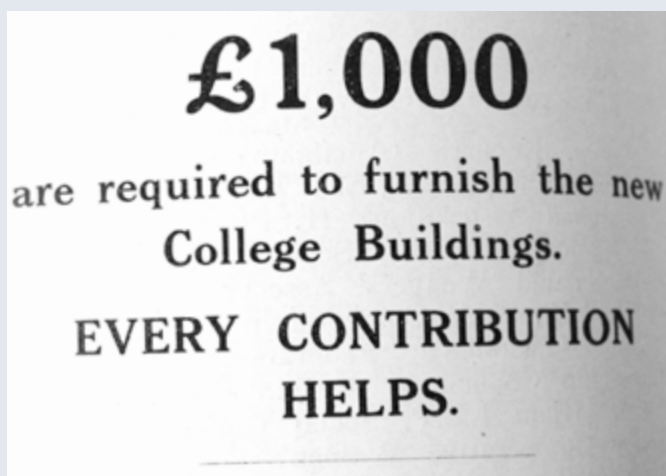


Above: The Bishopsgate Institute (1894), designed by Charles Harrison Townsend

⁸ 1. That it act well, and do the things it was intended to do in the best way.
2. That it speak well, and say the things it was intended to say in the best words.
3. That it look well, and please us by its presence, whatever it has to do or say.' (Ruskin, Stones of Venice)



Above: The 1913 Ruskin College Building, photograph taken in 1913.



Above: Appeal in the Ruskin Collegian, December 1912. Revealing that funds were scarce.



Above: View of a corridor with partial views of the bathroom and a bed sitting room.



Above: The Buxton Memorial Hall, as completed with dark glazed tiles.



Above: A students' bed sitting room.

The roof of the building is a mansard roof of slate, set back behind a gutter behind a vestigial parapet (in the absence of the balustraded parapet of the competition design). This is unusually restrained for a building in the Wrennaissance style. The roofs of this period were noted for their grand pitched roofs springing from the back of the cornice gutter. Buildings such as Richard Norman Shaw's Bryanston (1898) and Skipper's Metropole Hotel in Cromer (1893), demonstrate these distinctive tall roofs. The latter has two levels of dormer windows in the roof slope; Norman Shaw's New Scotland Yard (1887–1906) has three. The Wrennaissance style is often associated with female colleges of the late 19th and early 20th Century, such as Somerville College and Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford. Dodd's St Peter's College also demonstrates the Wren revival, as late as 1930, the building exhibits an accentuated roofline.

The 1913 building is generally seen in oblique views along Walton Street, where the projection of the cornice obscures the lower part of the roof and dormer windows and the whole of the upper slope. However, the roof is more clearly visible in longer views down Walton Street from the north, where the ridge of the upper part of the mansard can be seen running down Worcester Place.

The internal layout of the 1913 building has not been radically altered, consisting of rather small utilitarian rooms either side of a corridor. It has been suggested that this plainness is itself of social significance, but if so it is at variance with the palatial aspirations of the design of the exterior. The simple interiors have been subject to numerous ad hoc alterations, including new fire doors and surface-mounted services, as well as the painting of the glazed wall tiles to the corridors; these alterations have impinged on the few architectural features of worth. The main Hall maintains its original coffered ceiling and some wood panelling, albeit fairly plain and not original. The ironwork of the main staircase is of some interest. The former Senior Common Room contains a simple red brick and terracotta fire surround, probably dating from 1936. Most significant are some of the plaques and inscriptions, particularly the sculpted bronze memorial plaque to Sidney Buxton. Due to the detrimental additions and alterations to the interior features, the interiors are of very low architectural significance. Little of the interior of the building is visible from Walton Street or Worcester Place in view of the high cills, narrow windows and thick glazing bars.

The Walton Street facade is the main point of architectural interest in the 1913 building. It is a very competent building of its period without special distinction. It has also been compromised by its partial completion. It is therefore of local rather than wider significance. The building is not listed.



Above: View of Ruskin College seen from Walton Street



Above: New Scotland Yard (1887–1906) by Richard Norman Shaw



Above: St Peter's College (1930), Oxford by R. Fielding Dodd



Above: Current view of the Hall.



Above: A current view of the main staircase.



Above: A current view of a 2nd floor corridor in the 1913 building

1936 Building

The 1936 extension was designed by Brook Taylor Kitchin (1869-1940). Lord Sankey opened the Ruskin College extension on the 24th October 1936. Kitchin was not a prominent architect, he held a position as ‘...*Chief Architect of the Ministry of Health and the Welsh Board of Health, retiring in 1925 after thirty-two years of service, when he carried on practice privately*’ (Builder, 1940).

Joseph and Smithem’s design showed a three bay pedimented stone portico on the site of the 1936 extension, as the grand centrepiece of a long symmetrical elevation to Worcester Place. Kitchin’s extension added three bays to the north range of the Joseph & Smithem plan, up to the point where the range would have turned to close the quadrangle. The north elevation of the 1936 extension continues the architectural vocabulary of the 1913 building and follows the bay rhythm, but varies with the three bays stepping forward slightly. The mouldings to the windows recall the first floor windows of the 1913 building, with the addition of a keystone. Kitchin left the cornice completely blank, perhaps to allow for a pediment to be added later. The fall of the street and the absence of any kind of cornice means that the elevation lacks the integrity of the 1913 building, without providing any compensating design merit. In addition, the west elevation remains unfinished. The drawing submitted to Oxford City Council in 1935 states that this wall was temporary, there is no sign of preparations for the west wing anticipated by Joseph & Smithem. No drawings have been found to indicate what would have been added beyond the temporary west wall. The south elevation facing the quad is an accurate replica of Joseph & Smithem’s earlier work.

Internally there are two ground floor rooms, the Walkden Library which contains a timber gallery and coffered ceiling and a common room which has been significantly altered and only retains its original ceiling. This common room was initially named in honour of Malcolm Stewart, at a later the entire wing was named after him⁹. There was formally a two bedroom flat on the first floor with an access staircase tacked onto the west gable end wall, this was intended for a resident tutor. The second and third floors were divided into small rooms arranged along a central corridor. These rooms were again, plainly designed and furnished, with the only fixed features being a picture rail and radiator. During the 1960s, a number of these rooms were adapted, with the addition of built-in storage and headboards. Today, they contain few features of architectural interest.

It is thought that the Buxton Memorial Hall in the 1913 building was refurbished simultaneously. The original tiles were removed and replaced with timber panelling.

The 1936 extension is solidly built but is of minimal architectural significance.



Above: The Walkden Library in the 1936 extension. Below: A view of the newly-completed 1936 extension.



⁹ The common room was named the Brodetsky Room at a later date.



Above: A view of the newly-completed 1936 extension, taken from the garden. Note the incomplete west elevation and the tacked on staircase to the first floor apartment. Below: The common room in the 1936 extension (interior features no longer exist)



1967 Buildings

This extension was designed by Peter Bosanquet and Partners in place of the unexecuted wing of the 1913 design. The building was opened on the 30th June 1967.

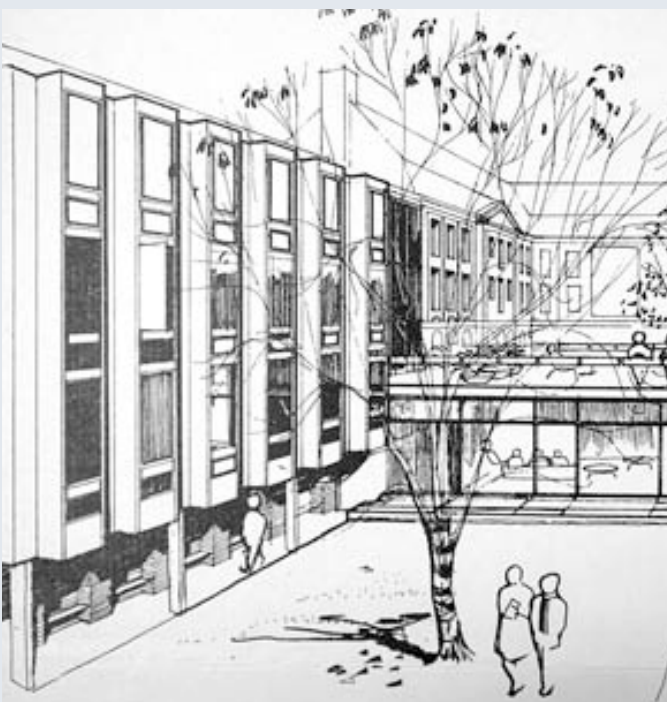
Peter Bosanquet (1918-2005) was trained at Cambridge University and the Architectural Association and entered the architectural profession in the late 1940s, a time of tremendous optimism about the rebuilding of a welfare state Britain in new architectural styles. In 1953 he joined the practice of Lionel Brett (later Lord Esher) near Oxford; the partnership was dissolved in 1959. Bosanquet then ran his own practice in Oxford until retiring in 1984 (Oxford Times, 1984). His best-known buildings are two churches, St John in Hatfield (1960) and St George in Letchworth (1964), described as '*outstanding*' (Pevsner & Cherry, 1977, p.42).

The extension is a three-storey, six-bay concrete framed building over a low undercroft, which is at ground level due to the gradient in Worcester Place. Its six bays are strongly accentuated by the lightweight panels between the windows, forming continuous vertical bands, and the precast concrete cladding panels which project to further emphasise the vertical rhythm. The building has 20 study-bedrooms on double-loaded corridors on the top two floors, continuing the pattern of the 1913 and 1936 buildings. The undercroft was intended for parking and storage. The raised ground floor level above this space is used for a dining room and kitchen. The dining hall has a parquet floor and is illuminated by windows in bays on

both sides; it is an attractive room. The study-bedrooms in this building have carefully designed fitted storage. The extension is connected to the 1936 building via a brick-clad link building, which contains a staircase.

The design is of some interest as a modern building with an elevation of precast concrete units and projecting window bays, linked vertically. It is a competent example of its period and style, but not outstanding, lacking the finesse of similar college buildings of the period by Arup Associates (Somerville and St John's College Oxford) and HKPA (St Anne's College Oxford and Darwin College Cambridge). The building has a hostile appearance at street level, where the recesses between the piers expose the car parking and the College's service bays.

Also between 1965 and 1967, an infill building was added to the garden of the College, adjoining the 1913 and 1936 buildings. This building masks the unfinished cloister of the 1913 building and the majority of the ground floor, effectively enclosing what would have been the quadrangle. This provided a single storey set of rooms containing a sports room, student's common room and a seminar room (The Elvin Room). The roof serves as a terraced space. This scheme holds no architectural significance and in abutting the earlier buildings, significantly reduces the quality of their internal elevations.



Above: A perspective of the 1967 extension, by Peter Bosanquet & Partners.



Above: Current view of the 1967 extension. Note on the right hand side of the image - the single-storey infill building.

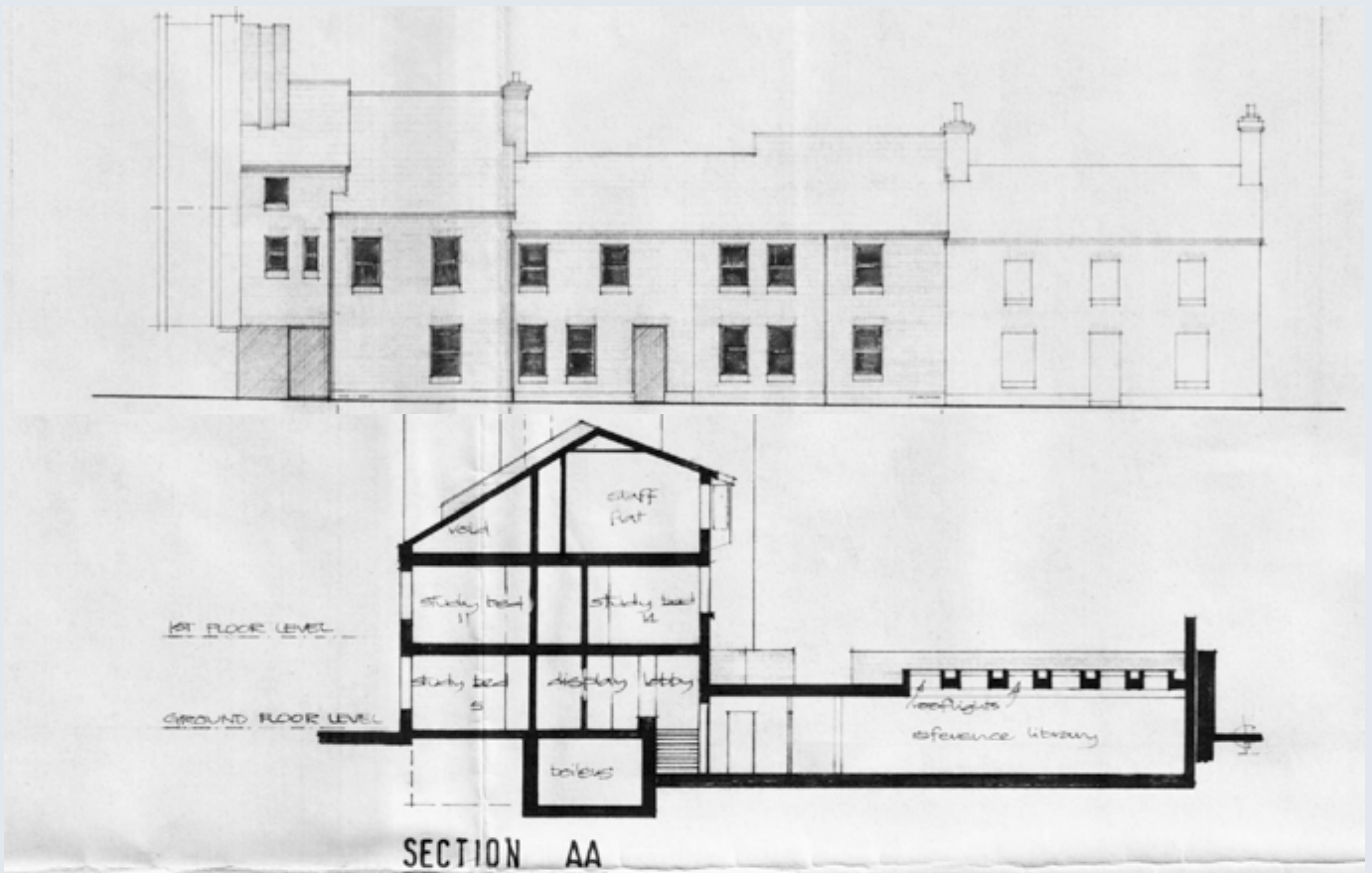
1982 Buildings

These buildings were designed by Peter Bosanquet and John Perryman. They were built to provide additional accommodation and a library facility. The two-storey elevation to Worcester Place follows the scale of the adjacent 19th Century residential buildings, with an abrupt change of scale from the 1967 and 1913 buildings. Inside the site is a semi-basement library, of purely utilitarian design, illuminated by linear rooflights. It was intended that seminar rooms would be added over the library, but this was not carried out. The accommodation is small and exhibits a particularly labyrinthine plan. This neo-vernacular extension, of brick walls, pitched roofs and traditional windows reflects the sharp contrast in taste which occurred from the mid 1970s, when a return to 'context' was favoured over Modernism. The buildings are of no special architectural significance.

This block was named in honour of David Kitson, an apartheid activist who attended Ruskin College.



Above: A view of the newly-completed library, c1982.



Above: Elevation and section of the 1982 extension.

Summary

There are four distinct phases of development, in buildings that were opened in 1913, 1936, 1967 and 1982.

The interiors of the existing buildings are of low architectural significance. They are largely utilitarian and there have been numerous ad hoc alterations, including new fire doors and surface-mounted services, particularly in the 1913 and 1936 buildings where there are few surviving decorative features. Where these features do survive, they have been altered, such as the glazed tiles in the upper corridors, which have been painted. One key item of significance is the main staircase, with decorative iron balustrades; this staircase was refurbished in the 1960s, with the addition of vertical wood panelling and a timber balustrade against the wall. The Hall in the 1913 building retains its coffered ceiling, but external servicing has detrimentally altered its appearance. The Hall also contains modest wood panelling, which replaced the original glazed tiles. The plain study bedrooms offer few defining features, apart from picture rails and original radiators. The Walkden Library in the 1936 extension still retains its

original timber gallery and coffered ceiling; both are of marginal architectural significance. The study bedrooms again exhibit few features, and include 1960s additions. The dining hall in the 1967 building, with windows in bays on both sides, is an attractive room. The study-bedrooms in this building have carefully designed fitted storage. The library in the 1982 building is purely utilitarian; the circulation is labyrinthine and the study-bedroom are small. The aspects of social significance which can found, such as the plaques throughout the building, particularly the Sidney Buxton bronze, which was moved when the Hall was renamed after Raphael Samuel in 1997. The sparse interiors could suggest the College's humble intentions, however, it is far more likely that this was a product of the restricted budget, rather than representing the College's social aspirations.

All the exterior facades to Walton Street and Worcester Place are well-preserved, and they are the primary features of architectural interest. Particularly the 1913 building, which has four stone aprons beneath the windows to the Walton Street façade. Miss Amne Grafflin (Walter Vrooman's wife), Miss Giles, Charles Bowerman



Above: 1907 competition elevations, Joseph & Smithem

Below: Elevations of the buildings on Worcester Place, showing phases of development.



1913 Building
4 Storey and basement

1936 Extension
4 Storey and basement

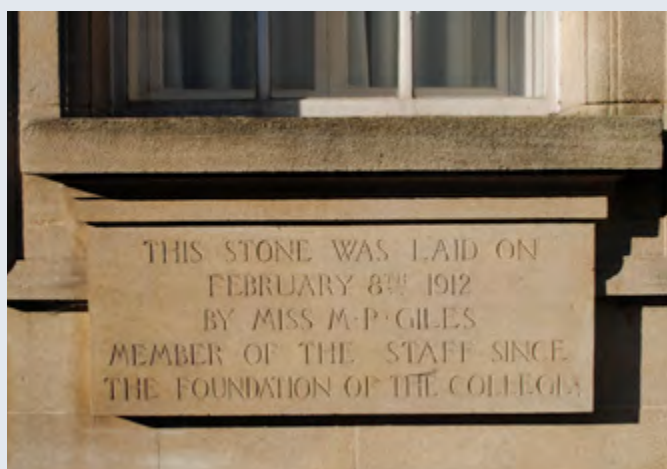
1960s
Link Block

1967 Extension
4 Storey

and Sydney Buxton placed these at the foundation ceremony in 1912. The buildings of 1913 and 1967 are very competent examples of the architectural idioms of their periods, but not of outstanding quality. The buildings of 1936 and 1982 are weaker in architectural terms. None of the architects has a national reputation. The buildings are not listed. Collectively, the buildings of Ruskin College have moderate architectural significance.

Evidential

There is possible evidence of the Civil War fortifications to be gleaned from the archaeology of the site. An archaeological desk-top appraisal has been carried out, and a 'Written of Investigation' will be agreed if appropriate. By contrast, in view of the recent date of the buildings, there is little or no historic or architectural knowledge to be gained from a study of the fabric of the 1913 building or of the later buildings on the site.



Above: One of the foundations stones on the Walton Street elevation.



1982 Extension, accommodation and library
3/2 Storey

Cultural

Ruskin Hall was founded at 14 St Giles in 1899 and was named after John Ruskin. However, as stated by one of its principals, Furniss, the College *"has little connection with the great man after whom it is called, beyond the fact that John Ruskin was an early pioneer in the cause of working-class education..."* (Ruskin College: What it is and what it stands for, 1918).

Ruskin College has carved out a distinctive place within the social reforms of the 19th and 20th centuries. From the outset, the College was entwined with the Labour movement and its intentions and with Trades Union backing, it played an important part in the evolution of the Labour Party in the first half of the 20th Century and beyond. Because of this association, the College remains full of idiosyncrasies and contradictions. By its conflicting purposes, as a college dedicated to both academic excellence and alternative approaches to education, there have been many tensions throughout its history. Likewise, its paradoxical relationship with the University has helped to create its identity as a thoroughly unconventional place. (Andrews, Kean, Thompson, 1999) Nevertheless, this the institution has witnessed and incited social and education reform.

Over the past 113 years, it has proved its position within the Labour movement by educating generations of activists and organisers as well as providing a model for labour colleges throughout the world. It has provided a vital route to higher education for adults and working class people who could not have afforded a university education. Prominent alumni have served in Parliament, with well-known figures including former Labour Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, Jack Ashley MP and firebrand Labour MP Dennis Skinner. A great deal of ex-Ruskin students have gone on to work within trade unions and co-operative societies, as well as teaching within the Labour movement and at universities and colleges. Therefore, the knowledge and impetus gained from their time at the College has fed into the Labour movement and the wider society.

The College's first permanent buildings were on Walton Street in the centre of Oxford, and it later developed a second campus in Headington. Both Walton Street and Headington have provided a base for numerous political marches and a stage for various events, both activist and liberal.

Though the buildings have hosted these events, the buildings play little role in the life of the local community. To a city dedicated to education, this building represents nothing more than another institution. Its formal and austere physical appearance, helps to cement this view.

The site holds historical significance relating to Ruskin College's pioneering contribution to the cause of social and educational reform in Britain. However, this meaning

is largely intangible, relating to memory and meaning. The building itself reveals no clue as to its reformist purpose through its design, and of the past disruptive and oppositional activities which have taken place within the College, there is no trace.

The interior has undergone significant alteration, particularly during the 1960s. In the intervening period, subsequent alterations have been made to the rooms, including servicing, security and access, resulting in very few rooms retaining any original features. The plaques and inscriptions are still extant, in particular, the bronze Sidney Buxton memorial plaque, now placed outside the Hall. Since its foundation stones were laid, the College's main imprint on the building has been through these memorial plaques commemorating those who have served the College. The wings and rooms have undergone subsequent name changes, perhaps representing the unfixed attitudes of the College. And perhaps it is true, as stated in the *Ruskin Collegian* in 1914, 'the most important thing was not the walls, but the men.'

Significance in the Oxford Central Conservation Area

The site is an in-between place. It straddled the Civil War fortifications: the King was in the City, and the Parliamentarians were outside, beyond the defensive ditch and palisade. During the 19th and early 20th centuries the site was on the boundary between the university district and the working-class streets of Jericho. The difference between the two areas would have been acute and is amply recorded in social history and literature: Jude the Obscure and Lyra Belacqua (Philip Pullman's heroine) traversed its streets.

Today, the Ruskin College site is within Oxford's Central (University & City) Conservation Area. The adjoining streets, Walton Street and Worcester Place, are mostly developed with 19th Century (or neo-19th Century) housing. Gentrification has softened the social contrast, but the physical charm of the area remains. Walton Street has an assortment of buildings of varying uses, size, styles, age, and building materials. The background is given by the rows of two and three storey houses and cottages that once dominated the area, but even these are greatly varied: some painted, some stone and some brick. Seen in views along the street, the skyline is distinctive for the silhouette of the chimney stacks and dormer windows against the sky. At intervals along the street are larger institutional buildings. From the neo-classical period there is Worcester College, St Pauls' Church and the imposing façade of the University Press. The Institute of Chinese Studies (formerly The Clarendon Institute) is polite Victorian/Jacobean, and Ruskin College represents a more assertive institutional Baroque, from the Edwardian period. Somerville makes a distinctive contribution to the scene, with the distinguished glass-fronted residence, designed



Above: Buxton Memorial plaque, now situated outside the Hall.



Above: The Raphael Samuel plaque, propped within the Hall

in the 1970s by Arup Associates. Between Worcester College and Ruskin College, Walton Street is flanked by a picturesque vernacular collection of rubble stone walls and outbuildings. Seen from the south, the flank wall of Ruskin College with its pair of Baroque chimney stacks dominates the view. The Ruskin College buildings are the largest in the vicinity – the bulky 1913 building in particular being the most prominent. The contrast in scale between Ruskin College and its neighbours on Walton Street and on Worcester Place is marked, and the building has a major presence as seen in long views along Walton Street from the north and south.

Worcester Place is more varied with two-storey cottages, more elaborate four-storey terraces and semi-detached houses (some of which are recent reproductions), and the Ruskin College buildings of 1913, 1936, 1967 and 1982. In this street scene Ruskin College's 1913 building



Above: View of College and Walton Street.



Above: View of College buildings on Worcester Place, looking towards Walton Street

sits comfortably, despite its bulk. The 1936 extension is visually integrated with the larger 1913 building. At the other end of Ruskin's site the 1982 building is inconspicuous due to its self-effacing scale and character. The 1967 building is a different matter. It is no higher than the 1913 and 1936 buildings but it stands out because of its materials and character. It is a bold architectural statement of the 1960s, but buildings of that period are now highly unfashionable. Due to the cycle of fashion it seems inevitable that buildings of the 1960s will eventually return to popularity, but today Ruskin's 1967 building would generally be regarded as having a negative impact on the street scene in Worcester Place. A highly conservative approach to development in Worcester Place is indicated by Ruskin's 1982 building, and also by the two four-storey reproduction Victorian blocks recently built in the street. However, a more adventurous approach was taken for the new development in Worcester Place where it turns to the north.

To the west and south, the Ruskin College site adjoins Worcester College. To the west there are Worcester College buildings and to the south the College garden. Most of the south boundary (corresponding to the extent of the land that Ruskin purchased in 1907, see page 12) is lined with evergreen holm oak trees, presumably planted by Worcester College with the intention of masking Ruskin's new buildings. The trees are now mature and almost completely hide the Ruskin buildings and overshadow most of the site. They are not prominently visible to the public from Walton Street or any other vantage point. On the south side a lane (part of Worcester College's land) led down to the lake. For most of its length this has fine stone walls on either side, but it seems that the east end was replaced by a high brick wall when Ruskin College was built. The lane is no longer a route. Further west than Ruskin College it has been incorporated into the landscaping of Worcester College's new residential buildings, and at the east end it forms part of Worcester's garden maintenance area.

The character of Walton Street, presently quiet and subdued, will change in the near future as the University's Radcliffe Observatory Quarter is built. This will provide a vast new resource for teaching and research, and Walton Street will become a far more significant route for students, teachers, researchers and university staff. From the street the radical shift in the University's centre of gravity will feel like a modification, a new layering of the urban structure.



Above: Former Clarendon Institute on Walton Street.



Left: View of the Ruskin College site from the south, over Worcester College garden. The evergreen holm oaks hide (and overshadow) much of the Ruskin site – a corner of the 1913 building can be seen on the right of the trees.



Above: Recent development in Worcester Place, where it turns north, that does not imitate 19th century housing.



Above: View of Ruskin College from Walton Street



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