NO MEAN PLANS

Designing the Great Court
at the University of Queensland

by

John W. East

2014
The author would like to express his gratitude for much information and assistance provided by Bruce Ibsen (University of Queensland Archivist) and all the staff of the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland.
## CONTENTS

1. Introduction ........................................... 1
2. Prelude .................................................. 4
4. The First Phase (1936-1942) ......................... 37
5. Post-War (1945-1960) .................................. 64
6. The 1960s ............................................... 94
7. The 1970s ............................................... 119
8. The 1980s ............................................... 135
9. The 1990s ............................................... 140
10. 2000-2010 ............................................. 147
11. Afterword .............................................. 153
1. INTRODUCTION

Whoever has the honour to be entrusted with the architecture of St. Lucia … must make no mean plans, for mean plans have no magic to stir any man's blood, or awaken inspiration in anyone, and the University should be an inspiration to her students. (J.J.C. Bradfield, June 22, 1936)¹

The University of Queensland is blessed with perhaps the most attractive university campus in Australia. Nestled in a pocket of the Brisbane River at St Lucia, a leafy western suburb of Brisbane, it stands about five kilometres by road from the centre of the city, but is best approached by water, on one of the high-speed ferries which skim up-river from the central business district.

The wide, meandering river surrounds the campus on three sides. Normally a placid, tidal waterway, it floods severely about once in a generation. This fact of nature has preserved the lower-lying parts of the campus from development, and the riverside areas are used mainly for sporting ovals and other recreational pursuits, creating a green girdle around much of the university. The meanders of the river also preclude the development of any major traffic route through the site, which is a natural cul-de-sac, removed from the noise and pollution of Brisbane's busy arterial highways.

The lagoons, which were a feature of the area long before European settlement, have been disciplined into substantial lakes. These lakes not only form attractive water features, they also provide irrigation for the lawns and gardens of the university. As development has spread from the central plateau down towards the lower ground, architects have used the main lake to great effect, creating striking buildings on its banks with internal spaces which open out to the water.

The tall trees which were planted along the river bank, to screen the *memento mori* of the Dutton Park cemetery, have long since fulfilled and exceeded their brief, and they now contribute to the rural charm of the riverside roadway. The exotic jacaranda trees attract hundreds of amateur photographers when they bloom in October, especially where they reflect themselves in the lakes. The many other native and introduced trees, carefully chosen and cultivated for decades now, are one of the delights of the campus.

The students and staff who are able to enjoy the amenities of this attractive site, to say nothing of the morning walkers and cyclists and the weekend picnickers who also make good use of it, would be surprised and amused to discover that, when first mooted as a location for a university, it was considered too remote, and even too unhealthy, for such a purpose. Those

¹ [J.J.C. Bradfield], "University at Saint Lucia Lay-Out: Address before the Senate and Staff of the University at the Geology Theatre, June 22nd, 1936," UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2.
familiar with the old universities of Europe, or even with the well-established universities of Sydney and Melbourne, expected a university to be close to the centre of the city. The medical profession, impatient for the establishment of a medical school in Queensland, wanted a university close to what would become the main teaching hospital at Herston. The "great site debate" was not finally resolved until construction began at St Lucia in 1938, by which time a medical school was already being built at Herston.

Now, after seventy-five years of development, the St Lucia campus is a huge educational complex which has outgrown its natural boundaries and outsourced some of its functions to roomier sites outside of Brisbane. The buildings on the campus are an object lesson in changing styles of Australian academic architecture over the last three-quarters of a century. They include many fine buildings, and also some cheap and nasty ones, but the recognised centre of the campus is the complex of sandstone-clad buildings, carefully situated at the apex of the site, adjacent to what was once called Mill Road, a dirt track which ran down to William Dart's eponymous sugar mill on the riverbank.

Since the early 1950s, this central complex of buildings has been known as The Great Court. The origins of the name are lost in university antiquity, but it has medieval resonances which would have appealed to white Australians of an earlier era, raised, as most of them had been, on the history and folklore of "the old country." Partially obscured and overshadowed by subsequent building, the Great Court is still the architectural centre of the campus.

The purpose of the present study is to provide a history of the development of the earliest university buildings which now form the Great Court. They were originally designed by one of the most prominent Australian architects of the inter-war years, a man whose name is unknown today except to architectural historians. These buildings then suffered from endless delays in construction, which effectively rendered the design out-moded before the buildings were even completed. For decades thereafter they were regarded as something akin to an embarrassing older relative, until changing tastes discovered in them the charms and attractive eccentricities of a dignified old age.

Today the Great Court is a heritage-listed complex, rich in architectural sculpture, and it attracts considerable interest, both from the casual visitor and the architectural historian. It is hoped that the following chapters will give a better understanding of this site. Seeing these buildings in their historical context may perhaps stimulate a renewed desire to preserve them and to respect the integrity of the original design.

However a working university is not a museum; its buildings have to be constantly adapted to meet the changing needs of students, teachers and researchers. To achieve this, while simultaneously respecting the vision, artistry and craftsmanship of our forebears, is a major challenge. Intelligent and sensitive refurbishment must be informed by a knowledge of the path already trodden.
Figure 1.1: Aerial view of the St Lucia site, about 1930

2 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AB/P/53.
2. PRELUDE (1926-1936)

The Earliest Plans

In October 1926, Dr James Mayne and his sister offered to pay for the resumption of land at St Lucia to create a new campus for the University of Queensland. The Brisbane mayor, William Jolly, declared that this was a site "unequaled for a University in any city in Australia or in the world." Certainly it offered great benefits when compared with the cramped accommodation which the University then occupied at George Street in the city, on the site of the current Queensland University of Technology. Nonetheless there were many who still favoured an earlier proposal to move the University to a site at Victoria Park, which was close to the centre of the city and also to the Brisbane General Hospital at Herston, which was envisaged as the teaching hospital for the future medical school.\(^1\)

The academic staff of the University generally favoured the St Lucia proposal. One of the strongest advocates was A.C.V. Melbourne, lecturer in history.\(^2\) Melbourne praised the St Lucia setting as being "secure in its isolation."\(^3\) He quickly began to assess the possibilities of the site, and had a rough layout sketch prepared by a Brisbane architect, R. Martin Wilson.\(^4\) In many ways Wilson's plan was the template for most of the subsequent plans. He located the principal buildings on the central plateau, using a square layout, with the main building in the centre of the square and other buildings at the corners. He proposed a bridge over the river to Boundary Street, with a tram line running up Mill Road. Unnamed buildings (probably colleges) were sited on the southern ridge by the river. There is no lake in Wilson's sketch, but he envisaged a riverside drive.\(^5\)

However the first serious attempt to plan the St Lucia site was undertaken by the University's Professor of Engineering, R.W.H. Hawken.\(^6\) He presented a preliminary plan for the site, drawn by his colleagues in the Engineering Department, to a meeting of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee in September 1929.\(^7\) This evolved into a layout plan which clearly influenced later thinking on the subject.\(^8\) At the centre of the campus, on the highest point of the St Lucia site, he situated the Library building (including the

---


\(^2\) See also Helen Gregory, *Vivant Professores: Distinguished Members of the University of Queensland, 1910-1940* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Library, 1987), 98-102.

\(^3\) Thomis, *Place of Light & Learning*, 160.

\(^4\) See also Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Library, 1984), 209-10.

\(^5\) The sketch is in the UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/7/1. The accompanying letter from R. Martin Wilson to A.C.V. Melbourne, 26 October 1926, is in the UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2.

\(^6\) See also Gregory, *Vivant Professores*, 43-7.

\(^7\) Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 29 September 1929, UQ Archives, UQA S15.

\(^8\) The dating of Hawken's plans is uncertain. One of the earlier versions in the UQ Site Plans Collection in the Fryer Library (UQFL250/4/3) has a manuscript note "about 1931-32."
administration, a museum and an art gallery in some versions of the plan). Roadways radiated out from this centre, flanked by the academic departments, student union and other services. The colleges were located on the ridge of higher ground on the southern riverbank. Carmody Creek would be dammed to create a small lake and the remaining low-lying land was earmarked for sporting fields and gardens (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Later re-drawing of Hawken's layout of the St Lucia site

---

9 UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/4/5.
On June 19, 1930, the certificate of title to the St Lucia site was formally handed over to the Chancellor of the University by Dr and Miss Mayne.\(^\text{10}\) The question was no longer whether the University would move to St Lucia, but when. In 1932 Melbourne became a member of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee, and at a meeting in September, he urged that Hawken's plan be adopted "as far as the main features are concerned." He further recommended that "an early determination should be made as to the style of architecture to be adopted." Recent examples of university design were called for, and the layout of the University of Birmingham was specifically mentioned as worthy of investigation.\(^\text{11}\)

At this point another important figure in the development of the new campus emerges, namely F.W. Robinson, lecturer in modern languages at the University.\(^\text{12}\) On October 13, 1933, Robinson gave an address to the "Shop Talk" Association of University Staff on "A New University at St Lucia." At this stage Robinson was only considering general principles for the design of the new campus. He was strongly in favour of the Oxbridge model of a university in which residential colleges played a major role. The need for a nucleus to the campus, and a Great Hall for formal occasions, was also stressed. Water features and vegetation were not neglected, and he made the rousing demand that "not a single Australian tree at present standing on St Lucia should be cut down!" He went so far as to provide a calendar of flowering trees, shrubs and vines suitable for planting there.\(^\text{13}\)

The year 1935 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the University of Queensland, and some saw this as an appropriate time to apply public pressure to obtain funding from the State Government to develop the new campus. Hawken's plan was published in the *Courier Mail* on May 11.\(^\text{14}\) Two weeks later, to maintain the momentum, a perspective view of the St Lucia site based on Hawken's plan and drawn by his colleague, A.J.M. Stoney, was also published.\(^\text{15}\) Robinson's criticism of Hawken's plan survives, and it makes interesting reading, for example,

... good for accessibility from town (and golf!) ... bad for inter-communication between departments (looks like perpetual circular motion) ... Where is the Great Hall? Has the University no soul? ... Where is the open-air gathering ground at the centre of things? ... Is not the "back-yard" of the University here turned toward the city, with stables and dog kennels full in front?\(^\text{16}\)

At a meeting of the Buildings and Grounds Committee on June 27, with Melbourne in the chair for the first time, a motion was adopted that "immediate steps should be taken to discover the attitude of the Government toward the University of Queensland ... the Government should be asked to state whether there is any prospect of obtaining the money

---

\(^{10}\) *Brisbane Courier*, June 20, 1930, 14.

\(^{11}\) Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 15 September 1932, UQ Archives, UQA S15.

\(^{12}\) See also Gregory, *Vivant Professores*, 127-30.

\(^{13}\) Robinson Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL5, box 13.

\(^{14}\) *Courier Mail*, May 11, 1935, 14.

\(^{15}\) *Courier Mail*, May 27, 1935, 17.

\(^{16}\) UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2.
necessary to transfer the University to St. Lucia" and a letter was drafted to the Premier, asking him to receive a deputation from the Senate. The draft letter noted that "it will be necessary to make a careful survey of the site, to determine the placing of the various buildings and to prepare detailed architectural plans."\(^{17}\) This proposal was discussed at the University Senate meeting on July 5 and the letter approved, and the Senate resolved to send a deputation.\(^{18}\)

The Senate deputation met the Labor Party Premier, William Forgan Smith, on July 26, 1935 and received an encouraging response. They reported that the Premier "favoured the calling of competitive plans for the ground layout and the buildings" and wanted plans prepared during the current financial year.\(^{19}\) The *Courier Mail* reported that "the Cabinet approved a suggestion that the Senate of the University should invite architects throughout Australia to submit plans and specifications, so that the structure may be worthy of the State's chief seat of learning. A prize may be offered for the best effort."\(^{20}\) This news would have raised the hopes of the architects of Queensland, any of whom would have welcomed such a large commission from the Government at a time when the building industry was depressed and work difficult to find. The Buildings and Grounds Committee were also favourable to the idea of an architectural competition, and suggested approaching the Royal Australian Institute of Architects for information on the organisation of such a competition.\(^{21}\)

On September 27 it was reported in the press that the Premier intended to "invite competitive designs" for the new buildings, and there was already public debate about the style of architecture to be adopted. While one senior public servant warned against a modernist "shirt factory design," a prominent local architect argued that modern architecture did not have to be of the "packing case" variety and that an Oxbridge model would be completely inappropriate for local conditions.\(^{22}\)

**The University (St Lucia) Building Committee**

On September 25, 1935 the Premier wrote to the Chancellor of the University to notify him that the Government intended to set up a committee to advise on the transfer of the University to St Lucia. The Government would nominate three members of the committee, and the University was invited to nominate a further two members.\(^{23}\) Of the Government nominees, the most important was J.D. Story. Story was then the State's Public Service Commissioner, but he had been a member of the Senate of the University since its foundation, and he would later serve for more than twenty years as its Vice-Chancellor. Story's biographer has argued

\(^{17}\) Second Report (1935) of the Buildings & Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.

\(^{18}\) Senate Minutes, 5 July 1935, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.

\(^{19}\) "St Lucia Site: Report of Deputation Received by the Hon. The Premier," Senate Papers, 9 August 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S2.

\(^{20}\) *Courier Mail*, August 1, 1935, 13.

\(^{21}\) Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 1 August 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S15.

\(^{22}\) *Courier Mail*, September 27, 1935, 12.

\(^{23}\) Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
that "his links with government, while criticized by some academics, had been crucial in gaining Premier William Forgan Smith's promise to build a permanent home for the university."\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Grotesque_of_J.D._Story.png}
\caption{Grotesque of J.D. Story\textsuperscript{25}}
\end{figure}

This is one of the grotesques sculpted by J.T. Muller on the Tower. It probably represents J.D. Story.

The Government also nominated J.J.C. Bradfield, perhaps the most prominent Australian engineer of his generation, responsible for the construction of both the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Story Bridge in Brisbane. It has been said of Bradfield that, "although in most respects severely pragmatic, Bradfield had a penchant for the grandiose."\textsuperscript{26} The final government appointee was A.B. Leven, who had held the post of Chief Architect with the Queensland Government since 1933.\textsuperscript{27}

Melbourne wrote to Story the following day to tell him that the University representatives on the committee would be himself and T.L. Jones, chairman of the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board, "on account of his association with the hospitals."\textsuperscript{28}

The \textit{Courier Mail} reported that the committee had been established "to consider plans and specifications for and the composition of the new University buildings at St. Lucia."\textsuperscript{29} It was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Georgina Story "Story, John Douglas (1869-1966)," \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} 12 (1990), http://adb.anu.edu.au.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Brian D. Pascoe, ed., \textit{A Guide to the Great Court}, rev. ed. (Brisbane: Media and Information Services, University of Queensland, 1992), 27.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Peter Spearritt, "Bradfield, John Job Crew (1867-1943)," \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography} 7 (1979), http://adb.anu.edu.au.
\item \textsuperscript{27} See also Watson and McKay, \textit{Directory of Queensland Architects}, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Melbourne Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL3, box 15.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Courier Mail}, October 10, 1935, 12.
\end{itemize}
a very broad remit, which may account for what Freestone has called the "haphazard and ill-directed process" which unfolded. At its first meeting on October 11, 1935 Melbourne was selected as chairman and Bradfield as vice-chairman. The committee decided that it would be called the "University (St Lucia) Building Committee." It discussed the question of holding an architectural competition, or requesting architects to submit plans, but this matter was deferred for further consideration.

The committee began by canvassing the requirements of the various University faculties, most of whom wanted one or more two- or three-storey buildings. On November 29, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Queensland Chapter) wrote to the committee to recommend that a competition be held for the design of the new University, with helpful suggestions for organising it and the value of prizes to be offered.

Meanwhile, F.W. Robinson, although not appointed to the committee, had been very active, making frequent visits to the St Lucia site to study the topography and take meteorological observations. He presented a proposed layout of the new campus to the third meeting of the committee on December 10. Robinson proposed a main quadrangle, with a tower in the front range and a Great Hall and Library at opposite corners of the quadrangle. The buildings were to have a north-north-west orientation. He gave considerable thought to the layout of the grounds, and proposed the creation of a lake by the construction of a weir across Carmody Creek. Like Hawken, he provided sites for colleges on the southern ridge by the river (Figure 2.3).

At the same meeting, Leven presented a plan which showed buildings grouped around a large quadrangle, along a north-south axis, with the main approach from the west. On December 12, over twenty members of the academic staff met with representatives from the committee to examine the Robinson and Leven plans. The latter was criticised for having too much direct frontage to the west, which would expose it to the worst of the summer heat and the winter winds, and for not sufficiently respecting the natural features of the site. Bradfield then assumed that Robinson's plan was more likely to find favour with the University authorities, and at a small meeting on December 19, he presented a sketch plan which "took over the main features of Dr. Robinson's plan."

Robinson felt that the committee were taking liberties with his work, and he would eventually make a formal complaint to this effect, to which the committee replied that it "unreservedly

---

30 Robert Freestone, Designing Australia's Cities: Culture, Commerce and the City Beautiful, 1900-1930 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 203.
31 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 11 October 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
32 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 23 October 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
33 Ibid., see attachment.
34 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 10 December 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
35 A later drawing of this plan is held in the UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/3/1.
36 Minutes of Meeting with Teaching Staff, 12 December 1935, Melbourne Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL3, box 15.
37 Minutes of meeting, 19 December 1935, Melbourne Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL3, box 15.
rejects his assertion that his design had been taken over by others and that it considers that the statement was unfounded and unwarranted.”

Figure 2.3: Later re-drawing of the final version of Robinson's layout

Meanwhile Leven was modifying his plan to reflect the criticism expressed by the academics. He changed the orientation of the buildings to a north-north-west direction, very similar to that adopted by Robinson, who probably saw this as further plagiarism of his design.

---

38 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 14 February 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
39 UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/6/4.
40 Leven later documented the development of his design in a series of plans preserved in the UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250, folder 3.
Bradfield had also submitted a plan, somewhat similar to the Hennessy design later adopted for the campus, with a main building facing due west, and a semi-circular grouping of buildings behind it (Figure 2.4). The western orientation would have found little favour with the University staff. The semi-circular arrangement may owe something to Webb and Bell’s design for the University of Birmingham (1902-1909), "an unusual formal semicircular arrangement with radiating pavilions."\[41\]

---

Figure 2.4: Later re-drawing of Bradfield's plan\[42\]


\[42\] UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/5/3.
The committee was now faced with an embarrassing number of plans. To complicate matters further, the chairman, Melbourne, left for overseas in January 1936. His place on the committee was taken by Henry Alcock, Professor of History, but the chairmanship now fell to Bradfield, who had previously been vice-chairman. This replacement of a cautious academic with an enterprising professional was not necessarily beneficial at this awkward stage in the committee's deliberations.

At the committee's sixth meeting on February 14, 1936, Bradfield reported that two Brisbane architects, R.P Cummings and F.B. Lucas, had interviewed him concerning the possibility of a competition for the design of the St Lucia site. Bradfield's reply had been non-committal. As a result, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Queensland Chapter) wrote to the University on February 25, to complain that "the Board [sic] that has been set up by the Government ... is not sufficiently representative" and that a competition would elicit designs "of very great value to your Senate in determining the features to be incorporated in the University." These protests were in vain, because the University simply forwarded the letter to Bradfield. The Institute would not let the matter rest. On March 31 they wrote again, both to the Registrar of the University and to the secretary of the committee, requesting meetings, but to no avail.

The University's Men Graduates Association also wrote to support the call for an architectural competition. The issue was discussed again by the committee at its meeting on April 29, but the committee decided that this was a matter for the government to decide, and the correspondence was forwarded to the Premier. The Premier was not interested. He told The Telegraph on May 13 that competitive designs would not be called for. The Vice-Chancellor of the University was quoted as saying that "he [the Premier] once did favour the competitive idea but he has had far greater opportunities to get fresh points of view on the matter since then." Vincent Price, president of the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, reaffirmed that "the whole of Australia should be given the opportunity of making a contribution to this stupendous task," and he expressed strong doubts about the ability of the State Department of Public Works to design such a project.

By this time the committee must have had an inkling of what was to come. At the meeting on April 29, Story (who enjoyed the Premier's confidence) had made the unminuted comment that "the Premier's idea seemed to be that the Department of Public Works and an outside

---

43 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 16 January 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
44 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 14 February 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
45 A transcript of the letter is included in the papers for the Senate meeting of 3 April 1936, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2. The original is in Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
46 Secretary, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Queensland Chapter), to Registrar, University of Queensland, 31 March 1936, also to Secretary, University (St. Lucia) Building Committee, 31 March 1936, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia) – Architectural Competition file, UQ Archives, UQA S130, box 48.
47 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 29 April 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
48 Telegraph (Brisbane), May 14, 1936, city final edition, 2.
firm of architects (possibly Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.) should be asked to submit plans."  

However, by now the committee had a plan, largely the work of the two technical men, Leven and Bradfield, which they thought satisfactory, and they were making preparations to present it to the University staff and Senate in June.  

Bradfield was a man who liked to get things done, and he was not one to be constrained by the niceties of committee etiquette. Now that the plan had been agreed, his aim was to market it. Without any apparent consultation with his fellow committee members, he set about packaging the plan in the most attractive manner possible. To this end, he enlisted the services of a talented draughtsman, R.C.G. (Charles) Coulter, who had produced drawings for Bradfield's Sydney Harbour Bridge design. It has been said of Coulter that his "major contributions to architecture and society are found in his powerful renderings of public buildings designed by others."  

Later scholars have been dismissive of Coulter's work. The University's historian described the design that he produced as "fussily ornate," and Freestone is of the opinion that his unevenly scaled renderings were not the best examples of his work and to latter-day eyes undercut Bradfield's intention of a 'simple, dignified and harmonious conception' by conveying an almost pre-modern monasticism in a fussy, ornate style.  

Coulter used an eclectic Gothic style in most of his perspective drawings of the buildings, but the Library building is distinctly baroque. Whatever their shortcomings to the modern observer, these drawings probably represented to a contemporary audience a very satisfactory model for a new university. 

Bradfield brought these drawings, and a draft report, to the next meeting of the committee on June 11. They were apparently well-received by the other members, with the exception of Leven, who was apparently too taken aback to make any comment at the time. The committee resolved to present the plan to the University staff and Senate on June 22. The following day, Story (ever the peacemaker) wrote to Robinson to keep him informed of developments, and to let him know that the committee were still hoping "that a competition

49 Notes on meeting of 29 April 1936 of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, J.D. Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 7.  
50 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 29 April 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.  
53 Thomis, Place of Light & Learning, 165.  
54 Freestone, Designing Australia's Cities, 206.  
55 Coulter's drawings are reproduced in full as an appendix to Report of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee (see details below). Some of the drawings have been reproduced elsewhere, e.g. Thomis, Place of Light & Learning, 163; Courier Mail, July 28, 1936, 18.  
56 University (St Lucia) Building Committee, Minutes, 11 June 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S488.
may be arranged for designers. The plans for layout are to be schematic only, considerable freedom being left to architects to modify, e.g. such features as cloisters or covered ways."

![Figure 2.5: Coulter's perspective drawing of the St Lucia buildings, looking east](image)

The following week the committee met for the final time, on June 18. After a week of reflection, Leven was now ready to voice his objection to Bradfield's high-handed behaviour. Leven, as the only architect on the committee, had assumed that he and his colleagues at the Department of Public Works would prepare the final drawings. Instead, Bradfield had presented the committee with a final plan, which, Leven pointed out, was "the only plan which had been put forward without consideration and review and that he had not seen the plan until it had been produced at the last meeting." Leven decided "for the sake of unanimity" not to press the matter further, but he was clearly upset. Bradfield scrambled to make amends, and "spoke eulogistically of the assistance rendered by Mr. Leven and stressed that the final plan was largely the plan of Mr. Leven."

The report was completed on June 20, 1936. It consisted of nine pages of typescript, seven pages of Coulter's perspective drawings, five pages of aerial photographs of the site, and a large colour fold-out plan, showing the lay-out approved by the committee on June 11. It was presumably presented to the Premier on the same day. As can be seen from the layout plan (Figure 2.6), there are definite similarities with Robinson's plan, especially as regards the lake and the orientation of the buildings. The colleges are located on the ridge by the river, as originally proposed by Hawken. The bridge across the river to West End is a key

---

57 UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 11.
58 Fryer Library, UQFL466, AB/P/47.
59 Notes on meeting of 18 June 1936 of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, J.D. Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 7.
60 Report of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, UQ Archives, UQA S314. Another copy is in the Bradfield Papers, National Library of Australia, MS4712, series 7, folder 4.
feature, and Coulter’s aerial drawing of the site shows it as a cantilevered miniature model of the Story Bridge (Figure 2.7).

![Figure 2.6: Later re-drawing of final layout adopted by the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, June 11, 1936](image)

The report proposed that the buildings be two-storeys high, to save the expense of inserting lifts. The Administrative and Arts Building, with the Great Hall extending to the rear, was the main feature of the plan. An open, cloistered quadrangle extended behind these buildings, with a prominent Library building on the other side to provide balance. The report recognised that "all these ideas are merely suggestive. The actual designs and details will be matters for

---

61 UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/7/6. This version was redrawn from the larger plan in the committee’s report.
architects." Nonetheless, the author of the report (presumably Bradfield), was not reluctant to give advice to the architects:

The architecture of the University buildings should express artistry, simplicity, beauty and harmony ... Into the design should be woven an individuality symbolic of Queensland, whilst a hint of Classical or Gothic would add to the charm.

![Figure 2.7: Coulter's aerial drawing of the St Lucia site](image)

On June 22, Bradfield gave an address to the Senate and staff of the University. It was a well-staged performance, with a carefully prepared speech and numerous slides. The *Courier Mail* reported that the meeting was held behind closed doors, but that "it is understood that the Government and the University Senate will be guided in their building plans by the recommendations." Bradfield gave the history of the St Lucia site and a detailed account of the various plans submitted, concluding with a description of the layout adopted by the committee. He ended his address on an inspiring note (and with an unacknowledged quotation from the American architect and planner, Daniel Burnham):

---

62 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AB/P/48.
63 The typescript of the address is in UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2. Another copy is in the Bradfield Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 4712, series 7, folder 5.
64 *Courier Mail*, June 23, 1936, 15.
Whoever has the honour to be entrusted with the architecture of St. Lucia should have vision to see where opportunity lies, to aim high in hope and work and dream in terms of the future. He must make no mean plans, for mean plans have no magic to stir any man's blood, or awaken inspiration in anyone, and the University should be an inspiration to her students.

On the day of Bradfield's address, the Adelaide architect Guy St. J. Makin, national president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, wrote to the Premier, stressing the need for a competition for the design of the new university.65

A full month elapsed before the State Government published the findings of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, on July 27, 1936. When two of Coulter's drawings were published in the Courier Mail on the following day, they were incorrectly attributed to Bradfield. The "magnificent buildings" and the beautiful vistas and drives were enthusiastically praised, and it was reported as "unlikely ... that there will be any material departure from the design and lay-out submitted by the joint committee."66

The journalist who wrote the latter comment was poorly informed, and yet it was completely reasonable to assume that the Government, having set up a committee of senior bureaucrats and professional men, intended to heed that committee's recommendations. Certainly Bradfield must have thought so, or he would not have invested so much time and effort in the project. Even Story, with his close links to Premier Forgan Smith, clearly believed in the value of the committee's work. But they were all mistaken.

As early as December 1935, when the committee was still in the early stages of its work, the Premier had mentioned to Jack F. Hennessy, senior partner in the Sydney architectural firm Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., that he might be asked to advise on the design of the new university, and later that month Bradfield supplied Hennessy with a plan of the site.67 As already mentioned, Story had notified the committee on April 19, 1936 that the Premier was interested in obtaining plans from Hennessy's firm. Late in June, shortly after Bradfield's address to the University, Forgan Smith saw Hennessy "and indicated that he most likely would be given the work."68 The formal offer was made late in July, and Hennessy telegraphed the Premier on July 23 thanking him for the appointment.69 On the same day, the Courier Mail carried a photograph of Hennessy and reported that "the Premier pointed out a few days ago that the Public Works Department would be associated with all the work of the new University, but it was of such national importance that an architect in private practice

65 Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
66 Courier Mail, July 28, 1936, 18
67 Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J.D. Story, 22 April 1937, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
68 Ibid.
69 Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
might be engaged also."⁷⁰ This was still a few days before the findings of the committee had even been made public.

Now thoroughly alarmed, the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects wrote to the Premier on the following day, asking him to receive a deputation concerning the new buildings at St Lucia. On August 5 they were informed that this would not be possible, but they were invited to submit their views in writing.⁷¹ There is no evidence that they did so; perhaps they had realised that the case was now hopeless.

Forgan Smith had not repudiated the work of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee, and on August 3 he met with Hennessy and asked him to report on the committee's findings.⁷² On August 17 Hennessy submitted his comments to the Premier, and he was clearly unimpressed with the committee's work. He was of the opinion that the new university should not be "a collection of public buildings dotted round the site and unconnected." He rejected the plan to have the traffic from the bridge flowing directly to the entrance of the university. He optimistically assured the Premier that he could work with the Department of Public Works, but added the ominous qualification, "as long as there is one controlling influence ... to prevent delays and extra cost." He declared that he was happy to meet with the committee and offered to produce "a fully drawn sketch design" within four weeks. The question of payment (later to become a matter of much contention) was not neglected, and Hennessy proposed a design fee of 1½% of the estimated cost of the whole institution, plus a fee of 2½% for drawings, details and specifications of buildings as constructed, not including payment for supervision.⁷³

The following day, when asked to comment on this letter, Story seems to have realised that the work of the committee had largely been in vain. He considered that the committee had discharged their function, and that the rest was a matter for the architects, so he made no recommendation for a meeting of the committee with Hennessy. He recommended that Hennessy now prepare designs for approval by the State Government and the Senate of the University. Once approval was given, Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. should be appointed supervising architects "on the clear understanding that they will act in association with the architects of the Department of Public Works."⁷⁴ Forgan Smith accepted Story's advice, and the same day, August 18, 1936, appointed Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. as consulting architects to advise on the project.

Reaction from the local architectural profession was predictable, swift and fruitless. Nobody was prepared to publicly attack Hennessy, who was a very successful and well qualified

---

⁷⁰ *Courier Mail*, July 23, 1936, 12.
⁷¹ Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
⁷² Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J.D. Story, 22 April 1937, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
⁷³ Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
⁷⁴ Public Service Commissioner, Minute, 18 August 1936, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
architect, but they complained that "there was no need for the Government to go outside the State for professional advice." The failure to hold a competition for the project had left "a strong feeling of dissatisfaction."\(^{75}\) Leo Drinan, manager of the Queensland office of Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., was quick to point out that the firm had maintained an office in Brisbane for eleven years and had been working in the city since 1916, so it could hardly be dismissed as a "southern" firm.\(^{76}\) However the failure to hold a competition was an issue that remained without explanation or obvious justification; it will be re-examined in the following chapter.

On the day after Hennessy's appointment was announced, the *Courier Mail* carried a long article on the architect and his firm. Hennessy summed up his approach to the project in these terms:

> The main thing was to have plans that would provide for Queensland materials, and strike a note in architecture that would reflect the spirit of Queensland, rather than be an imitation of something from the older countries.\(^{77}\)

The implicit dismissal of the committee's report, and of Coulter's drawings, made it clear that Hennessy would be starting afresh. The University (St Lucia) Building Committee had become just one more of history's irrelevant sideshows.\(^{78}\)

---

\(^{75}\) *Courier Mail*, August 20, 1936, 16.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., August 21, 1936, 16.

\(^{77}\) Ibid., August 19, 1936, 15.

\(^{78}\) For further analysis of the plans considered by the Committee, see Freestone, *Designing Australia's Cities*, chapter 5; Christian Charbel Nakkash, "Original Site Planning: University of Queensland," (B.Arch. thesis, University of Queensland, 1990).
3. JACK F. HENNESSY, ARCHITECT OF THE GREAT COURT

Who was Jack F. Hennessy, the architect appointed by Premier Forgan Smith to design the new university at St Lucia? And, just as importantly, why did Forgan Smith decide to give the job to Hennessy, in preference to the many other talented architects in Queensland and Australia? The first question is easier to answer than the second.¹

Origins

As his name suggests, Jack F. Hennessy belonged to an Irish Australian Catholic family, but the Hennessys were not a typical Irish Australian family. In the early twentieth century, Australians of Irish Catholic extraction were mostly descended from those who had come to the country as convicts, farm workers, domestic servants, or navvies. The Hennessys belonged to a higher caste.

Hennessy's father was also called Jack F. Hennessy, and he was also an architect. Although proud of his Irish heritage, Hennessy senior was actually born in England, in Leeds, in 1853. His parents, Bryan and Ellen Hennessy, had recently moved there from Ireland, as the first step in the family's quest for self-improvement, and Bryan Hennessy worked in the clothing trade. The family was prosperous enough to be able to employ a resident domestic servant.²

Jack F. Hennessy senior was the second of four children, and the one who would make the family's fortune. Having shown promise at school, he was articled to the Leeds architectural firm of William Perkin and Son. He completed his articles in 1875 and was awarded a three-year studentship of the Royal Institute of British Architects, which allowed him to study in London under some of the most distinguished architects of the day. One of these was William Burges, a leading figure in the Gothic Revival, and this was the architectural style which was to become the trademark of Jack F. Hennessy senior. After further study in Spain, he worked in New York and Boston and was for two years junior partner in a firm in Los Angeles before arriving in Sydney in October 1880.³

Jack F. Hennessy senior rapidly became one of the most prominent Sydney architects of his time. His father, elder brother (who had by now also qualified as an architect) and youngest sister soon joined him in Sydney. After four years working for the Sydney City Council he went into partnership with Joseph Sheerin, an Australian-born Catholic architect, and established a flourishing practice. As Morton Herman puts it,

---

² 1861 census of England, township of Leeds, ward of Mill Hill (the family name is incorrectly recorded as Henness).
from the first, Sheerin and Hennessy was a very successful firm, having Church authorities, municipalities, and merchants as clients, which allowed them to design a wide range of buildings and to experiment extensively in the then current modes of design. They did, however, have new ideas, which if not always successful were at least bold.4

In 1884 Hennessy married Matilda Silk, who bore him seven children (four of whom survived childhood) before her untimely death in 1898.5 The second child, and the only son to reach adulthood, was John Francis junior, the future architect.

"Genial" and "popular" were terms commonly applied to Jack F. Hennessy senior by his contemporaries, and his personality was no doubt an asset in his professional advancement. Without wishing to detract from his achievements, it could be suggested that his religion also played a role in his successful career. Sheerin and Hennessy were Catholics at a time when there were few Catholics in the professions in Australia, and they consequently benefited from the patronage of their co-religionists. It is impossible to understand properly the careers of the Hennessys, father and son, without knowing something of the tribal and combative nature of Australian Catholicism at the time, a religion deeply rooted in the sad history of Ireland. As Edmund Campion explains,

building a church and school and convent and then paying for them was a significant part of parish life. Under the leadership of the priest, the various fund-raising endeavours created an attractive social ambience in the parish. The early Irish-

---

4 Morton Herman, The Architecture of Victorian Sydney (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1956), 76.
5 Death certificate of Matilda Hennessy, New South Wales, registration no. 1898/005006.
Australians may have lived in slums and hovels, but they liked big, impressive churches. And they enjoyed raising the money to pay for them ... Thus the buildings are an important element of Irish religion in Australia. They were built, every one of them, by the priest as community leader and paid for by the communal efforts of the parishioners.⁶

**Early Years**

Jack F. Hennessy junior was born on January 8th, 1887 at Burwood, Sydney. It was an era in which it was a mixed blessing to be the only son of a successful father. Such sons benefited from the financial support and social and professional networks which their fathers provided, but they frequently suffered the deadening weight of expectation that they would follow in the parental profession and match the achievements of their progenitor. Did Jack F. Hennessy junior decide that he wanted to be an architect, like his father, or was the decision made for him?

He began his secondary education at the Christian Brothers' High School at Lewisham, and completed it at another Christian Brothers establishment, St Patrick's College, Goulburn, which had established a reputation for high academic achievement. On completion of his schooling he was articled to the Sydney architectural firm of Sulman and Power, under the leadership of John Sulman, one of the most prominent Australian architects of the day, a man whose "taste was essentially conservative (he considered much modern art to be 'awful rubbish'), but his interests ranged from painting to town planning."⁷ Sulman was also the lecturer in architecture at the University of Sydney, where the subject was taught as part of the engineering degree, and Hennessy was one of his students.⁸

For want of a full degree course in architecture, aspiring architects had to make do with the architectural course offered at the Sydney Technical College, which Hennessy attended. He was awarded the 1905 silver medal of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales for the best measured drawing by a student,⁹ and about a year later he passed the intermediate examination of the Royal Institute of British Architects.¹⁰

It is at this stage in Hennessy's biography that the advantages of being the only son of a successful father become fully obvious. As opportunities for architectural education in Australia were very limited, his father sent him overseas for about five years for further study and experience. It had been the custom for Australian architects to travel to England and Europe to advance their education, but Jack Hennessy senior had worked in the United States before coming to Australia and believed that the future of the profession was being forged in

---

⁹ *Art and Architecture* (Sydney) 3, no. 6 (1906): 253.
¹⁰ Ibid., 5, no. 2 (1908): 78.
America. In his 1910 inaugural address as acting president of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, Hennessy senior spoke glowingly of the School of Architecture at Pennsylvania University: "it is asserted that it is to this great school that America owes her present pre-eminence in architecture, that of being fifty years ahead of the world."\textsuperscript{11} This was where his son was currently undertaking the four-year course leading to the Bachelor of Science in Architecture.

![Figure 3.2: Student project by Jack F. Hennessy junior: A Museum Doorway \textsuperscript{12}](image)

Having successfully obtained his degree, the younger Hennessy completed his education with the obligatory tour of Europe, studying the masterworks of the western architectural tradition \textit{in situ}. Some of his pencil sketches from this period were subsequently published as cover illustrations of architectural journals in Australia.\textsuperscript{13} He returned to Sydney late in 1911.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Art and Architecture} (Sydney) 7, no. 3 (1910): 93.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 7, no. 5 (1910): 129.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Salon} 7, no. 3 (1916) and \textit{Architecture} 4, no. 1 (1918).
By this time, his father's long-time business partner, Joseph Sheerin, was sixty-five years old and ready to retire. Hennessy senior, now fifty-eight years of age, was no young man either. Clearly what the firm needed was an infusion of new blood, and yet the young Hennessy initially went to work with Spain, Cosh & Minnett. Presumably this was never intended as a permanent arrangement, and early in 1912 he moved to his father's office at Norwich Chambers on the corner of Bligh and Hunter Streets, Sydney, and the firm of Sheerin and Hennessy was reborn as Hennessy and Hennessy. In many ways it was an ideal combination: a widely experienced senior partner with excellent connections in the Catholic community throughout New South Wales, and an energetic junior partner newly returned from the best architectural education available anywhere in the world.

In terms of academic credentials, Jack F. Hennessy junior was now one of the best qualified architects in Australia, so it is not surprising that he was offered the post of lecturer in architecture at the University of Sydney in 1912, following the retirement of his old mentor, John Sulman. The new lecturer's philosophy of architectural education was based on the conviction that "architecture is both an art and a science" and the pragmatic realisation that "the local geographical, geological and climatic conditions must all affect the architecture of a country."  

Like his father, Hennessy campaigned for the establishment of a chair in architecture at the University of Sydney and he was a member of a committee of the Institute of Architects which made representations on this subject to the government in 1912. When the degree course was finally established at the beginning of 1918, he taught the inaugural class of nine students (three of them women) until the arrival of the foundation professor, Leslie Wilkinson, later that year.

Hennessy's years in America were also beneficial to his personal life, for it was there that he met his future wife, Dorothy Grady. He returned to Philadelphia in November 1913 for the wedding and they settled in Sydney, where three children were born to them before the untimely death of Dorothy Hennessy on July 3rd, 1919.

The largest project which the father and son team would undertake began shortly after their partnership was formed in 1912, and was not completed until well after the death of the senior partner. This huge undertaking was the construction of the nave and towers of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, the spiritual centre of Australian Catholicism. The design was the work of William Wardell (1823-1899), friend of Pugin and Newman, and one of the leading Australian exponents of the Gothic Revival. The Hennessys quite properly made it be

---

15 Salon (Sydney) 1, no. 2 (1912): 123-5.
16 Building (Sydney), May 11, 1918, 9; ibid., 98.
17 Sydney Morning Herald, January 3, 1914, 14.
18 Ibid., July 4, 1919, 8.
known that "the work now being carried out (with the exception of the Crypt, which is our design) is the completion of the design of the late W.W. Wardell." For the younger Hennessy the cathedral extensions offered invaluable experience in the management of a large project. Labour was difficult to find during the war years of 1914 to 1918 and locating a suitable supply of stone also proved problematic. His personal supervision of the works attracted favourable comment. It was also good experience in the problems of dealing with clients who suffered from perennial cash flow problems: the Church's fund-raising efforts were never able to keep up with the contractors' bills.

![Figure 3.3: Pencil sketch by Jack F. Hennessy junior of the nave of St Mary's Cathedral](image)

**The Archbishop's Architect**

The firm of Hennessy and Hennessy now began to expand its sphere of activity into Queensland. The young James Duhig, who was to become one of the great builders of the Catholic Church in Australia, was appointed to the see of Rockhampton in 1905. He had already established contact with the Hennessys before he moved to Brisbane as coadjutor archbishop in 1912 and he and the younger Hennessy became close friends. After Duhig became archbishop of Brisbane in 1917, Hennessy and Hennessy were awarded many

---

20 *Architecture* (Sydney), April 21, 1919, 120.
21 *Building* (Sydney), September 12, 1928, 51.
22 *Building and Engineering* (Sydney), May 24, 1949, 16d.
important commissions, the first of which was the Convent of the Sacred Heart (Stuartholme), at Toowong in the western suburbs of Brisbane, perched (like many of Duhig's buildings) on a prominent hilltop. It is a large brick building, never completed, in a style reminiscent of the Gothic, with dormer windows and arcaded verandas.24

The opening of Stuartholme on August 1, 1920, was a memorable day for Jack Hennessy junior for more than one reason, because it was there that he met the woman who was to become his second wife. Stella Beirne was the youngest daughter of the wealthy Brisbane retailer, T.C. Beirne.25 For an architect wishing to expand his practice in Brisbane it was a perfect match. As Hennessy was a widower with three children, the wedding, on January 11, 1922, was a comparatively quiet affair, celebrated by Duhig himself in his private chapel.26

The award of a papal knighthood of St Sylvester to Jack F. Hennessy senior in 1920 was a well-deserved reward for decades of architectural service to the Catholic Church in New South Wales.27 It was perhaps also a recognition that his career was coming to a close. In 1923 he withdrew from active involvement in the firm and he died on November 1, 1924.

The death of the elder Hennessy probably loosened the ties that bound the firm of Hennessy and Hennessy to the Catholic hierarchy in New South Wales. His son had found a wealthy patron in Brisbane and the firm's centre of gravity was moving northwards. In June 1920, Hennessy and Duhig were in Rockhampton for the laying of the foundation stone of a large boarders' residence for the Range Convent, another prominently sited building. It was a two-storey brick structure typical of much of Hennessy's work in the 1920s, with its Romanesque arcaded verandas and deep purple-red brickwork.28

Duhig's archiepiscopal seat was the Brisbane cathedral of St Stephen, which had been designed in the 1860s by a local architect, Richard George Suter (1827-1894), in the Gothic Revival style. By the end of the nineteenth century only the nave and the west front had been completed, and in the early years of the twentieth century the prominent Brisbane firm of Hall & Dods produced a plan for the eastern extension, with a large crossing tower and transepts. However when Duhig became archbishop in 1917 he already had plans for a much grander cathedral, and he only reluctantly proceeded with the completion of St Stephen's. Hennessy produced for him a simple Gothic design with transepts and a short sanctuary, each with tall lancet windows. It was opened in April 1922.29

The amount of work being conducted in Queensland led Hennessy to open a Brisbane office in 1924, and to manage it he appointed one of the staff from his Sydney office, Leo Joseph

---

24 A perspective drawing of the proposed building was published in Building (Sydney), November 12, 1925, 73.
26 Brisbane Courier, January 12, 1922, 9.
27 Architecture (Sydney), December 20, 1920, 173.
29 Brisbane Courier, March 31, 1922, 4.
Drinan. Drinan was born in West Maitland, New South Wales, in 1903 and had trained under Thomas Wilfred Silk, a local architect who also happened to be the brother-in-law of Jack F. Hennessy senior. Drinan was a talented architect and much of the firm's success in Queensland over the following forty years is attributable to him.

Duhig's appetite for the construction of impressive church buildings was boundless. His dream was to construct a huge cathedral in Brisbane that would be one of the wonders of the Southern Hemisphere and, as his biographer records, "he had an ally in all this, a man of vision as broad and of energy as restless as his own, a man as optimistic as he, as daring, as ready for the greatest risks," in other words, his architect. Hennessy and Duhig had settled on a plan for a massive Renaissance basilica as early as 1916, and in 1923 Hennessy exhibited a drawing of the proposed building at an exhibition in Sydney. The foundation stone of the Holy Name Cathedral was finally laid on September 16, 1928, and work on the construction of the extensive foundations then commenced. However the huge sums required for the construction were beyond Duhig's means. Although work continued intermittently for years, the only part of the structure that was ever completed was a crypt fronting Gipps Street, which was opened in 1935.

Hennessy's business relationship with Duhig was becoming very complex. Hennessy had been looking for suitable stone to build the Holy Name Cathedral and had sent an engineer to the United States to investigate Benedict stone, a manufactured stone produced by mixing crushed natural stone with cement and removing minerals which caused disintegration in natural stone. Hennessy recommended the adoption of Benedict stone for the construction of the cathedral and Duhig decided to set up a factory in Brisbane for the production of the stone, using a local porphyry as the natural ingredient. The factory opened at Bowen Hills in Brisbane in August 1929. With characteristic confidence, Hennessy declared that there is no doubt but that as soon as this stone is understood properly, as it is understood by us, it will be used throughout the length and breadth of Australia in preference to the natural stones.

However the cost of setting up the factory, plus the royalties to be paid to the parent company, exacerbated Duhig's already serious financial problems. In 1930 he was able to obtain a loan from the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Company (CML), using as security the Benedict Stone Works and other properties. Hennessy was already working on a new

---

31 Obituary of Leo J. Drinan, *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), March 2, 1967, 5.
33 *Building* (Sydney), March 12, 1923, 70 and 76.
34 Boland, *James Duhig*, passim.
36 Jack F. Hennessy to Archbishop Duhig, 19 June 1930, Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, Brisbane, Duhig Correspondence, Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. file.
building for CML in Brisbane, which was to be only the first of a series of such buildings, and CML agreed to use Benedict stone in all of these buildings. The resultant relationship between Duhig, CML and Hennessy is one which Duhig's biographer has described as "mutual dependence." Ultimately, Benedict stone was not a financial success, and the works were sold in 1950.

Figure 3.4: Perspective drawing of the proposed Holy Name Cathedral  
Showing the Ann Street frontage

Hennessy's firm designed many other buildings for the Catholic Church in Queensland during the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the more notable were St Vincent's Hospital at Toowoomba, Nazareth House at Wynnum North, Villa Maria in Fortitude Valley, Corpus Christi Church at Nundah, St Ignatius Loyola Church at Toowong, the Mater Hospital at Mackay and the Pius XII Provincial Seminary at Banyo. The firm also continued to do work for the Church in New South Wales, and even obtained a few commissions in Victoria and Western Australia.

---

Among these projects were the impressive Romanesque chapel for the Christian Brothers’ training college at Strathfield in Sydney, the Church of St Mary at Geelong, the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, the Cardinal Cerretti Memorial Chapel at St Patrick's Seminary, Manly, the Freehill Tower at St John's College within the University of Sydney, and the St John of God Hospital at Belmont (Riverdale) in Perth.

However in 1938 the close-knit professional partnership between Duhig and Hennessy began to unravel. When Hennessy failed to obtain the commission for the extension of Villa Maria, for which he had prepared the original design, he was furious. His anger was heightened by the fact that the project was entrusted to a firm headed by Duhig's nephew, Frank Cullen. Cullen had worked for Hennessy for five years, first as an articled pupil and then as a draftsman, a fact which probably added to Hennessy's sense of injury. Hennessy was learning that the system of patronage from which he had benefited so richly could also work to his detriment. He made wild claims of malpractice and conspiracy, which effectively ended his friendship with Duhig.40

![Figure 3.5: Hennessy and Duhig (centre) at the Holy Name Cathedral Site](image)

Probable taken in 1928.

41 Concrete Constructions (Queensland) Ltd. photograph collection, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland (acc: 27937).
The International Architect

Although Hennessy was one of the leading Australian ecclesiastical architects of his day, his practice was by no means confined to commissions for the Catholic Church. Like his father before him, he designed major commercial projects which were very different from his ecclesiastical work and brought him to the attention of a public outside the circles of Australian Catholicism and even beyond the shores of Australia.

The firm's involvement in construction of commercial premises received a stimulus from Hennessy's Brisbane connections. His marriage to the daughter of T.C. Beirne soon yielded some important commissions from his new father-in-law, including a cinema, flats for the accommodation of Beirne's staff, and extensions to his large department store in Fortitude Valley. Hennessy's first Brisbane "skyscraper" was a six-storey office building in Adelaide Street, near the corner of Edward Street, constructed for the Freeleagus brothers, a family of successful Greek businessmen. When opened in 1929 it was named the Astoria Building.42

Hennessy's most important commercial client would prove to be the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Company (CML). As we have already seen, a complex relationship developed between Hennessy, CML and Duhig. The company decided to create a new state headquarters building in Sydney by extending the Mutual Life Insurance office building on the corner of Pitt Street and Martin Place, which they had purchased in 1926. This building had been erected around 1894 to a design of the successful Sydney architect John Kirkpatrick (1856-1923). Hennessy was given the brief of adding a further three stories to the building and refurbishing the office space for the new owners. Externally the extension was a more restrained repetition of the classical style of the original building. Internally, the challenges included the insertion of new lifts and the remodelling of the business chamber and offices. With a successful insurance company as his client, Hennessy was able to indulge his taste for scagliola and marble in a range of colours to create an impressive public space for customers.43

Clearly the CML were pleased with their extended and refurbished Sydney building. They asked Hennessy to design for them a new building as their Brisbane headquarters. The ten-storey building beside the General Post Office in Queen Street was opened in November 1931, having taken only nine months to erect, and it is perhaps the most admired of Hennessy's surviving buildings, although little of the original interior remains. It was also the first large building to be built using the locally produced Benedict stone. Contemporary media reports described the style as "modern Romanesque,"44 and it is today often loosely described as art deco, but in many ways it is a uniquely Hennessy style, a commercial equivalent of his Romanesque Revival churches.45

---

42 Brisbane Courier, December 21, 1928, 18.
43 Building (Sydney), July 12, 1929, 50-60.
44 Brisbane Courier, November 13, 1931, 11.
45 Building (Sydney), December 12, 1931, 39-49.
A modern commentator has said of Hennessy's CML buildings that "although the idiosyncratic Romanesque composition of these buildings was not overtly Art Deco, their massing and areas of emphasis, such as parapets and entries, were similar to office buildings designed in that style."\(^{46}\) The Brisbane building was the prototype. The elaborate detailing of the windows on the lowest and highest floors, the animal statuary, the very prominent parapet with numerous gargoyles, and the mansard roof with coloured tiles create an interesting exterior, all executed in a predominantly pink Benedict stone, with splashes of green. Internally, the shopfronts in the shopping arcade on the ground floor and the bronze doors and lift lobby possibly owed something to the contemporary art deco style. The scagliola and marble of the public insurance chamber, and the coloured wall coatings and terrazzo elsewhere inside the building, all reflected Hennessy's penchant for striking colour effects. With its combination of professional suites and office accommodation on the upper floors, shops and insurance office on the ground floor, and basement café, it was the quintessential city building of the 1930s.

\[\text{Figure 3.6: Detail of the façade of the former CML Building, Brisbane}\]

The directors of the CML were so pleased with the Brisbane building that they commissioned Hennessy to construct a series of buildings, all in the same style, in other cities in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Hennessy's practice was now becoming an international one. From an architectural perspective, his CML buildings may seem repetitive, but this was a deliberate strategy on the part of the company to establish a consistent "brand." Benedict stone produced at Duhig's factory in Brisbane was used to face all of these buildings, even those in Durban and Wellington. Admiration of the CML buildings has never been universal.

Writing in 1960, Robin Boyd dismissed the Adelaide building and its Benedict stone facing as "something of a party joke in ... satiny, master-bedroom pink."\(^{47}\)

In December 1933 Hennessy received the ultimate professional accolade when he was made a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.\(^{48}\) Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were still "the colonies," and the real test for Australians in any walk of life was to achieve success in the mother country. In 1937 and 1938 the Australian media carried reports that Hennessy had been commissioned to design buildings for CML in Birmingham and eight other British cities, and that he was believed to be the first Australian architect to be summoned to Britain.\(^{49}\) Despite this international success, Hennessy insisted (with uncharacteristic modesty) that he was "just an average architect."\(^{50}\)

The CML building in Birmingham was opened in 1939. It is a nine-storey stepped art deco building with very little external decoration. In September 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War put an end both to the company's plans for further building work in England and to Hennessy's international career.

Meanwhile, Hennessy's work for Colonial Mutual had been noticed by other insurance companies, who were keen not to be left behind. This brought him major commissions from both the Australasian Catholic Assurance Company (ACA) and the Prudential Assurance Company. For the ACA he constructed buildings almost simultaneously in Sydney and Melbourne. The Sydney building, opened in February 1936, is of fourteen storeys faced in Vibro stone in shades of pink (darker at the lower levels). Of Hennessy's major projects, this was the first unequivocally art deco building.\(^{51}\) The Melbourne ACA Building was opened late the same year. It is of thirteen storeys, but smaller than the Sydney building, and occupies a mid-block location. The pink facing is similar to that of the Sydney building, but here Benedict stone from Brisbane was used.\(^{52}\)

Hennessy's first building for the Prudential Assurance Company was opened in Wellington in April 1935. The Prudential Building in Sydney was opened five years later in May 1939. It was a massive fourteen-storey building, with its main frontage to Martin Place and additional frontages to Elizabeth Street and Castlereagh Street. It was the last and biggest of Hennessy's skyscrapers, but survived for a mere thirty years, falling to Whelan the Wrecker in 1969. It was a stripped classical building, faced in Hawkesbury sandstone with a base of polished granite.\(^{53}\)


\(^{48}\) *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), January 19, 1934, 12.

\(^{49}\) See, for example, "Australian Architect to Design English Buildings," *Building and Manufacturing* (Brisbane), January 13, 1938, 5.

\(^{50}\) *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), June 19, 1937, 15.

\(^{51}\) *Building* (Sydney), February 12, 1936, 12-23.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., November 12, 1936, 16-21.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., June 24, 1939, 16-27, 100a-100b.
Of Hennessy's two other large Sydney office buildings, only the façade of Challis House in Martin Place (refurbished 1936-1937) remains. University Chambers, a thirteen-storey art deco building in Elizabeth Street (opened 1938), was demolished in 1970.

To summarise the pre-war career of Jack F. Hennessy junior, we might say that he was a conservative architect, firmly rooted in the revivalist styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However in matters of constructional technology he was something of an innovator, fascinated since his student days by the new building techniques being developed in the United States. He liked to see himself as a hard-headed business man, and rejected the views of "many commercial men [who] look upon architects as being unpractical and day-dreamers without any knowledge of business."\textsuperscript{54}

This combination of conservatism and pragmatism had worked effectively for Hennessy and had enabled him to build his father's well established firm into one of the most prominent architectural practices in Australia.

A Catholic Conspiracy?

It is now time to return to the Brisbane of 1936 to attempt to establish why Premier Forgan Smith awarded the task of designing the new University at St Lucia to Jack F. Hennessy, without any public competition being held. A recent scholarly work on the subject reflects the folk memory of the event in these terms:

> The state government, which controlled the university's purse strings, acted decisively at this point. Rejecting renewed calls for a competition, it appointed Hennessy and Hennessy as university architects in July 1936, an appointment explained by their shared connections to the Roman Catholic Church in Brisbane and its head, Archbishop James Duhig.\textsuperscript{55}

Is this a fair interpretation of the events? Was the appointment really contrived by Duhig for the benefit of the Catholic Church?

Certainly, as we have already seen, there was a complex business relationship between Duhig and Hennessy. Hennessy's firm had already conducted a large amount of design and drawing work for the still unbuilt Holy Name Cathedral, and Duhig must have realised that at some time he would have to pay Hennessy in full for this work, although, as subsequent events were to show, he seems to have underestimated his financial obligations to Hennessy. In 1936 Hennessy was still obtaining a significant number of other commissions from the Brisbane Archdiocese (for which he was presumably receiving payment), so he would have been foolish to press Duhig too hard for payment for his work on the cathedral, but his patience

\textsuperscript{54} J. F. Hennessy, "Some Aspects of Recent Architecture," \textit{Architecture} (Sydney) 21, no. 9 (1932), 203.

\textsuperscript{55} Robert Freestone, \textit{Designing Australia's Cities: Culture, Commerce and the City Beautiful, 1900-1930} (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 206.
was not boundless. (As recounted above, the relationship between the two would sour after 1938, but that was still in the future.) If Duhig could obtain for Hennessy a large and lucrative public commission such as the new University, Hennessy would surely be more likely to tolerate, or even forget, the Archbishop's unpaid accounts.

There is also the question of Duhig and Hennessy's involvement in the Benedict Stone Works, which Duhig's biographer has described as "their boldest venture and greatest disaster."56 This enterprise had not proved to be a financial success, despite Hennessy's best efforts and the backing of the Colonial Mutual company. Duhig may well have hoped that if the University was designed by Hennessy, who had first advised him to invest in Benedict stone, there was a very good chance that this large group of buildings would be built using the stone, which would have been a huge boost to the firm's sickly balance sheet. As we shall see, Hennessy did indeed suggest Benedict stone as one of the options for the construction of the St Lucia buildings, and Duhig protested to the Premier when Helidon freestone was chosen instead.57

Duhig was an opportunist and a financial wheeler-and-dealer, but, in all fairness, it must be stressed that his commitment to the University of Queensland was genuine. From the first, he had been a strong supporter of the St Lucia project.58 Himself a visionary and fearless (not to say reckless) builder and planner, Duhig had immediately seen the potential of the site.

It is hard to overestimate Duhig's influence. One historian has spoken of a "triumvirate of powerful men" who dominated Queensland in the 1930s, and Duhig was one of them.59 The other two were the union boss, Clarrie Fallon, and the Labor Premier, William Forgan Smith. Duhig also had considerable influence at the University, of which he had been a senator since 1917, and where he "scrutinized all appointments from cleaner to vice-chancellor."60 One historian describes Duhig's "close personal relation" with Forgan Smith.61 This relationship between the Catholic prelate and the nominally Presbyterian politician may seem strange, but the Queensland Labor Party of the 1930s was very much a Catholic institution. All but two of Forgan Smith's Cabinet colleagues were Catholics, and the Premier needed the support of the Catholic Church for his political survival. He was therefore very attentive to Duhig's concerns.

The decision of the Forgan Smith government in 1935 to build the new University campus at St Lucia thus gave Duhig the means, the motive and the opportunity to advance his own interests by ensuring that the commission was awarded to Duhig's friend and business associate, Jack F. Hennessy, without any public competition. There does not seem to be any

---

56 Boland, James Duhig, 229.
57 See chapter 4.
58 Malcolm Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy-Five Years (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 160.
60 Boland, James Duhig, 345.
conclusive proof that Duhig did so. The archbishop’s influence "was usually wielded in unrecorded messages and informal meetings."\(^{62}\) Certainly we know that Forgan Smith originally intended to hold a competition for the design of the site. The deputation from the University Senate who met the Premier on July 26, 1935 reported that the Premier "favoured the calling of competitive plans for the ground layout and the buildings."\(^{63}\) However Forgan Smith subsequently changed his mind. A newspaper article of May 14, 1936, quotes the University Vice-Chancellor, W.N. Robertson, as saying "I do know that he [the Premier] once did favour the competitive idea but he has had far greater opportunities to get fresh points of view on the matter since then."\(^{64}\) Did one of those fresh points of view come from Duhig?

If Forgan Smith was persuaded by Duhig to entrust the project to Hennessy without any public competition, when did he reach that decision? As recounted in the previous chapter, the University (St Lucia) Building Committee was established late in September 1935. Less than three months later, in mid-December, Forgan Smith told Hennessy that he might be asked to work on the project. The work of the committee, in canvassing views and gathering information, was always seen as the precursor to the selection of an architect to prepare the final plans, but if that architect had already been chosen while the committee was still deliberating, it would surely have been more efficient to have the two working in tandem. When the commission was eventually awarded to Hennessy, the committee members must have felt some bitterness about the whole process. One of those members was Andrew Leven, the Government Architect, whose department would be closely involved in the construction of the new buildings at St Lucia, and as we shall see, Leven's attitude towards the project would prove to be very negative.

There was another factor which added to the aura of sectarian partiality surrounding Hennessy's appointment. Hennessy's father-in-law was the successful Brisbane Catholic retailer T.C Beirne. Since 1928, Beirne had been Warden to the University.\(^{65}\) To the Protestant mind, this also must have seemed extremely suspicious. However the likelihood that Beirne had any role in the appointment is slight. It was the State Government, not the University, which was constructing the new campus, and the University had little more than an advisory role in the process. Furthermore, Beirne was a very different man from Duhig and not always an admirer of Duhig's methods. Nonetheless, Beirne was a major contributor to Archdiocesan funds and Duhig may have hoped to foster Beirne's goodwill by obtaining the commission for Beirne's son-in-law.\(^{66}\)

Much of this is speculation. What we know for certain is that there was widespread belief in Brisbane at the time that Hennessy was appointed architect to the new University because of

---


\(^{63}\) "St Lucia Site: Report of Deputation Received by the Hon. The Premier," Senate Papers, 9 August 1935, UQ Archives, UQA S2.

\(^{64}\) *Telegraph* (Brisbane), May 14, 1936, city final edition, 2.


\(^{66}\) On the relationship between Beirne and Duhig see Boland, *James Duhig*, passim.
his connection with Duhig. For a contemporary view of the matter, we can turn to the
*Protestant Clarion*, a weekly Brisbane newspaper established by the Protestant Labour Party
to counter the perceived dominance of the Catholic interest in Queensland. In its inaugural
issue, it reported that

Messrs. Hennessy and Hennessy, architects for Catholic institutions, Sydney, [have
been] appointed architects for the new Queensland University, despite the fact that
there are excellent Queensland architects available.  

The appointment of Jack F. Hennessy as architect to the new University may or may not have
been a Catholic conspiracy, but it certainly seemed that way to many people in Queensland.

---

67 *Protestant Clarion* (Brisbane), January 27, 1938, 3.
4. THE FIRST PHASE (1936-1942)

The Hennessy Plan

Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. were appointed consulting architects for the construction of the new University on August 18, 1936. Less than a month later, on September 14, they sent the Premier the first version of their design for the site.

The letter which accompanied it\(^1\) set out the rationale for the design, based on a "great central semicircular Quadrangle around which the various buildings are arranged and all connected by means of an arcade." The object of this design was to keep related departments in close proximity to each other, and to reduce the distance between individual departments and the administration (the latter being sited in the main building at the front). The use of open arcades to connect the buildings, rather than the traditional closed quadrangle, "allows for all breezes passing through the various departments." The quadrangle provided for pedestrian access to the buildings, while vehicular access was provided by roadways around the complex. The estimated cost of construction, to provide for fifty years' growth, was one million pounds, and it was considered that this would cover the cost of stone exteriors to all buildings.

Under the heading "Architectural Design," Hennessy claimed that "we have endeavoured to give you something new and original. Neither as regards lay-out or external appearances is there anything like it in the World." With apparent reference to the main frontage, he explained that "we have obtained our main result by massing and grouping, depending upon mass and simplicity for the main effect and introducing a great sculptured cornice." As to the quadrangle itself, he argued that "we have achieved a more collegiate type allowing of the introduction of a continuous arcade" which was meant to "show in detail the tie with the Old Country." In a postscript he mentions the use of "Aboriginal ornament ... to create an Australian tie from the earliest times up to today."

Despite Hennessy's claims of originality, some observers have seen in his design similarities to the plan for the campus originally developed by J.J.C. Bradfield, which was itself reminiscent of the design of the University of Birmingham.\(^2\)

Soon afterwards, on September 25, Hennessy addressed the Senate of the University, explaining his plans. The Senate was favourable to the design and set up a committee to report on the plans and to provide continuing liaison with the government and architects.\(^3\)

The designs were approved by Cabinet the following day, and on September 27 the Premier

\(^1\) Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to the Premier, 14 September 1936, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.

\(^2\) See chapter 2, especially Figure 2.4.

\(^3\) Senate Minutes, 25 September 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
instructed Hennessy to proceed with the preparation of working drawings.\(^4\) Within a few days, some of the perspective drawings began to appear in the press, and on October 12 the Sydney magazine *Building*, owned and edited by Hennessy's friend Florence Taylor, carried a lengthy illustrated article on the project.\(^5\) The inclusion of a photograph of Forgan Smith was politically astute.

![Figure 4.1: Hennessy's initial layout plan, September 1936\(^6\)](image)

In this first version of the plan, the orientation of the Main Building is almost due west, suggesting that Hennessy had learnt nothing from the experience of the University (St Lucia) Building Committee. A hospital, a medical school and a teachers' college all formed part of the complex at this stage. Hennessy followed precedent by locating the colleges on the high ridge beside the river on the south of the site. The bridge from West End joined the northern end of Mill Road, and from there traffic was directed into the roadways around the site.

The plan for the "Quadrangle" (an inappropriate term for a semi-circular enclosure) shows it to be largely free of trees, with radial pathways. The Union Building was located in the outer circle, but with a tall central tower facing the tower of the Main Building and acting as a foil to it. Both towers have prominent flagpoles affixed to the outer walls, suggesting the fins which were so distinctive a feature of the art deco buildings of the time. The tower of the

---

\(^4\) Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J.D. Story, 22 April 1937, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.

\(^5\) “Proposed Queensland University,” *Building* (Sydney), October 12, 1936, 17-27.

\(^6\) University of Queensland Art Museum, 1936.05.
The Main Building was designed to house a carillon of bells, with pierced stonework openings on the sides. A reflecting pool was planned in front of the main entrance.

One of the most prominent features of the design was the Great Hall, located at the western end of the front range. The interior, faced in stone, can only be described as cavernous, although the University's historian later described it as looking "a little like the inside of a London railway station." It was planned to use coloured Aboriginal motifs to decorate the ceiling.

![Figure 4.2: Perspective drawing of the Great Hall, September 1936](image)

Today, the style of these buildings is usually described as stripped classical. The standard guide to Australian architectural styles describes the stripped classical style as "a starkly functional, symmetrical building to which the classical orders could easily be added. Rarely, however, was ornament completely eschewed, and a few touches of Art Deco were not uncommon." The same handbook summarises the style as "progressive yet conservative," a description which aptly describes much of Hennessy's work.

Response of the University community to Hennessy's plan was remarkably positive. Perhaps it could hardly have been otherwise, considering the conditions under which the staff were labouring at George Street. The question of orientation of the buildings was of course raised,

---

8 University of Queensland Art Museum, 1936.03.
10 Ibid., 167.
but Hennessy dismissed this issue by insisting that the contours of the site dictated the orientation; air-conditioning could be provided if necessary. He anticipated initial costs of £400,000 to £500,000, plus the expense of building the bridge, and hoped that the building work would take about two years, from March 1937 to March 1939. The Senate committee examining the plans was "impressed by Mr. Hennessy's anxiety to comply with the requirements of the University."

The working drawings were handed to the Premier on February 22, 1937 and passed the following day. All the preliminaries were now complete and construction could begin.

**The University Works Board**

That Hennessy could forecast completion of the project by early 1939 shows how little experienced he was in working on large government projects. The skyscrapers which he had recently constructed had been built for well-resourced insurance companies, who were keen to see quick returns on their investment in expensive central city properties. To be sure, Hennessy also had long experience of working for the Catholic Church, where projects could be delayed for years, or even decades, while additional funds were raised from long-suffering parishioners and pious benefactors, but he obviously assumed that with a State Government as his client there would be a steady flow of taxpayer's money to pay the bills for his monumental scheme.

Perhaps he should have known better. One of Hennessy’s few large public works projects had been the design of new tramway workshops for the Brisbane City Council, which were opened in 1927. The project ended in acrimony, and Hennessy’s claim for more than £6,000 in additional fees was rejected by the Council. His relationship with the State Government would prove to be just as problematic. Apart from financial issues, there was also the question of dealing with a government agency as constructing authority. Hennessy was used to dealing with commercial building firms, with some of whom he had long-established relationships. He would find it a very different matter to deal with the architects and bureaucrats of the Queensland Department of Public Works.

To be fair to the State Government, it must be understood that this large construction project was being undertaken in a difficult fiscal environment. There is little doubt of Forgan Smith’s commitment to the project. He was one of those working-class autodidacts with a passion for learning who were so prominent a feature of early Australian labour history, and his biographer considers that "of all major public works initiated during his premiership, Forgan

---

11 "Questions Asked by the University and Answers Supplied by Mr. Hennessy," Papers for Senate Meeting, 30 October 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
12 "Report of Committee Appointed by the Senate to Give Consideration to the Plans Submitted by the Architect," 8 December 1936, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
13 Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J.D. Story, 22 April 1937, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
14 *Brisbane Courier*, March 1, 1927, 14.
Smith very likely got most personal satisfaction from the new university building at St Lucia.15

Forgan Smith had come to power in 1932, three years into the Great Depression. He had adopted a mildly inflationary programme to stimulate the economy, and a substantial part of that programme was made up of large public works projects, such as the Story Bridge, the Hornibrook Highway and the Somerset Dam. The new university was the latest of these.16 Funding for these projects was usually dependent on large borrowings, which had to be approved by the Loan Council, a joint State-Federal institution established in 1924, which had assumed additional importance since the onset of the Depression. Forgan Smith was a cautious man who realised that he was obliged to work within the constraints imposed by the Loan Council, and he had no intention of following the example of the Labor Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang, who had begun the journey to political oblivion when he suspended interest payments on State loans in 1931.

To oversee its large construction schemes, the Queensland Labor Government had set up a Bureau of Industry in 1933, as a successor to the Bureau of Economics and Statistics established by the previous conservative government. The well regarded economist, J.B. Brigden, was retained in the position of director when the new bureau was formed. Brigden had risen from Protestant working-class origins in Victoria to become a university lecturer and consultant to various Australian governments. Previously a supporter of the deflationary Premiers’ Plan, Brigden was now a convert to the doctrine of increased government spending as the most appropriate means of combating the Depression. He would play an important role in the construction of the new university.17

The Bureau of Industry was authorized by an Order in Council dated March 4, 1937 to construct the buildings at St Lucia and carry out all related works on the site. The powers of the Bureau were delegated to the University Works Board, as a Committee of the Bureau of Industry.18 J.R. Kemp, an engineer and Commissioner for Main Roads, was appointed chairman of the University Works Board. The other foundation members were J.D. Story (at that time still Public Service Commissioner, but later to become Vice-Chancellor of the University), J.B. Brigden (Director of the Bureau of Industry), G.M. Colledge (Under Secretary of the Department of Public Works), H.C. Richards (Professor of Geology at the University, but here acting in his capacity as a member of the Bureau of Industry) and A.C.V. Melbourne (lecturer in history at the University).19

---

19 Two sets of the minutes of the meetings of the University Works Board are preserved in the Queensland State Archives. The set originating from the Premier and Chief Secretary’s Department (item ID 538216) is more complete than the set originating from the Office of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works (item ID 41.
The foundation stone of the new university was laid by the Premier on March 6, 1937. It was made of Benedict stone, which must have raised Archbishop Duhig's hopes of future large contracts for the supply of building material. Hennessy presented a gold trowel, engraved with the names of the members of the University Senate, and an embossed silky oak mallet.20

Figure 4.3: Laying the Foundation Stone.

Hennessy (right) is handing the mallet to Forgan Smith.21

With these pleasant formalities out of the way, it was time for the University Works Board to get down to work. However it was obvious from the first meeting of the Board on April 30, 1937 that relations with the architects were going to be problematic. Hennessy and his Queensland manager, Leo Drinan, were invited to attend for part of that meeting, and the Board made it clear that they wanted a formal agreement of Hennessy's relationship with the State Government. They were concerned that all of Hennessy's instructions from the Premier had been verbal, with no clear instructions in writing. Hennessy assured them that he was prepared to work with the Department of Public Works as the constructing agency.22

It was also apparent that the architects' fees would be a contentious issue. Hennessy had already (on March 8, 1937) submitted an account for the very large sum of £25,000, and he told the Board that he would charge the usual Institute of Architects' fees. The chairman, Kemp, replied that this was "hardly specific enough." Kemp declared firmly that "the Board

341196), but neither set is complete. Many other documents relating to the activities of the University Works Board are preserved in the Story Papers, University of Queensland Archives, UQA S533.
20 Courier Mail, March 8, 1937, 13.
21 UQ Archives, UQA S533 p18.
22 University Works Board, Minutes, 30 April 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
would need to consider the whole position and the extent to which the services of Mr Hennessy's firm would be required."\textsuperscript{23}

At their next meeting on May 21, the Board recommended the payment of only £10,000 to Hennessy, less than half of the sum which he had claimed. It was reported that the architects had sent a letter recapitulating the history of their negotiations with the State Government, which however contained no suggestions for a formal agreement.\textsuperscript{24} Forgan Smith’s method of doing business by verbal agreement and shaking of hands was clearly unacceptable to his public servants.

However by now the whole project was in doubt. On May 6, the Minister for Public Instruction and Assistant Treasurer had written to the Chancellor of the University to report that the Loan Council had reduced the funds available to the Queensland Government, and there were consequently no funds available to begin construction at St Lucia. The Government suggested that the University might lend money from its own reserves to the Bureau of Industry so that work could commence.\textsuperscript{25} On June 11 Drinan wrote to the Under Secretary in the Chief Secretary’s Department, complaining that, in spite of all the work which his firm had conducted on the project to date, they had still received no payment whatsoever.\textsuperscript{26}

At the request of the Board, Story drafted a series of questions for Hennessy, and a reply was forwarded by Drinan to the Board for consideration at the meeting on June 30. It was already clear that there would be insufficient funds to construct all the buildings as originally planned, and the Board was concerned to know if the architects could sectionalise the plan so that it could be proceeded with piecemeal, but without destroying the symmetry of the overall design. Hennessy provided reassuring responses on this score, but insisted that his claim for fees was in respect of drawings already prepared. He reiterated his belief that his firm could work with the Department of Public Works "as long as there is one controlling influence."\textsuperscript{27}

The problem of funding was partially resolved when the State Government eventually found sufficient funds to cover a less ambitious building programme requiring £100,000 per year for a period of five years, and this was announced to the press on July 10.\textsuperscript{28} On the same day the initial payment of £10,000 to the architects was made, which Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} University Works Board, Minutes, 21 May 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216. Hennessy’s letter of 4 May 1937 is in Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
\textsuperscript{25} Papers of Senate Meeting, 17 May 1937, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{26} Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
\textsuperscript{27} University Works Board, Confidential Memorandum, 24 June 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 341196.
\textsuperscript{28} University Works Board, "Report on the Works Programme," 2 August 1937, UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2, also in Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
accepted "without prejudice to the balance of our claim." The payment was large enough to be queried in Parliament by a member of the opposition a few months later.

In view of the reduction in funding, the University Works Board realised that there would have to be a staggered move of the University to the St Lucia campus, with those departments which would be accommodated in the Main Building to move first. 

Brigden prepared a report for the Premier (dated August 2, 1937) forwarding six alternative proposals for construction of the St Lucia campus in stages. However his report went further, also suggesting the possibility of re-designing the buildings of the semi-circle "on a simpler basis," noting that "very few universities have been able to extend to such buildings the same architectural features as distinguish the main buildings [i.e. those of the frontage]." On the question of the relations of the University Works Board and the Public Works Department with the architects, the report urged that "it is necessary that these relations shall be defined in an agreement with particular care."

Forgan Smith forwarded the report to the Chancellor of the University on August 6.

It was at this point that the University staff decided to flex their muscles. The University had set up its own liaison committee to communicate with the architects and the Government, but it soon proved to be ineffective. At its penultimate meeting on May 28, 1937, Melbourne reported that "the Works Board had been unwilling to give any authority to him to continue with negotiations with the architect." Melbourne had been working for the development of the St Lucia site for over a decade, and he did not intend to be sidelined.

A joint meeting of the University Senate and Professorial Board was held on September 3, 1937. Melbourne suggested that none of the six schemes proposed by the Works Board was satisfactory. He submitted an alternative plan for completion of the campus in three stages, over a period of twelve years. The first stage was a five-year plan to construct the bridge, the Main Building and half of the Library, at an estimated cost just under the £500,000 allocated by the government. As further funds became available, the buildings for the science, medical and engineering departments would then be constructed over a further five years, and the final two year stage would see the construction of the Great Hall, the Union Building, and the remainder of the Library.

---

29 Receipt from Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., 10 July 1937, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
31 University Works Board, Minutes, 12 July 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
32 University Works Board, "Report on the Works Programme," 2 August 1937, UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 2, also in Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
33 Senate Committee to Liaise with the Architect and Government, Minutes, 28 May 1937, UQ Archives, UQA S489. A more complete set of the papers of this committee is in the file "Building Accommodation (St Lucia) Review of Concept," UQ Archives, UQA S130 box 59.
34 "Programme for Erecting University Buildings at St. Lucia," papers for Senate Meeting, 24 September 1937, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
Perhaps Brigden was incensed at this dismissal of his own proposals, or perhaps he was motivated by genuine concern about the whole project. Whatever the reason, he now took an extraordinary step. Being himself a member of the University Senate, he prepared and printed at his own expense a fifteen-page booklet dated September 15, 1937 for the confidential consideration of the Senate, entitled "A Private Letter to the Members of the Senate of the University of Queensland ... on Buildings for the University."

He reminded the Senate that the Government had only committed £500,000 to the project, with no prospect of further funding, so he believed that the plans needed to be simplified, or else there would be a long separation of the arts and science faculties (which indeed proved to be the case). He presented an imaginary conversation between a Brisbane resident and a visitor from the country after the completion of the Main Building. The visitor looks at it and asks "What on earth will they do with the great long building?" The city dweller replies "That ... is just for the frills; literature, philosophy, history, and all that bunk." Brigden criticised the provision of "so many separate buildings with their external walls and roofs," "the maintenance that would be required for the buildings and their grounds," the lack of "care taken for the convenience or comfort of the people who are to use the buildings," the western orientation "exposed to the westerly winds in winter and the westerly sun in summer." He even revived the hoary question of the suitability of St Lucia as the site of the university.

The matter was debated at length at the Senate meeting on September 24, which had to be reconvened on September 27 to continue the discussion. Despite Brigden’s dogged opposition, the Senate was largely in favour of Melbourne’s plan, and Brigden’s opposing

---

36 Copy in Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
motion was defeated. A resolution incorporating Melbourne’s proposals was prepared for the Premier.37

Undeterred, Brigden wrote a personal letter to Forgan Smith on September 29, in which he argued that

The University building programme is in much the same stage of consideration as was Dr. Bradfield's plans for the [Story] bridge, and the City Council's plans for a dam [Somerset Dam], when these matters were referred to the Bureau. On examination we were able to turn expensive and impracticable schemes into effective and justifiable programmes. I think that the same experience will follow with the University buildings.38

At this difficult juncture, Forgan Smith called upon Story, his trusted advisor. At the Senate meeting on September 24, Story had already expressed himself as being generally favourable to Melbourne’s plan, although he was concerned to avoid delays between the three stages. In a confidential letter to the Premier dated October 4, Story suggested that the Government proceed with a "contracted" scheme for the Main Building and Library, taking advice from Hennessy on how to do this "without marring the beauty and general symmetry of the conception." They could then use this experience to determine "actual costs, beauty (or otherwise) of finished buildings, suitability of building material used" and then decide in three years’ time how to proceed with rest of the scheme.39

On October 7 the Premier wrote to the Chancellor of the University, thanking the University for their comments on the proposals. He stated that he wanted the Works Board to work with the Senate and architects to look for savings. He commented favourably on Melbourne’s proposals.40

The University Works Board seem to have misinterpreted the Premier’s wishes, or perhaps Brigden simply refused to take no for an answer. At the Board meeting on October 8, it was reported (correctly) that the Premier wanted modifications of the plans and that "the Board should get as much working space as it could from the money available” (a typically frugal Forgan Smith comment). However the Board seems to have interpreted this as an invitation to make free with Hennessy's original design. The Department of Public Works was asked to prepare significant modifications to the plan, with the main frontage reduced in length by a third, the Main Building to have three floors instead of the original two, but the semi-circular layout of the buildings to be retained.41

37 Senate Minutes, 24 September 1937, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
38 Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
39 Ibid.
40 Papers of Senate Meeting, 29 October 1937, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
41 University Works Board, Minutes, 8 October 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
However the Works Board was soon brought back to earth. A deputation consisting of Brigden, Leven, Kemp, Melbourne and Richards met the Premier on October 28. They presented a variety of alternative schemes to reduce costs, including the "elimination of the Great Hall and the Library for the start." The plans provided for a contraction by one-third of the original plan. They also offered another plan "more on the rectangular system." The Premier replied that "he was not favourable to any idea of a material change in the original design. They had paid for those plans which had been accepted and published, and consequently to alter the layout and design to any material extent would make the Board and the Government look foolish." However he had no objection to "the re-orientation of the various elevations" and seems to have accepted the principle of contraction.  

Hennessy had finally won the battle for the design of the St Lucia site, but Brigden was not gracious in defeat. On November 1 he wrote to the Premier, complaining that Hennessy "has provided a layout – which we have had to vary – and he has prepared working plans which we cannot use. He will expect payment, and the amount must be the subject of discussion." He followed this the next day with a letter to Drinan, telling him that the Board required that the Main Building "be simpler in design and materials. It is to run with the ground contours and not across them, and to have the northerly aspect which conforms with those contours."  

Drinan promptly forwarded this letter to Story. Story prepared a note (presumably for the Premier), in which he recommended that Hennessy be relieved of supervision of the project. This would reduce friction between "Brigden – Hennessy – personally; The Works Board – Hennessy; The Works Department – Hennessy; Main Roads Commission – Hennessy," but at the same time, "Hennessy would retain the honour of designer of the St. Lucia University buildings."  

The amount of animosity which Hennessy had attracted is remarkable. Certainly he could be a difficult man to work with, but he was fortunate that his Queensland manager, Leo Drinan, was a man of very different personality who was usually able to smooth over tensions with clients. However the problems between Hennessy and the senior Queensland public servants were too severe to be assuaged with diplomacy. Perhaps religious sectarianism played a role, or perhaps the bureaucrats resented the manner in which Hennessy had been appointed, or perhaps they just took a strong dislike to the man. Whatever the reason, an environment now existed which was severely hostile to the successful completion of the St Lucia project. 

Hennessy met with the Premier on November 12, 1937 and Forgan Smith (obviously aware of the tensions between the architect and the University Works Board) instructed him to deal mainly with Story. Accordingly Hennessy wrote to Story on November 15, proposing a

---

42 "Notes of a Deputation from the University Works Board … 28th October 1937," Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700. A plan initialled by Kemp and dated 28 October 1937, showing the shortened buildings and the revised orientation, is in the UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/1/5. 
43 Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5. 
44 Ibid. 
45 Ibid.
further payment of fees of £5,000 to cover all expenses to date. All further plans, drawings and specifications would be charged at the rate of 2½% of the estimated cost of the building. Hennessy noted that the Premier preferred that supervision of the works should be left to the Public Works Department.\(^{46}\) At its next meeting, the Works Board duly recommended payment of a further £5,000 to the architects and an agreement with the architects on this basis.\(^{47}\)

Having finally resolved to proceed with the partial construction of the Main Building and the Library, the Works Board requested the architects to prepare working plans, and Drinan assured them that these would be available within three months.\(^{48}\) Brigden therefore wrote to Hennessy on November 27, requesting plans for the Main Building, Great Hall and Library, using the revised orientation. The Board had adopted "as a working basis" a limit of £100,000 for the construction of the Main Building. Brigden sanguinely expressed his confidence that "the happiest relations will exist between yourselves and the Members of this Board."\(^{49}\)

Hennessy wrote privately to Story on December 7 to say that "I still think that our Scheme of layout was the better, your Bureau has decided – so let it be."\(^{50}\) Hennessy had gained most of what he wanted, so he could afford to be generous, but if he thought that his problems with this project were now over, he was badly mistaken.

In January 1938 the Premier approved a memorandum setting out the basis for cooperation between the University Works Board, the architects, and the Department of Public Works (the constructing authority). This made it clear that the Board would be responsible for approving the general principles of the project and the expenditure, but that the architects and the Department of Public Works would deal with the details through direct contact.\(^{51}\) One has to wonder whether anyone really believed that this complex triangular relationship would work successfully.

Hennessy met with the Board on January 10, where his plan for the Main Building and adjacent semi-circle of buildings was formally approved. It was decided to begin by building a section of the Main Building, 550 feet long, and the ground floor only of the Library building, the two to be connected by cloisters.\(^{52}\) At a further meeting the following week, Hennessy ominously expressed doubts that the proposed portion of the Main Building could be constructed for £100,000.\(^{53}\) Construction work finally began on March 7th, 1938.\(^{54}\) Work on the grounds had already commenced on August 9 the previous year.\(^{55}\)

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 18 November 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\(^{48}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 25 November 1937, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\(^{49}\) Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 6 January 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\(^{52}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 10 January 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\(^{53}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 12 January 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\(^{54}\) Thomis, *Place of Light & Learning*, 167.
Figure 4.5: Aerial perspective of the approved plans, early 1938\textsuperscript{56}
Note the darker shading of the sections of the Main Building and Library which were approved for initial construction.

Construction Begins

At the meeting of the Board on the day when building work commenced, Hennessy presented a report on the cost of various options for stone-facing for the Main Building. The cheapest option was £72,040 for an artificial granite to be supplied by the Benedict Stone Works, and the most expensive option was Helidon freestone from P.J. Lowther & Sons at £100,097. Hennessy stressed that his estimated cost of £130,000 for the Main Building was based on the assumption that stonework would cost £70,000. This suggests that he favoured the selection of Benedict stone.\textsuperscript{57}

At least some of the Board members would have known that the Benedict Stone Works was owned by Hennessy's friend and patron, Archbishop Duhig, and that it was Hennessy himself who had recommended to Duhig that he set up this business to provide stone for the grandiose Holy Name Cathedral (designed by Hennessy), which Duhig planned to construct in Ann Street.\textsuperscript{58} It is therefore not surprising that the Board delegated one of its members to further investigate the cost of Helidon freestone "if purchased by the Construction Authority itself."\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} Building (Sydney), March 24, 1938, 30.
\textsuperscript{57} University Works Board, Minutes, 7 March 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\textsuperscript{58} T.P. Boland, James Duhig (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986), 239–40.
\textsuperscript{59} University Works Board, Minutes, 7 March 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
The decision to construct only part of the originally planned buildings had caused concern at the University, not only among lecturing staff but also for the Student Union, who were keen to obtain suitable accommodation in the new buildings. When Melbourne reported on this at the Works Board meeting of May 10, the Board asked him to discuss this with University authorities and report on options for additional space, and the associated costs. When Forgan Smith saw the minutes of this meeting, he annotated them "Board have no authority to decide matters involving increased costs." At the same meeting the Board authorised payment of only half of Hennessy's latest account for £3,250.60

In May 1938 the British economist Colin Clark replaced Brigden as Director of the Bureau of Industry.61 In view of Brigden's bitter opposition to the whole St Lucia project, this was a positive development.

Although the Board could report in August that the State Cabinet had approved a further loan of £50,000 to provide funds for the project, it expressed concern that costs were not within estimates. Still, it was emboldened to decide that the Chemistry Building would be built next, as the first of the semi-circle of buildings at the rear of the Main Building.62 Hennessy was present at this meeting, and also at the following meeting, where he was perhaps attempting to deflect blame for cost overruns onto the Department of Public Works when he complained that the cost of labour in proportion to the cost of materials was too high.63

On August 25 Hennessy wrote confidentially to J.D. Story to complain that "every endeavour is being made to take all authority from me ... and to force my resignation." He was scathing in his comments on the Department of Public Works and its wasteful management of the project. A.B. Leven, the Department's Chief Architect, who had played an unhappy role on the abortive University (St Lucia) Building Committee, "definitely stated that he would have nothing to do with it." Hennessy had no criticism of the works supervisor, T.R. Bell ("an excellent man").64 In a file note, Story attempted to clarify the Byzantine complexity of the position: "The Bureau of Industry has appointed the Department of Public Works the Constructing Authority ... The Constructing Authority, as a Constructing Authority, is directly responsible to the Bureau and not to the Works Department, as an official Department."65

Clearly the situation was unworkable, and late in September 1938 the Board took two significant steps. Firstly, it took upon itself the role of constructing authority, thus obtaining more immediate control of the project. Secondly, it appointed Robert Percy Cummings, lecturer in architecture at the University, as consulting architect to the Board. Cummings was to be paid an allowance of £150 per annum, his immediate duty being "to act as Architectural

---

60 University Works Board, Minutes, 10 May 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
62 University Works Board, Minutes, 23 August 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
63 University Works Board, Minutes, 13 September 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
64 Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
65 Ibid.
Adviser to the Works Board." It is unlikely that Hennessy welcomed the involvement of another architect in the project: it was hardly an expression of the Board's confidence in Hennessy and his staff. Henceforth Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. would be referred to as the "designing architects."

Figure 4.6: Grotesque of R.P. Cummings
Carved by Rhyl Hinwood

The first task assigned to Cummings was to act as referee of disputes over the choice of building stone. Hennessy was present at the meeting on October 11 when the Board decided in favour of Queensland freestone. Four companies had tendered to supply stone for the Main Building, and the cheapest tender was from the Benedict Stone Company, at just over £68,000. The two companies tendering for freestone were quoting much higher prices, but the Premier supported the Board's decision to select a Queensland freestone. However he wanted the Board to enter into negotiations to see if the tenders could be reduced.

Archbishop Duhig was not pleased with this decision. He entered into correspondence with Forgan Smith on the subject, and also enlisted the lobbying skills of the future Labor Premier, Vince Gair. Forgan Smith wrote to Gair on December 2 to explain that the decision to use

---

66 Memo, 14 September 1938, from J.D. Story to the Chief Secretary, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
67 Pascoe, Guide to the Great Court, 70.
68 University Works Board, Minutes, 26 September 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
69 University Works Board, Minutes, 11 October 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
70 "Main Building – St. Lucia. Tenders for Stone for Superstructure," Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
71 Memo, 17 October 1938, from Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department to Director, Bureau of Industry, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
freestone was based on the advice both of Professor Richards of the University and that of the architects: "Queensland Freestone would symbolise most appropriately the spirit and individuality of Queensland and conduce most effectively to simplicity, beauty and harmony in the architectural design."\(^{72}\) By this stage Hennessy probably no longer cared about fostering Duhig's interests, because in 1938 the two fell out over the extension of Villa Maria convent in Fortitude Valley.\(^{73}\)

![Figure 4.7](Figure47.png)

Figure 4.7: Leo Drinan, T.R. Bell (superintendent of works) and Hennessy inspect progress at St Lucia, November 1938\(^{74}\)

Meanwhile the project was lurching to its next crisis.

At a meeting on November 8, 1938 the Board members "expressed some concern that there was every indication that the Architects' estimate of cost of the Main Building would be exceeded."\(^{75}\) Hennessy was present at a special meeting of the Board later that month where G.M. Colledge of the Department of Public Works presented figures suggesting that the cost of those sections of the Main Building and Library now under construction would be around £235,000, far in excess of the £130,000 quoted by the architects. In reply, Hennessy "asserted that he had never used the figure of £130,000 for the Main Building," although the minutes of the meeting held on March 7 suggest that he had indeed used that figure. Hennessy preferred to quote from Story's questionnaire of June 1937, where the architect had given a positive

\(^{72}\) Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.

\(^{73}\) See chapter 3.

\(^{74}\) John Oxley Library; published in *Courier Mail*, November 25, 1938, 4.

\(^{75}\) University Works Board, Minutes, 8 November 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
response to the question "Could ... the Administration, etc. Building be proceeded with in sections, the first section to embrace an expenditure of £150,000?" In any event, the project was seriously over budget and the Board asked the consulting architect and the designing architect to look at ways of reducing costs, provided that "the artistry and harmony of the general conception is to be maintained."  

Early in December 1938, Story prepared a note on the problem for the Premier's consideration. Story insisted that recriminations and post-mortems were useless, that comments by outsiders should be ignored, and that "acrimonious correspondence" should be avoided. He showed some frustration with the University Works Board: "The Board's mandate is to build [Story's emphasis] the University to an approved design, not to design it." Clearly Hennessy's problems were not all of his own making. Story suggested a careful examination of ways of making savings, "provided the general conception of artistry and harmony is not blemished seriously."

On January 23, 1939 Hennessy submitted to the Board a report in which he estimated the cost of all those buildings which were planned for at least partial construction in the near future, namely the Main and Library buildings, plus the buildings of the semi-circle: Chemistry, Geology, Physics and Biology/Agriculture. He estimated that the total cost, if built in freestone, and without equipment, would be £602,000. At its meeting on February 7th the Board received reports that the University authorities saw no possibility of further space reductions. Under these circumstances, the Board saw no option other than to write to the Premier saying that the allocated sum of £500,000 would not be sufficient for the five-year plan to construct the semi-circle, plus the Engineering Building to the rear.

The Premier promptly refused to increase the allocation, so the Board resolved at its meeting on February 20 to continue work on the Main, Library, Chemistry and Geology buildings, but to undertake no work on the remaining buildings, other than to develop plans for the Physics building. It also resolved that freestone should be used for all the buildings of the semi-circle. At this meeting the Board decided to accept the tender from P.J. Lowther & Sons of £60,936 for freestone for the Main Building, a sum much lower than their original tender of £90,030 or the sum of £100,097 which Hennessy had quoted in March the previous year. By June the press was reporting that the State Quarry at Helidon and the privately owned Wright's Quarry were gearing up to supply stone for the project. In August it was announced that the freestone blocks to be used would be "in a wide range of colours … no two blocks will be the same."

---

76 University Works Board, Minutes, 29 November 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 341196.
77 "St. Lucia," undated notes [December 1938], Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 5.
78 University Works Board, Minutes, 7 February 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
79 University Works Board, Minutes, 20 February 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216; "Report by Co-ordinator General on Tenders for Freestone for University at St Lucia," 11 April 1939, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.
80 Courier Mail, June 8, 1939, 9.
81 Ibid., August 22, 6.
The Board's decision regarding the curtailment of the building programme was duly notified to the University on February 27.\(^82\) Both the designing and the consulting architects agreed that no economies in construction were possible "without altering the character and harmony of the buildings." The Board could only hold out the hope that improving financial conditions might encourage the Government to provide additional funding.

In April the Board approved a further payment to Hennessy's firm of £4,000, which was less than the amount billed.\(^83\)

The University was naturally unhappy with the curtailed plans adopted by the Works Board. On April 26 the Chancellor of the University wrote to the Premier to ask for additional funding so that the Physics Building could be built and to provide accommodation for student activities at St Lucia. Two days later the premier replied, suggesting that the University Senate lend £95,000 to the Bureau of Industry to provide the necessary additional funds. By May 18 the Chancellor was able to reply that the Senate had given approval for this step. The Acting Premier confirmed this agreement on June 13, noting that it would be validated by act of parliament.\(^84\)

In May the University authorities suggested the completion of the Main Building at the eastern end, adjacent to the Library Building. It had already been decided to add a second floor to the Library building,\(^85\) so the extension of the Main Building eastwards would neatly fill a gap and provide accommodation for the Student Union.\(^86\) The Premier eventually approved this proposal.\(^87\)

The preparation of detailed drawings for the buildings in the semi-circle was earning Hennessy's firm substantial sums. There were however ongoing disagreements about extra fees. Drinan wrote to the Chairman of the University Works Board on June 14, 1940, with a claim for £20,150 in extra fees to cover supervision, preparation of special plans and specifications, maintenance of an office on site, travelling expenses, plans for buildings which the University no longer intended to erect, consultants' fees and artists' fees. For the latter item they claimed the sum of 250 guineas, on the grounds that "considerable time and expense has been, and will be, involved in the preparation of drawings of special decorative friezes and panels and sculptures, depicting historical and other subjects for the use of stone carvers and modellers."\(^88\)

\(^82\) Chairman, University Works Board, and Director, Bureau of Industry, to Chancellor, University of Queensland, 27 February 1939, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700.

\(^83\) University Works Board, Minutes, 11 April 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.

\(^84\) Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 1, Queensland State Archives, item ID 2031700; also in Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.

\(^85\) See manuscript addition, 2 June 1938, to the floor plan included in the University Works Board, Minutes, 7 March 1938, Queensland State Archives, item ID 341196.

\(^86\) University Works Board, Minutes, 9 May 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.

\(^87\) University Works Board, Minutes, 12 September 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.

\(^88\) Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 31.
The Works Board appointed a special committee to investigate this claim, and in their report on July 22, they partially accepted some of the claims, requesting more detail, and rejected outright other items. The claim for artists' fees was however accepted in full.90

As so often, Story was required to adjudicate the matter. His minute to the Chief Secretary, dated July 2, 1941, began by stressing that "the University buildings are unique of their kind in Queensland; they possess architectural individuality and artistic beauty." He accepted that the architects had assumed increased responsibility for supervision after the Bureau of Industry became the constructing authority in September 1938, and he declared that this arrangement "has worked very well."91 The matter was finally settled late in 1941 with the payment of an additional £11,773.92

By March 1941 the freestone facing of the Main Building was almost complete, and the internal walls, ceilings and parquetry floors were well advanced, while the freestone facing of the Chemistry Building had begun.93 However wartime conditions were making it increasingly difficult to continue work at St Lucia. In January 1941 the Board re-affirmed its decision not to proceed with the Physics Building,94 and in April it was decided to cease work on the Geology Building.95 Early in January 1942, following a meeting of the Loan Council, it became necessary to revise the State's loan programme, and the Co-ordinator General recommended that the work at St Lucia be stopped to conserve funds for defence projects,

---

89 John Oxley Library.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 University Works Board, Minutes, 29 October 1941, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
93 *Courier Mail*, March 11, 1941, 12.
94 University Works Board, Minutes, 24 January 1941, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
95 University Works Board, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 30 April 1941, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
and to release the plant and labour at St Lucia. The government agreed and immediate steps were taken to close the job down.\textsuperscript{96} For Hennessy, this represented a considerable loss of income. He was paid a total of £3,771 in 1942 and 1943,\textsuperscript{97} at a time when non-military building activity was almost at a standstill and architects little in demand.

There had initially been plans to use part of the Main Building as an emergency hospital, but in July 1942 the Army expressed an interest in using the site for military purposes. The State Government gave its approval,\textsuperscript{98} and in the latter half of 1942 the Army occupied the Main and Chemistry Buildings and the upper floor of the Library. The St Lucia site now became the Advanced Land Headquarters of the Allied Defence Forces.\textsuperscript{99}

**Taking Stock**

After almost four years of work, none of the buildings at St Lucia was yet ready for occupation by the University. Total expenditure on the project up to this point was approximately £500,000.\textsuperscript{100} What had been achieved?

Contemporary photographs show the University rising out of the surrounding farmland like an English stately mansion. For provincial Brisbane of the time, it was a remarkable collection of buildings, and the impact on visitors is well captured in an article in the *Sunday Mail* in July 1940, written by the prominent Brisbane journalist and literary columnist, Firmin McKinnon.\textsuperscript{101} The sheer size of the buildings, "too vast to be appreciated in detail", the "beautifully grained" freestone, the "great windows" and "sculptured ornaments and figures" were all praised. McKinnon became lyrical when describing the prospect to be had from the Tower balcony: "splendid panoramic views can be had of the distant ranges from Cunningham's Gap to the Lamington National Park and back across the suburbs," providing a sad reminder of what has been lost in the subsequent development of the site.

The facing of Helidon freestone is intrinsic to the visual impact of the buildings. F.W. Robinson, who (as we have seen) was involved in the planning of the campus from the earliest stages, has said of it:

> The material which "makes" the University is the Helidon sandstone. No attempt was made to sort out the white or brown or violet stone in order to secure a uniform colour, as in the sandstone buildings in Brisbane. At St. Lucia all shades of colour are

\textsuperscript{96} Secretary, University Works Board to Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 7 May 1942, Buildings and Grounds Committee Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S15.

\textsuperscript{97} University Works Board, Minutes, 3 December 1943, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.

\textsuperscript{98} Premier to Major-General J.M.A. Durrant, 17 July 1942, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Use for Unofficial Purposes, 1939-45 War, UQ Archives, UQA S130.

\textsuperscript{99} For an account of the Army's occupation of the site, see Clive Moore, *The Forgan Smith: History of a Building and its People at the University of Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld: School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland, 2010), chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{100} Kemp, "Transfer of the University of Queensland," 40.

\textsuperscript{101} *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), July 14, 1940, 8.
found, with every variety of grain, figure and pattern. The result is enriching and pleasing. One may look for the whole effect or at will isolate and enjoy the individual stone. They look particularly colourful when wet by rain.\footnote{102}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Aerial photograph of the University site, 1944\footnote{103}}
\end{figure}

The process adopted by the University Works Board to select stone for the St Lucia buildings has already been described. Yet an article in the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} in 1954 told how "Mr. Jack Hennessy, of Sydney, the university architect … searched for this special stone, and, when he found it, had a quarry opened,"\footnote{104} and the magazine \textit{Building and Engineering} in 1951 reported that "the beautiful stone used in the buildings after years of search was found by the Architects."\footnote{105} This is pure myth-making. The archival records make it quite clear that the decision to use Helidon freestone was made by the Works Board, under the arbitration of R.P. Cummings, the consulting architect. However it is not clear who decided to take the novel step of using stone of variegated colour. As a journalist later reported, "once builders rejected this sort of stone in favour of the ungrained, lighter freestone, a sample of which is to be seen in the Brisbane City Hall."\footnote{106}

Perhaps Hennessy was responsible for the decision to use variegated stone. Certainly the importance of colour is a recurrent theme in his work. In an address to the Royal Society of Arts in London in May 1932, he argued that

\footnotesize
\begin{flushleft}
\begin{itemize}
\item 102 F. W. Robinson, \textit{The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane} (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1957), 8.
\item 103 UQ Archives, UQA S908 p1769.
\item 104 \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, July 9, 1954, 10.
\item 105 \textit{Building and Engineering} (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 30.
\item 106 \textit{Courier Mail}, November 26, 1951, 2.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushleft}
we are ... finding that bright and brilliant colours are becoming essential in our hot and humid localities. Nature has always told us so, but we have been rather late in realising the fact. The further north one goes in Australia the more brilliant and glorious are Nature's colours; reds are reds, in all their shades and values; greens are greens, blues blue, and yellow yellow. We are finding that with the proper blending of these colours the glare from the sun is almost eliminated and the effect of coolness and ease is obtained. This is noticeable both in the external and internal treatment of our homes and buildings.\textsuperscript{107}

He planned further colour effects for the exterior of the University buildings. The light grey granite of the base course, which provides an attractive but unobtrusive pedestal for the freestone walls, was constructed as planned. However the proposed colour enamelling of the coats-of-arms on the pillars in the cloister and of the panels representing Australian flora and fauna, which would "aim at life-like portrayal,"\textsuperscript{108} did not eventuate. It is not clear whether cost-cutting or mature reflection put an end to the latter project. Colour also played a role internally, not only in the rubber flooring of the corridors, but also in the extensive use of silky oak joinery. This was a timber much favoured by Hennessy, and he had even employed it in projects outside Australia.\textsuperscript{109} It was also eventually used in place of the proposed (and very expensive) bronze for the construction of the external doors of the Main Building.\textsuperscript{110}

To add interest to the extensive stone facings of the buildings, Hennessy's plan called for "a series of historical friezes in strong relief. These would portray the story of the development of each of the great primary and secondary industries of Australia."\textsuperscript{111} These plans became more ambitious as work progressed. In April 1939 the University Works Board accepted a tender of £6,531 from McGowan, Muller & Pilling for stone carvings on the Main Building,\textsuperscript{112} and further tenders from McGowan and Muller for other buildings were accepted in November 1940.\textsuperscript{113}

Hennessy would no doubt be annoyed that the name of John Theodore Muller is today more often associated with the Great Court buildings than that of Jack F. Hennessy. Muller's carvings were the foundation for what is now described as "the greatest extent of architectural sculpture in Queensland."\textsuperscript{114} Born in Dresden in 1873, Muller trained as a stonemason before emigrating to Australia in 1903. After moving to Queensland in 1911 he worked on projects such as the extension of the Treasury building and the new City Hall.\textsuperscript{115} Muller and Frederick

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Courier Mail}, August 22, 1939, 6.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Courier Mail}, December 8, 1933, 4.
\textsuperscript{110} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 28 October 1957, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Semper Floreat}, March 8, 1937, 2.
\textsuperscript{112} University Works Board, Minutes, 11 April 1939, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\textsuperscript{113} University Works Board, Minutes, 5 November 1940, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538216.
\textsuperscript{114} Lisanne Gibson and Joanna Besley, \textit{Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a Cultural Landscape} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 207.
McGowan began work at St Lucia in 1939 and continued until the works were shut down in 1942. McGowan died in 1942, but Muller resumed work in 1945 and continued carving until his death in 1953.\footnote{Pascoe, \textit{Guide to the Great Court}, 11.}

![Figure 4.10: John Theodore Muller\footnote{Fryer Library, UQFL466 AL/P/36.}]\footnote{Thomis, \textit{Place of Light & Learning}, 207.}

The planning and design of the sculptural work was taken very seriously by all involved. Given the dire financial position of the whole project, the University's historian has mocked the architects who "blithely corresponded with the university over the names of those people who should be commemorated in the fabric of the new buildings."\footnote{J.J. Stable and R. Yorke Hedges to Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 20 September 1938, UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 1.} However it was not just the architects who were concerned about these matters. As early as September 1938 two of the professors wrote to the Chairman of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee to urge that while "the symbolical design of the frieze or friezes, if such is considered essential, is a matter for the artist," they considered that "representation of living persons should be avoided."\footnote{J.J. Stable and R. Yorke Hedges to Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 20 September 1938, UQ History Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL458, box 12, folder 1.}

The Buildings and Grounds Committee held a special meeting on June 5, 1939 to finalise a list of persons to be commemorated in sculpture in the new buildings, in response to a request from the architects. The Committee provided names of founders and benefactors, excluding any living persons. They also responded to a request to provide crests of other universities to be carved on the capitals of the cloister columns, resolving that only the coats of arms of British universities and the oldest universities of other nations should be used. When Melbourne presented this report at the Senate meeting on June 30, he noted that "relief
carvings, according to the Architect's suggestions, would take the place of busts or statues of the persons mentioned.\(^{120}\)

In November the architects wrote to the Senate, sending a plan of "proposed corbels on Quadrangle elevations of Main Building, Library, Chemistry, Geology and Physics." The architects intended to have these carved in life-size heads and were requesting photographs in full face and profile of members of the University "who have been closely associated with it since its inception."\(^{121}\) The response of the University authorities is interesting. They recommended the carving of full-size figures of Justinian, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Plato (and these were eventually carved to flank the Arts and Law entrances in the frontage), but they felt that the heads on the corbels "should represent persons of similar character appropriate to the part of the building on which they are carved."\(^{122}\)

The University authorities were firm in their desire to exclude representation of living persons. This probably explains why Muller's grotesques were deliberately anonymous, and why subsequent researchers have laboured to identify the originals on whom the figures were based. The grotesques ("gargoyles") have fascinated observers since they first appeared. A newspaper report in February 1941 includes a photograph of one of the grotesques near the Law entrance, now believed to have been modelled on one of the crane drivers working on the site. Drinan explained that these figures were being used "to alleviate the severe simplicity of the outer walls."\(^{123}\)

Hennessy certainly did not intend to be constrained by the University's objection to the inclusion of living persons in the sculptural work. In 1942 a design was prepared for a frieze panel to be placed near the top of the Tower, on the main frontage. This design depicted the foundation of the St Lucia campus, and Forgan Smith and Hennessy are prominently depicted, along with the Maynes and other university dignitaries.\(^{124}\) The breathtaking hubris of this design surely justifies (and perhaps explains) the University's opposition to the representation of living persons. It was never executed and the panel remains blank to this day.

It is generally assumed that Leo Drinan designed most of the friezes.\(^{125}\) Hennessy's plan for a sculptured cornice had obvious antecedents in Classical architecture, but it was a motif which he had never previously employed in his own work. He seems to have overestimated the impact of the friezes, and not realised that their altitude, the low relief of the carvings, and the inevitable discolouration of the stone would rob them of impact. This is particularly true of the friezes near the top of the tower; those below the parapet near the main entrances are more visible, except where they are obscured by trees (an indignity which Hennessy would

\(^{120}\) Papers for Senate Meeting, 30 June 1939, UQ Archives, S2.
\(^{121}\) Minutes of Senate Vacation Committee, 19 December 1939, UQ Archives, S2, 1940 volume.
\(^{122}\) Minutes of Senate Vacation Committee, 7 March 1940, UQ Archives, S2.
\(^{123}\) Sunday Mail, February 16, 1941, 7.
\(^{124}\) UQ Site Plans Collection, Fryer Library, UQFL250/2/3.
\(^{125}\) Pascoe, Guide to the Great Court, 11.
never have tolerated). In 1957 it was suggested that the murals on the exterior of the buildings should be lit at night, but the proposal was rejected.126 The friezes remain incomplete, and were not applied at all to the two final buildings (Physics and Biological Sciences).

Figure 4.11: Sculptures near Law Entrance127

Hennessy was a proud Australian, and it had always been part of his plan to include Australian motifs in the design of the buildings. Many of the friezes depict Australian (and specifically Queensland) subjects. The roundels and other smaller sculptures around the arches include depictions of native plants and animals. The inclusion of Aboriginal themes and figures into the friezes is noteworthy, and reflects Hennessy's genuine interest in Aboriginal culture. It was his intention to include in the Great Hall "ornament based on drawings, carvings and colours of our aborigines, these forming the most beautiful primitive art in the world – a fact not generally known by the public."128 The Great Hall was never built, but glass panels under the skylight above the Library reading room were etched with Aboriginal rock drawings and paintings.129 These were demolished when the Library was extended in the 1960s.

127 Photograph by Graham De Gruchy.
128 Courier Mail, September 29, 1936, 13.
129 Building and Engineering (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 29. No evidence has been found to confirm a later report that the Aboriginal designs were the work of Margaret Preston, cf. Susan Pechey, Impressions of the
Many of the additional adornments which Hennessy had planned for the St Lucia buildings fell victim to cost-cutting. Colledge’s report to the special meeting of the Works Board on November 29, 1938 had mentioned the expensive "special provisions such as copper roof, bronze windows, parquetry floors, copper doors, etc." Early plans for the Library building required the use of scagliola (an imitation marble finish) to line the walls in the lower ground floor entry vestibule. Hennessy had envisaged buildings along the lines of those which he had designed for the insurance industry. He was to discover that working for a straitened State Government was a very different matter.

In July 1939 the Works Board asked the architects to find cheaper alternatives to the granite paving which had been planned for the main entrance tower and cloisters, and in August they decided to dispense with the Florentine bronze finish which Hennessy had recommended for the window frames. In March 1941 they accepted the architects' suggestion of the use of a frame made of wood, instead of bronze, for the large skylight in the Library roof, as a cost-saving measure.

The main entrance area under the Tower, always envisaged as one of the significant monumental spaces, also fell victim to cost-cutting. The bronze doors and inscriptions that were planned for this area never eventuated, nor did the carved panels for the ceiling. As the plan in Figure 4.12 shows, even the stone facing of the walls in the upper floor was abandoned to save money.

Trees did not play a large role in Hennessy's concept for the central buildings of the campus. He was probably keen to keep the sight lines to his impressive buildings unobstructed. However the approved plans (see Figure 4.5) do show some large trees spaced along the frontage. D.A. Herbert, of the University's Biology Department, was chief advisor on tree plantings for the campus, and his recommendations for the area in front of the Main Building were careful not to obscure the monumental structure. J.R. Kemp, the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, was however of the opinion "that a row of tall trees planted between the building and the driveway along the front of the main building was desirable to break the long line of the building." This plan was implemented, albeit with large spaces between the trees. The quadrangle however remained a treeless, barren worksite, awaiting the construction of the remaining buildings. It would be a long wait.
Figure 4.12: Transverse section of main entrance under tower (detail)\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{137} UQ Archives, S234 53.
5. POST-WAR (1945-1960)

Resumption of Work

The Second World War made a much greater impact on the daily lives of Australians than had its predecessor, the so-called "Great War." The theatre of battle was uncomfortably close to the Australian mainland, which did not escape entirely unscathed. Brisbane itself became a major operational centre, encircled by large military encampments, and the Australian commander, Sir Thomas Blamey, established his headquarters in the unfinished University buildings at St Lucia.

However by 1943 it was clear that a turning point in the war had been reached, and the far-sighted were already planning for the post-war era. In July 1943 the University authorities were suggesting that completion of the St Lucia campus would make a suitable Commonwealth Post-War Reconstruction Project.¹ In August 1943 the Senate urged that building at St Lucia resume as quickly as possible.² A large cohort of young men had forgone further education to fight for their country, and it would soon be imperative that their interrupted education be completed. In September 1943 the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee was already arguing that this was a strong reason for the early resumption of building work at St Lucia, as well as for the purchase of further land to extend the site to the west.³

However nothing could be done until the Army vacated the site, and even with the tide of war moving northwards and away from Australia, the military were in no hurry to leave. Finally, late in 1944, approval was given for the return of the St Lucia premises to the University.⁴ Work on the buildings resumed on a small scale early in 1945.⁵ At the Senate meeting on May 14, 1945 it was reported that the Army had evacuated the site and that finance had been arranged to continue the building work, but that the demand for new housing was so great that it seemed unlikely that the State Government would be able to find resources to proceed with the construction of the University. The Vice-Chancellor, the perennially pragmatic Story, accepted that there were higher national priorities than the St Lucia project.⁶

And so the returning flood of servicemen had to be accommodated at the already overcrowded George Street campus, where the Departments of Chemistry and Physics (to

¹ Vice-Chancellor to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 7 July 1943, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
² Senate Minutes, 6 August 1943, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
³ Third Report (1943) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
⁴ Acting Prime Minister to the Premier of Queensland, 27 November 1944, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 2, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538212.
⁶ Senate Minutes, 18 May 1945, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
take but one example) saw their enrolments rise from 250 in 1945 to 600 in 1946. As late as July 1946 the Buildings and Grounds Committee had to report that "nothing is being done towards re-commencing work on the buildings at St. Lucia because of the lack of labour and material," and the local press was asking if the new University had not become the "City's No. 1 White Elephant."

In the post-war period, the project was largely free of the administrative and professional conflicts which had plagued it in the early years. The Bureau of Industry was abolished in March 1947 and the Co-ordinator General of Public Works became responsible for the construction of the University. As the Co-ordinator General (J.R. Kemp) was also the Chairman of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee, there was close cooperation between the constructing authority and the University. Kemp continued in this dual role until his retirement at the end of 1953. Until 1949, Kemp's subordinate with day-to-day responsibility for the University project was James Holt, who was thus well acquainted with the brief when he succeeded Kemp as Co-ordinator General in 1954. Leo Drinan continued to supervise the architectural work on behalf of Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., while R.P. Cummings, promoted to the position of foundation Professor of Architecture in February 1949, continued to provide architectural advice to the University.

---

7 Malcolm Thomis, A Place of Light & Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy-Five Years (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 177.
8 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 30 July 1946, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
9 Courier Mail, July 19, 1946, 2.
10 UQ Archives, S178 b229.
11 Kemp, "Transfer of the University of Queensland," 49.
12 Courier Mail, December 31, 1953, 2.
By the end of 1947 the pace of work at St Lucia had increased, and tenders were being called for equipment required for the completion of the Chemistry Building. Parts of the incomplete Main Building were already in use. There was an air of desperate guile in the Senate's suggestion, in May 1948, that the Government expedite completion of the work at St Lucia so that the new University could be opened by the King on his forthcoming tour of Australia.\footnote{Senate Minutes, 20 May 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S2.}

However the end of the beginning was now in sight. On July 21, 1948, the Senate inspected the St Lucia site and walked about 1½ miles along its extensive colonnades and corridors.\footnote{Courier Mail, July 22, 1948, 4.} In December, the Faculties of Arts, Commerce, Law, the Library, and the Departments of External Studies and of Physical Education moved into the Main Building so that teaching could commence at St Lucia from the beginning of the 1949 academic year.\footnote{F. W. Robinson, \textit{The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane} (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1957), 5.}

The official opening of the Main Building on May 5, 1949 was a rather small affair. About 400 people were present to hear the address by the Premier, E.M. Hanlon, who rose from his sick-bed for the occasion. In his introductory remarks, Forgan Smith, the former Premier and now Chancellor of the University, told the guests that

\begin{quote}
this stately building … will form the central feature of a group of University buildings which for picturesque setting, architectural design and beauty, construction, material and finished workmanship will become renowned among Universities – ancient and modern.\footnote{University of Queensland Gazette, no. 14 (September 1949): 1.}
\end{quote}

He also paid tribute to the architects, Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., and "their accomplished representative, Mr. Leo Drinan." An honorary degree of Master of Engineering was bestowed on Kemp, the Co-ordinator General, in recognition of his very significant contribution to the successful completion of the project.\footnote{Courier Mail, May 6, 1949, 1 & 3.}

The Chemistry Department was finally able to occupy its new building at St Lucia in 1950, and work soon began on extensions to it. Late in 1950 work commenced on the western extension of the Main Building, a section 90 feet in length which had been omitted from the initial phase of construction as an economy measure.\footnote{Third Report (1950) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} It was finally completed in 1953.\footnote{Senate Minutes, 2 July 1953, UQ Archives, UQA S2.}

The Geology Building was occupied at the beginning of the 1951 academic year\footnote{First Report (1951) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} and it had already been decided that it would be named the H.C. Richards Geology Building, a fitting tribute to the recently deceased Professor of Geology, who had contributed in many ways to
the planning of the St Lucia campus. One of his younger colleagues, Frederick W. Whitehouse, an Ipswich boy who had later completed a doctorate at Cambridge, was responsible for having the capitals of the columns in front of the building carved in the arms of the Cambridge colleges — but only those of the men's colleges. (The arms of the women's colleges, Newnham and Girton, were finally added in 1985 and 1987 respectively.) There was clearly good reason for the Co-ordinator General's later complaint that the "arrangement by which details of heraldic carvings were supplied to the Department was quite unsatisfactory."

Figure 5.2: Geology Building in the 1950s

It was therefore not until 1951 that the buildings which had been commenced before the war — namely the Main Building (minus the 90 feet at the western end), the lower two floors of the Library, the Chemistry Building and the Geology Building — were finally complete. Even allowing for the disruption caused by the war, progress had been unconscionably slow.

It was also in 1951 that the term "Great Court" began to appear in publications relating to the University. Previously the area to be enclosed by the buildings had been referred to as "the quadrangle," an incongruous name for a semi-circular space. A magazine article in 1949 described "an internal grand court" at the University, but it is not until 1951 that we find

22 Senate Minutes, 30 September 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
23 Dorothy Hill, The First Fifty Years of the Department of Geology of the University of Queensland. Papers of the Department of Geology, University of Queensland, vol. 10, no. 1 (St Lucia: The Department, 1981), 35.
25 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AC P 67.
26 Building and Engineering (Sydney), July 25, 1949, 19.
references to "a semi-circular 'Great Court'"\textsuperscript{27} and "a Great Court, large enough to seat 10,000 people."\textsuperscript{28}

![Main Building, late 1950s](image)

**Figure 5.3: Main Building, late 1950s\textsuperscript{29}**

**Sermons in Stones**

The one area in which significant progress was made in the immediate post-war years was the stone-carving. As early as December 1944 approval was given for resumption of this work.\textsuperscript{30} Frederick McGowan had died in July 1942, but his partner John Theodore Muller was prepared to resume work as a salaried employee of the State Government, and in the relatively short period which remained before his death in March 1953, Muller made further remarkable contributions to the architectural sculpture of the buildings.\textsuperscript{31} The friezes over the Arts Entrance on the frontage of the Main Building had been completed by McGowan in 1940,\textsuperscript{32} and the statues of Shakespeare and Chaucer which flank the entrance were added by Muller after work resumed, and likewise those of Plato and Justinian at the Law Entrance.\textsuperscript{33} Muller was also responsible for the friezes and statues around the entrance to the Chemistry Building\textsuperscript{34} and the "dinosaur frieze" above the entrance to the Geology Building, originally requested by Professor Richards in 1940.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., December 24, 1951, 20.
\textsuperscript{28} *Courier Mail*, November 26, 1951, 2.
\textsuperscript{29} Fryer Library, UQFL466, AC P 57.
\textsuperscript{30} Co-ordinator General to the Chief Secretary, 14 May 1947, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 2, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538212.
\textsuperscript{31} H. J. Summers, "78—Still He Keeps Carving," *Courier Mail*, November 17, 1951, 2.
\textsuperscript{32} *Courier Mail*, December 24, 1940, 6; *Building* (Sydney), June 24, 1941, 17.
\textsuperscript{33} See Figure 5.1, in which the statues are clearly freshly carved. This photograph was probably taken about 1945. The recent tree plantings (recommended by Kemp in 1944) help to date the photograph.
\textsuperscript{34} Summers, "78," 2.
\textsuperscript{35} Secretary, Bureau of Industry Works Board to Registrar, University of Queensland, 21 October 1940, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Inscriptions on Buildings, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
Muller also continued work on the friezes on the Tower. On the west side of the Tower he sculpted a frieze depicting the service of the Australian forces in Africa and Southeast Asia during the Second World War, probably to a design by Leo Drinan. One of the figures is a likeness of James Moore Henderson (1913-1941), whose mother was a first cousin of Jack F. Hennessy. Henderson had trained as an architect and was employed as a draftsman by Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., working on the University project. He was killed in action in Syria on June 9, 1941.

This touching commemoration in sculpture of one who had worked on the Great Court was echoed in 1950, when the Buildings and Grounds Committee suggested that Muller make himself the subject of one of the grotesques. Muller prepared a plaster maquette, but the carving was not finally executed until 1981, by Muller's successor, Rhyl Hinwood, who modified Muller's design. It is located near the Law Entrance. Muller's death on March 15, 1953 was front-page news in Brisbane. As F.W. Robinson later wrote, he had "made the walls of St. Lucia speak in eloquent silence of many things suggestive of thought, human significances, and playful fancy."

Progress was also being made with the internal artistic decoration of the buildings. In June 1948 the State Cabinet approved the expenditure of £3,827 for marble facing in the Library reading room. The reading room was topped by a skylight with a glass ceiling beneath, into which were etched images taken from Aboriginal rock art.

The largest room in the Geology Building was the Geology Museum, a lofty and well-lit space which occupied the north-west corner of the ground floor. This was another significant

---

36 Information supplied by Helen Silk, January 2013. See also Summers, "78," 2.
38 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 18 September 1950, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
40 Courier Mail, March 16, 1953, 1.
42 Acting Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, to Secretary, P.J. Lowther & Son, 25 June 1948, University of Queensland Archives, UQA S282 150/7 part 1.
43 Building and Engineering (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 29.
public space, and it was planned to embellish it with murals. In 1951 approval was given to pay £150 to three art students from the Central Technical College to paint on the upper half of the eastern wall a mural representing the evolution of the reptiles.\textsuperscript{44} In the event, the work was carried out by two artists, Don Cowen and Quentin Hole. The following year they produced another mural for the southern wall, depicting the age of mammals, for the same fee.\textsuperscript{45} In 1958 Hole executed a final mural depicting a prehistoric sea creature\textsuperscript{46} for which he was paid 150 guineas.\textsuperscript{47}

Murals were also planned for the stairwells in the secondary entrances of the Main Building. Hennessy was looking for an artist to execute two murals on Aboriginal themes, one depicting the arts of peace and the other depicting the arts of war. Arthur Murch was recommended, and he prepared a sketch depicting the Molonga Corroboree, which was submitted to the University in February 1951.\textsuperscript{48} After receiving comment on the design from the anthropologist A.P. Elkin, the project was approved, noting that the meaning of the corroboree was "now difficult to surmise."\textsuperscript{49} Modern authorities believe that this corroboree was a response to European massacres of Aboriginals, and that the dance was an incitement to kill the white settlers,\textsuperscript{50} but the University authorities were blithely unaware of this fact. Murch produced a large canvas (24 feet long and 4 feet high) for which he was paid 250 guineas.\textsuperscript{51}

When Murch presented his design for the companion mural depicting the peaceful activities of daily Aboriginal life, to be located in the Law stairwell, the University authorities decided to draw the line. They did not share Hennessy's enthusiasm for Aboriginal motifs:

These activities … have already been carved in stone in thirty (30) panels on the exterior walls of the main building. It is felt that it would be quite out of proportion to repeat them in the mural space on the stairway.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{44} Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General, to Chief Engineer, 29 June 1951, University of Queensland Buildings and Grounds Committee Papers, Co-ordinator General's Project Files, Queensland State Archives, item ID 341362.
\textsuperscript{45} W. H. Bryan, Professor of Geology and Mineralogy, to Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General, 10 October 1952, Murals—St. Lucia Buildings, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{46} Kerry Heckenberg, "The King of the Sea and Other Stories of Prehistoric Life at the University of Queensland," \textit{reCollections: A Journal of Museums and Collections} 5, no. 1 (2010), http://recollections.nma.gov.au
\textsuperscript{47} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 23 September 1957 and 28 October 1957, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{48} Leo J. Drinan to Secretary, Co-ordinator General's Department, 20 February 1951, copy in Building and Grounds Committee Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{49} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 23 July 1951, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{50} Henry Reynolds, \textit{The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia} (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006), 97.
\textsuperscript{51} Co-ordinator General to Chief Secretary, 3 March 1952, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 3, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538213.
As an alternative, it was suggested that the mural might depict "processional groups of the great figures of literature, statesmanship, philosophy, law." The Registrar wrote to the Coordinator General, requesting "a motif more specifically associated with the work of the Faculties of Arts and Law." The second Murch mural was thus never completed, and the artist apparently received no payment for the design. The whole project had been a sadly unprofitable venture for Murch.

In 1955 it was proposed to insert above the Law stair a bas-relief plaster panel depicting the growth of universities throughout the ages, to be executed by the Queensland sculptor, Leonard Shillam. Shillam quoted a price of 350 guineas for the work, but the University authorities could not decide who would pay for it, so the project was deferred, and in 1962 it was finally abandoned altogether.

The principal monumental space in the Main Building (and indeed in the University as a whole, until the Great Hall should be completed) was the central entrance foyer of the Main Building. For this area the architects had planned various adornments, including carved ceiling panels, friezes and inscriptions, but all of these apparently fell victim to cost cutting.

The architects' vision for this central section of the Main Building was expounded by Drinan in 1941: "The Tower ... by reason of its massive proportions, dominates the rest of the University buildings, and stands out for what it is, the focal point of the whole University." From the foyer on the first floor, above the entrance, a staircase would lead to the second and third floors, which were designed to accommodate a carillon of bells, and then to the fourth floor, which would house an art gallery and museum. The carillon had never formed part of the brief for the St Lucia buildings, but was apparently an initiative of the architects.
In anticipation of the carillon, the window openings on the second and third floors of the Tower were not glazed, but instead fitted with pierced stone panels. It was intended to carve these panels, but the carving was only completed on the side facing the Great Court. These carvings (almost certainly the work of Muller) were in three vertical bands, beginning from a base depicting, respectively, a kangaroo, a lyre bird and an emu, and ascending through groups of koalas, possums, parrots, galahs and cockatoos, interspersed with eucalypt blossom.\footnote{For description and photograph, see \textit{Building and Engineering} (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 20 and 28.}

![Figure 5.6: Pierced stone panels on the Great Court face of the Tower\textsuperscript{64}](image)

Once the University began to occupy the Main Building, it became clear that there were serious problems with the architects’ plan for the Tower. As there was no provision for a lift, the intention to place the art gallery on the topmost floor was clearly impractical. The chairman of the John Darnell Fine Arts Committee suggested as early as March 1949 that it

\footnote{\textit{Building and Engineering} (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 28.}
would be better to locate the gallery in the foyer on the first floor of the Tower.\textsuperscript{65} This proposal was eventually approved and the gallery was opened by the Governor of Queensland on September 24, 1952,\textsuperscript{66} creating a very attractive public space. As Robinson commented a few years later, "the first two floors of the Tower area at present serve as the University ceremonial and social centre, pending the erection of the Great Hall."\textsuperscript{67}

![Figure 5.7: Darnell Art Gallery, first floor of Tower\textsuperscript{68}](image)

Figure 5.7: Darnell Art Gallery, first floor of Tower\textsuperscript{68}

About 1954

But there were more substantial changes to the Tower design in preparation. In 1950 the Buildings and Grounds Committee received a report suggesting that the Tower was "neither high enough nor otherwise suitable for a campanile" and that the cost of installing bells would be unrealistically high.\textsuperscript{69} Six months later, the Committee received information that the pierced stone panels were allowing rain, bird lime, bird lice and feathers to enter the Main Building, and it was suggested that they be replaced with windows.\textsuperscript{70}

The suggestion to remove the stone panels was controversial, and a special committee was set up to investigate the matter. In July 1952 it reported that the Main Building was already fully occupied, and so the only way of obtaining additional accommodation was to utilise the upper floors of the Tower. It also noted that "the Architects for the University buildings

\textsuperscript{65} C. G. Cooper to Registrar, 16 March 1949, Buildings and Grounds Committee Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Courier Mail}, September 25, 1952, 2.
\textsuperscript{67} Robinson, \textit{University of Queensland}, 21.
\textsuperscript{68} Fryer Library, UQFL466 A/P/14.
\textsuperscript{69} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 23 October 1950, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{70} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 7 May 1951, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
seemed unwilling to consider the removal of the stone fretwork," but nonetheless concluded that "the appearance of the tower would be enhanced, rather than any artificial beauty being lost, if windows were substituted for the fretwork." It would also be necessary to install a lift to serve all floors of the Tower.\footnote{Special Committee to Advise on the Question of Substituting Windows for the Stone Fretwork, Report, 4 July 1952, Buildings and Grounds Committee Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S15.}

Although the Buildings and Grounds Committee endorsed these conclusions, Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. were vehemently opposed to the plan. Drinan (who had probably designed the panels) insisted that

These motifs include the principal forms of flora and fauna that are so characteristically Australian, and which, with other carvings used elsewhere on the new University buildings, set these latter apart as a group of structures unique among the Universities of the world.\footnote{Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J. Holt, Co-ordinator General's Department, 31 October 1952, copy in Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Main Building, UQ Archives, UQA S130.}

When the matter came before the Senate in November, it was referred back to the Buildings and Grounds Committee for further consideration.\footnote{Senate Minutes, 6 November 1952, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} However the Accommodation Subcommittee of the Buildings and Grounds Committee remained firm:

The Sub-Committee noted the Architects' remarks about the favourable comments by overseas visitors regarding the detail on the stone panels in the tower, which it is proposed to remove; but that they have not been present to hear many unfavourable comments regarding the block-like, lifeless appearance of the top half of the tower when viewed from a quarter of a mile or farther away …\footnote{Buildings and Grounds Committee, Accommodation Sub-committee, Minutes, 31 March 1953, UQ Archives, UQA S15.}

The Senate finally approved the proposal in November 1953.\footnote{Senate Minutes, 5 November 1953, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} At a meeting of the Buildings and Grounds Committee in March 1954 it was reported that the Registrar had approved plans developed by Professor Cummings to modify the Tower so that the second and third floors could provide accommodation for the Department of Architecture, with the top floor available for the ethnological collection, storage and the Classics Gallery. A lift would be provided. The chairman announced that the question of the removal of the stone traceries was now settled.\footnote{First Report (1954) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.}

But he was wrong. Hennessy had contacts at the highest level in the Queensland Government. In September 1954 the Premier, V.C. Gair, informed the University that he was concerned about the "demolition" of a portion of the Main Building and that "the Government would not view with favour any scheme which would involve alterations to buildings that have so
recently been erected and which, as you know, have been so carefully planned."\textsuperscript{77} However the Buildings and Grounds Committee were unmoved, pointing out that only one face of the tracery had so far been fully carved, so the expense of carving the other faces would be saved if the tracery was removed: "many leading architects" considered that replacing the tracery with windows would "improve the general appearance and utility of the Main Building."\textsuperscript{78} The Premier yielded,\textsuperscript{79} and in May 1956 the Department of Architecture occupied its first premises at St Lucia (with windowless lecture rooms).\textsuperscript{80} Drinan had warned that "this space, if divided up into rooms, will be most unsuitable for staff … They will never be satisfactory."\textsuperscript{81} Years later James Birrell endorsed this opinion, dismissing the Department of Architecture's premises in the Tower as "makeshift accommodation."\textsuperscript{82} Mercifully Muller did not live to see the destruction of one of his largest sculptures.

As the stone facing of the Main Building was completed, the question of inscriptions had to be addressed. Classical models were uppermost in the minds of the architects and the academics, and the latter were asked to furnish suitably uplifting passages to be carved above the main entrances, and originally also in monumental spaces of the interior, such as the entrance hall of the Main Building. In 1941 the Buildings and Grounds Committee approved a number of passages from Locke, Thomas Browne, Bacon and Milton,\textsuperscript{83} but none of these was every used – they were probably too wordy. The same fate awaited Professor Jones's suggestion of a quotation from Leonardo da Vinci for the vestibule of the Chemistry Building.\textsuperscript{84}

It was not until 1949 that the Buildings and Grounds Committee approved the more pithy quotations which were finally carved on the front of the Main Building, namely the passage from Thucydides over the Arts Entrance, the passage from Justinian over the Law Entrance, and the passage from the First Book of Esdras over the Tower Entrance. However they rejected the rather pedestrian text recommended for the rear Tower Entrance, "Freedom Means Responsibility," explaining that they would prefer "a quotation from some great authority."\textsuperscript{85} They subsequently accepted the inspiring words of Disraeli which now occupy that position: "A Place of Light, of Liberty and of Learning."

\textsuperscript{77} Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department to Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland, 3 September 1954, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 3, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538213, copy in Third Report (1954) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{78} Third Report (1954) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{79} Premier to Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland, 18 November 1954, Chief Secretary's Batch Files, New University at St Lucia, part 3, Queensland State Archives, item ID 538213, copy in Fourth Report (1954) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{80} R. P. Cummings, "Department of Architecture, St. Lucia," \textit{University of Queensland Gazette}, no. 36 (December 1956): 2.
\textsuperscript{81} Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to J. Holt, Co-ordinator General's Department, 31 October 1952, copy in Building Accommodation (St Lucia)—Main Building, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{82} James Birrell, \textit{A Life in Architecture: Beyond the Ugliness} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2013), 79-80.
\textsuperscript{83} Second Report (1941) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{84} T. G. H. Jones to Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 18 June 1941, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Inscriptions on Buildings, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{85} Third Report (1949) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
An issue which was never satisfactorily resolved during these immediate post-war years was the question of a memorial to the Mayne benefactors. As the Main Building approached completion in 1948, the architects reminded the Buildings and Grounds Committee that it had been suggested to have an inscription in the Arts Entrance reading "This door opens on land given to the people of Queensland by Doctor and Miss Mayne." At the Senate meeting on August 5, 1948 mention was made of a tablet and inscription to be placed over one of the entrances. However, soon afterwards the Buildings and Grounds Committee accepted a suggestion for a set of monumental gates as a memorial to the Maynes, but Vice-Chancellor Story considered that this would be too expensive, so the Committee resolved to ask the architects to plan "a memorial suitable for all benefactors."

In September 1950 the architects asked for clarification, recalling that they had already submitted a model for a statuary group to commemorate the Maynes. As the brief was now to commemorate all benefactors, they raised the possibility of erecting "a fountain with seats or symbolic statuary group with suitable inscriptions covering all benefactors." In May 1951 the Buildings and Grounds Committee resolved that a bronze plaque in memory of the Maynes be erected above the foundation stone in the vestibule of the main entrance, and the text for the plaque was approved the following year.

And yet the plaque was never erected. The Mayne name was commemorated with the opening of the Mayne Hall in 1973, and in 1981 a commemorative plaque, executed by Kathleen Shillam, was installed in the hall. It was not until the University's centenary year in 2010 that a portrait medallion of Dr Mayne, executed by Rhyl Hinwood, was installed in the Forgan Smith vestibule above the foundation stone, as proposed in 1951. The inscription on the accompanying plaque does not use the text approved in 1952 and makes no mention of Miss Mayne.

It was not only the benefactors who deserved to be remembered. A meeting was held in July 1947 to discuss the location of the memorial to members of the University community who had died during the Second World War. It was suggested that the memorial should be located in the Great Hall, but J.R. Kemp argued that "it was not likely that any member present would live to see the Hall erected." As Kemp was both Co-ordinator General of Public Works and Chairman of the University's Buildings and Grounds Committee, he was well placed to make this assessment. The meeting therefore recommended that the war memorial be temporarily located in the entrance hall to the Main Building.

86 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 27 July 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
87 Senate Minutes, 5 August 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
88 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 21 September 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
89 Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to Secretary, Co-ordinator General's Department, 25 September 1950, copy in Buildings and Grounds Committee Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
90 First Report (1951) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
91 First Report (1952) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
93 The plaque and accompanying text are reproduced at: http://monumentaustralia.org.au
94 Joint Meeting of the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the War Memorial Committee, Minutes, 17 July 1947, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
the memorial was not finally erected at that site until 1975, and then amid complaints that it should properly have been located in the recently opened Mayne Hall.⁹⁵ It was not just the Maynes who had to wait for their memorial.

**Reviewing the Concept**

In August 1943, when the Senate urged that building at St Lucia resume as quickly as possible, they recognised that the world had changed significantly since the project was first mooted: "some years had elapsed since preliminary plans ... had been prepared ... Actual developments and potential developments might involve a comprehensive review of design, lay-out, equipment and staffing."⁹⁶

One of the major developments anticipated was a significant increase in enrolments as returned servicemen resumed, or commenced, their university studies. However this was probably foreseen as a temporary phenomenon; it is unlikely that the University authorities had yet realised that tertiary education would become accessible to a much wider spectrum of young Australians in the post-war years. The other important development was the increase in research activity. The international war effort had dramatically accelerated developments in many areas of science and technology, and as a local journalist pointed out, "the atom has been split since original plans [for the St Lucia campus] were drawn ..."⁹⁷

As the buildings of the new university were completed and occupied, those who would have to work and study there began to express their opinions on their new home.

The academics who had struggled for so long in the makeshift buildings at George Street would probably have thought it churlish to be too critical of their new accommodation. Late in 1949 it was reported that there was "increasing expression of general satisfaction with the location of the University at St. Lucia ... the beauty of the site and some of the surroundings."⁹⁸ But of course there were some complaints. The rooms on the courtyard side of the Main Building were said to be cold and dark in winter,⁹⁹ a problem which Professor Stable had anticipated as early as 1936.¹⁰⁰ The corridors and stairwells of the Main Building were found to be very noisy (as they remain to this day), and those who were used to the compact George Street campus felt that they would need bicycles to negotiate the extensive grounds at St Lucia.¹⁰¹

---

⁹⁶ Senate Minutes, 6 August 1943, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
⁹⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰⁰ Committee Established by the Senate to Consider the Architect's Plans, Minutes, 20 November 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S489.
¹⁰¹ UQ Staff Association, St. Lucia Suggestions Committee, First Report to the Buildings and Grounds Committee, 13 April 1949, Robinson Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL5 box 13.
Even with the modified north-north-west orientation, the rooms on the front of the Main Building were still very hot on summer afternoons, and it was soon found necessary to install venetian blinds.\footnote{Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 24 July 1950, UQ Archives, UQA S15.} The Chemistry Building faces almost due west, and although the rooms on the ground floor were sheltered somewhat by the cloister, those on the first floor had no protection at all from the sun. When one professor of Chemistry requested air-conditioning for his first-floor office, all that he received was a ceiling fan.\footnote{Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 9 May 1955, UQ Archives, UQA S15.} Even members of the University Senate had to be content with a pedestal fan.\footnote{Fifth Report (1957) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, UQ Archives, UQA S15.}

However it would soon become clear that the most severe problem for the academic staff was a lack of space: finding accommodation for the additional teaching and research staff who were appointed as the University expanded rapidly during the 1950s was a constant headache. In 1950 an official in the Administration Section warned the professors who were planning the Biological Sciences Building that "experience since the Main Building at St. Lucia has been occupied has been that the study accommodation for members of the teaching staff was greatly under-estimated when the building was planned."\footnote{J. D. Cramb, for Registrar, to Professors of Zoology, Botany and Agriculture, 11 September 1951, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.} As the engineer and future chancellor, A.E. Axon, pointed out in 1953, the rooms as designed were simply too large: "accommodation is on an extravagant scale."\footnote{A. E. Axon to J. D. Story, 25 September 1953, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533 [135].} When it was announced in the following year that many academics in the Main Building would have to share rooms, there was vigorous protest from the departmental heads.\footnote{Heads of all departments located in Main Building to Registrar, 14 October 1954, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Main Building, UQ Archives, UQA S130.}

The situation only deteriorated. By December 1958 it was reported that there was a "catastrophic situation facing the Departments housed in the Main Building."\footnote{Malcolm Thomis, \textit{A Place of Light & Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy-five Years} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 263.} As a palliative, Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. favoured the addition of a third floor to the building.\footnote{Ibid., 264.} However Story had by now come to the conclusion that the only solution was a new Humanities Building, to be located at the western end of the Main Building, in the position originally intended for the Great Hall.\footnote{Ibid., 263.}

The administrative staff were, if anything, more dissatisfied than the academics with their accommodation. Only a small number of them had moved to St Lucia when teaching commenced there in 1949. When the western extension of the Main Building was completed in 1953, it was intended that the whole lower floor of the Main Building, from the Tower to the western end, would be occupied by the Administration, but the staff were reluctant to leave George Street. The Vice-Chancellor himself prepared a memorandum listing the disadvantages of such a move from the point of view of the staff: the cost of transport,
insufficient public transport facilities, absence of shopping amenities, distance from medical and dental practitioners, defective refectory arrangements, and not least the absence of "tonsorial facilities." In the event, Story remained based at George Street until his retirement, but most of his staff were forced to relocate to St Lucia.

They were not happy when they took up residence. While the Main Building extension was still under construction, one of the administrative staff had warned that "the position regarding accommodation in the Main Building is so fluid, that it seems to be very inadvisable to erect permanent partitions on either of the floors of the addition." In 1956 it was reported that "the type of accommodation provided in the main building at St. Lucia is considered unsuitable for purposes of Administration and is not economical of space." Nonetheless, the administrative staff would have to make do with these premises until 1965, when the J.D. Story Building (designed by James Birrell) was opened.

And what about the students? A member of the first cohort of Arts students to make use of the Main Building commented much later that

compared with the rather rundown lecture rooms at Old Government House at the bottom of George Street, our new surroundings with their high ceilings and wide corridors were quite magnificent.

However an architecture student was of a very different opinion:

The whole design is socially repressive. It is reminiscent of the huge Pentagon block in Washington, the huge Palace of the Soviets in Moscow, or a Mussolini stadium. It is inhuman, out of scale with the human figure. It belies the climate, it belies the structure, it belies its purpose. It is designed to impress people, in a pompous manner, with the importance of the University, the Architecture and the Government. It is popularly known among students as "the Mausoleum."

The group whose opinion was least canvassed were the very people who had paid for the buildings, namely the citizens of Queensland, but in 1950 arrangements were made with the director of Queensland Tourist Services to conduct tours of the Main Building on two afternoons per week during the Long Vacation. The following year it was reported in State

---

111 J. D. Story, "Readjustment of University Administrative Organisation Based upon the Transfer of the Administration to St. Lucia," 27 July 1953, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
112 J. D. Cramb, "Allocation of Space in the Addition to the West Wing of the Main Building Now Under Construction," 6 December 1950, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Main Building, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
113 Administrative Sub-committee, Minutes, 21 June 1956, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Administration, Main Building, UQ Archives, UQA S130, box 47.
114 Clive Moore, The Forgan Smith: History of a Building and its People at the University of Queensland (St Lucia: School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland, 2010), 55.
115 Aspect: Australian Architectural Students News Sheet, September 1951. The only known copy of this article is a transcript in the Fryer Library, UQ History Collection, UQ FL458, box 12, folder 9.
Parliament that visitors considered the new university to be "the finest building to be seen anywhere."\(^{117}\)

In the buildings housing the scientific departments the same problems of overcrowding emerged as in the Main Building. The Geology Building was the smallest of the buildings planned for the semi-circle, and by 1954 the Professor of Geology was reporting shortages of space resulting from unforeseen increases in research activity.\(^ {118}\) By 1960 his successor was calling (vainly) for an extension to the building.\(^ {119}\) The most which could be obtained to ease the problem was a mezzanine floor in the store room.\(^ {120}\)

The Chemistry Department was more fortunate. As early as 1948 the Professor of Chemistry was insisting that "rooms designed for new research activities not envisaged ten years ago are greatly in need at St Lucia."\(^ {121}\) In the decade after the Chemistry Building was first opened, a series of extensions, small and large, extended it back to the Circular Drive. By 1960 it boasted the "most modern lecture theatre at Queensland University" with seating for 270 students.\(^ {122}\)

Despite all the problems, there were those, like Story, who remained committed to the original Hennessy vision. In 1959 the Vice-Chancellor insisted that "the external architectural features and symmetry of the Central Group, and the purposes of the Great Court, should … be maintained inviolate."\(^ {123}\) However it was also clear that the many additional buildings which needed to be built outside the Great Court would be of a different design, and Story was only too aware that the 1936 concept would not serve the expanding institution without continual review.

In March 1958, an article in the student newspaper reported that a majority of University staff advocated construction of buildings in brick, to allow a "cheap and fast" completion of the campus. The Professor of History, Gordon Greenwood, was quoted as saying that it was impossible to build the whole University in the style currently being employed. He was supported by the Brisbane architect, Ronald J. Voller, who remarked that "an all-stone University would be like a diet of Christmas cake." On the other hand, another local architect, Athol Bretnall, advocated the completion of the campus in stone "for the sake of uniformity."\(^ {124}\)

\(^{117}\) Thomis, *Place of Light & Learning*, 212.
\(^{118}\) W. H. Bryan to Registrar, 5 March 1954, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Geology, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\(^{119}\) Allan F. Wilson to Registrar, 16 June 1960, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Geology, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\(^{120}\) Allan F. Wilson to Registrar, 26 June 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Geology, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\(^{122}\) *Courier Mail*, July 6, 1960, 16.
\(^{123}\) J. D. Story, memo, 13 November 1959, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\(^{124}\) *Semper Floreat*, March 27, 1958, 3.
Figure 5.8: The Chemistry Building in the 1960s

Note the early layout of pathways across the Great Court and the first attempts at tree plantings

Although there was no suggestion that Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. should not continue to work on the completion of the Great Court, new ideas were required for the buildings outside the central group. Throughout the 1950s, the Accommodation Section within the University's own Architecture Department played an increasing role in providing architectural advice and services to the University. External architects were also being employed. In March 1958 it was reported that Collin and Fulton were designing the new Union Building, and that Moulds and MacMinn were working on the Veterinary School.

"Hennessy's Horror"

Of all the Great Court buildings, the one which attracted most criticism from its occupants was the Library. Harrison Bryan, University Librarian from 1950 to 1962, and the fiercest critic of the building, recounts the following anecdote concerning the design of the Library:

There is a story, I think not apocryphal, which goes something like this: A prominent Australian librarian [working in Sydney] received a telephone call one afternoon, "Good afternoon" said a voice, "I am from the architects responsible for the new University of Queensland. We have now got to the stage of thinking about the Library. In view of your reputation and your experience both in Australia and

---

125 Fryer Library, UQFLA466 AC/P/66.
overseas we thought you might like to give us some advice." – "Certainly, I would be delighted to spend a day or so on your plans. When would you like to come up?" – "Well, actually our train leaves for Brisbane in twenty minutes."127

Bryan placed much of the blame for the poor design of the Library at the door of A.C.V. Melbourne who, in addition to his teaching responsibilities and involvement in the planning of the St Lucia campus, also held the office of Honorary Librarian from 1934 to 1938.128 The minutes of the St Lucia Liaison Committee meeting on December 8, 1936 record that Melbourne and Hennessy had "informally discussed" the plans for the Library. At that meeting Hennessy produced a preliminary pencil sketch of the building, designed to eventually accommodate one million books, with an "open reading room" and a "monumental entrance."129

Melbourne was a vigorous and effective champion of the Library, but he was not a qualified librarian and had no experience of running a large library. When the first professionally trained University Librarian, Richard Pennington, was appointed early in 1939, construction work had already commenced and it was too late to materially alter the design.

Hennessy envisaged the Library as being, along with the Tower Entrance and the Great Hall, one of the major monumental spaces of the University. For the lower ground floor he designed a large entrance hall with staircases rising on either side to the reading room on the cloister level, an octagonal space lined with marble and topped by a glass ceiling. When the building was completed to its full height, the reading room would lie at the base of a deep atrium, with three floors of galleries rising above for book storage.130

The design was suitably impressive, but it simply would not work as a functioning library. As early as 1944 Pennington had written to the Buildings and Grounds Committee to point out that "it is a cardinal principle of library organisation that there shall be only one exit-and-entrance, which can be properly supervised. This exit-and-entrance as far as the St. Lucia Library is concerned will be that opening on to the Cloisters."131 There were no less than four exits from the main reading room, one into the cloisters, and the other three leading down to the lower ground floor, and none of them was supervised in any way. Pennington suggested that the main entrance on the lower ground floor be "bricked up." This would have closed off one of the principal entrances in the front range of the University buildings; unfortunately we have no record of Hennessy's reaction to this suggestion, but it was certainly not implemented.

128 Ibid., 6.
129 St Lucia Liaison Committee, Minutes, 8 December 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S489.
130 For a more detailed history of this building see John W. East, "The Duhig Building: Changing Configurations of a Library Space at the University of Queensland" (2012), http://eprints.rclis.org
131 University Librarian to Chairman, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 19 May 1949, copy in Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
When the Library was finally occupied at the end of 1948, the problems of its design became increasingly apparent. Harrison Bryan was by now the University Librarian and he fought continuing battles to restrict the number of entrances to the reading room, thereby provoking a stream of complaints from students. In the end, he had to accept both the entrance from the lower level and from the cloisters, and in an attempt to avoid pilfering, he partitioned off a portion of the reading room "as a kind of sheep run to divert students, entering either from the north-western staircase or the [cloisters], past a control desk ...".

![Figure 5.9: Ground floor of the Library in the 1950s](image)

Harrison Bryan is at the charging counter. The exit to the cloisters is the doorway at the rear.

The lower ground floor provided reserve book storage and the staff working areas. The latter were described by Bryan as "monuments of inflexibility" whose "inadequacy in size was underlined by the permanency of the brick partitions which separated them from one another." The solidity of the construction of the St Lucia buildings would prove, again and again, to be a major hindrance to the repurposing of spaces as the University expanded. When in 1961 it became necessary to create extra space on the upper floor of the Library, Bryan was delighted when the authorities agreed to break through "the very substantial wall dividing the Library from the spine of the Main Building" to allow expansion into the ground floor of the adjacent building.

---

133 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AG/P/85.
135 Ibid., 40.
Lighting was also a problem. The building had been designed with a cruciform floor-plan: a Greek cross, with the eastern and western arms considerably truncated. The attraction of this design was that each arm of the cross could be lit by windows on three sides. With the central reading room lit by a skylight, maximum use could be made of natural lighting. However by 1949 electric light was no longer a luxury, and the tall windows became a problem, as they exposed the books (and readers) to excessive sunlight. In the central reading room the heat generated by the glass skylight was sufficient to warp the wooden furniture, and in 1951 the skylight above the engraved ceiling was painted to counteract this. However after sunset the central reading room was "in utter darkness" and readers were forced to use the northern reading room instead.

Without air conditioning during the long Brisbane summers, it was only possible to maintain a tolerable temperature in the Library "by dint of opening all the windows, which made a mockery of any attempt to maintain security." As one former Library staff member wrote, many years later, "you could not control access to the library. The really useful books were always – well, somewhere else."

As in the other buildings at St Lucia, the most acute problem proved to be space. In 1942, well before the move to St Lucia, Pennington had warned that "it is becoming doubtful whether even the new Library at St. Lucia will be large enough for the collection, without either recourse to a system of ceiling-high metal shelving or the addition of another story to the building." As university expansion gathered pace after the war, this prediction proved to be only too accurate. With no immediate prospect of upward extension, the only option was to make use of the lofty spaces by inserting metal mezzanine floors. The ceiling height on the upper floor was a grand and wasteful 18 feet, and the first mezzanine was built in the bookstack in the southern arm of this floor in 1955. A considerably larger one was built in the centre of the lower ground floor in 1959. The mezzanines were a necessary, but ugly and claustrophobic expedient.

"The University of Queensland Library is saddled with a bad building. Let me correct that; it is saddled with a fantastically bad building, a librarian's nightmare." This was Bryan's considered opinion after more than ten years of trying to provide library services in the building that he elsewhere referred to as "Hennessy's Horror." At least some of the students must have shared his opinion: in 1960, the student newspaper carried a facetious article about
the latest proposal for the elusive Great Hall, suggesting that "the Hall itself, when not in use for lectures will be required as a library reading room, since the present marble-lined, octagonal horror is to be taken over full-time by the Black and White Cab Co. as a tourist attraction."  

![Figure 5.10: Northern reading room, Library ground floor, 1950s](image)

**Completing the Semi-Circle**

An early version of the ground plan for the St Lucia site (Figure 5.11) gives us a clear picture of the architect's original conception for the inner semi-circle of buildings which would house the main science departments. As the plan indicates, the two largest buildings (Chemistry and Biology/Agriculture) were planned as E-shaped buildings, the Physics Building was to have a U-shape, and the smallest building (Geology) would be L-shaped. All were planned to have a two-storey elevation to the central courtyard, but the fall of the land away from the central plateau meant that, with the insertion of basements, some of them would have a three-storey elevation to the rear.

The ground plan of each building was a traditional one, based on the need to maximise natural lighting and natural ventilation. The former requirement was already a little outdated by 1936, by which time electric lighting was no longer a luxury. The question of ventilation was more complex. In his earliest discussions with the University Senate, when responding to concerns about the orientation of the buildings, Hennessy had stated that "air-conditioning could be suitably provided throughout."  

However a little more than a year later, it was reported that Mr Hennessy recommended some draft system of ventilation in preference to air-conditioning. Experience overseas had shown that the latter is not satisfactory

---

145 *Semper Floreat*, 29 June 1960, Great Hall supplement.
146 UQ Archives, S178 b417.
147 "Questions Asked by the University and Answers Supplied by Mr Hennessy," papers for Senate Meeting, 30 October 1936, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
especially from the point of view of the health of those working in air-conditioned buildings. Running costs are high also ... Provision has been made in the designs for air-ducts should the Board decide to install some system later.\textsuperscript{148}

As the air-conditioning of Australian buildings started to become more common in the 1950s, building designs which made a priority of natural ventilation were starting to look outmoded.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.11}
\caption{Original ground plan, about 1937\textsuperscript{149}}
\end{figure}

When planning for the Physics Building was in progress after the war, Professor Cummings, in his capacity as the University's consulting architect, suggested to the Buildings and Grounds Committee "that the partitions of the Physics Building should not be part of the structure but should be movable so that the building may be altered at any time."\textsuperscript{150} The Committee asked him to discuss this suggestion with Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., but there is no evidence that it was implemented, even though it must, by that time, have been obvious that scientific research was a rapidly evolving activity which could only be accommodated in buildings with a flexible internal layout.

\ \begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{148} University Works Board, Minutes, 12 January 1938, Queensland State Archives, Item ID 341196.  \\
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Courier Mail}, July 19, 1946, 2.  \\
\textsuperscript{150} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 2 December 1948, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\end{flushright}
The Professor of Physics, Hugh C. Webster, was more successful with his suggestions for alterations to the building's design, and he became perhaps the only academic to have a significant impact on the design of any of the Great Court buildings. Webster had observed that buildings were being erected overseas in which the lecture theatres had no windows, "the rationale being that the theatre needed to be darkened so often for showing lantern slides, that it was preferable to have only artificial lighting, which could be switched off without delay." With artificial lighting and ventilation, it would be possible to construct two large lecture theatres in the centre of the building (in place of a light-well), immediately accessible from the main entrance. 

Cummings lauded the "compact nature of this type of plan," and it was endorsed by the University and implemented. Webster also obtained flexible partitions between the teaching laboratories so that their size could be modified as required.

The construction of the Physics Building was ridiculously protracted. Work on the foundations began early in 1950. By the end of the following year, the basement was almost complete. In 1953 the Radon Laboratory, a small detached building just west of the

---

151 H. C. Webster, *A History of the Physics Department of the University of Queensland* (St Lucia: The Department, 1977), 13.
152 R. P. Cummings to Registrar, University of Queensland, 21 February 1949, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Physics, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
154 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AC/P/75.
156 Senate Minutes, 6 December 1951, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
Physics Building, was completed.\textsuperscript{157} In 1954, as work limped along, Professor Webster intervened again, in an attempt to obtain individual seats in the lecture theatres, instead of the proposed wooden benches which he considered "excessively uncomfortable."\textsuperscript{158} However the most which he could obtain for his students was a concession that sponge rubber upholstery would be applied to the benches.\textsuperscript{159} The building was finally occupied at the beginning of 1956, and Webster was able to boast that it was the first of the St Lucia buildings to be designed and constructed with a knowledge of post-war needs, and provision has been made in it for demonstration lectures and laboratory classes with large numbers of students.\textsuperscript{160}

The gestation of the final building of the semi-circle, the Biological Sciences Building, would be just as wearisome. It was almost excluded altogether from the central group of buildings, after the Buildings and Grounds Committee decided in 1952 to use this space for a different building, possibly the Administration Building.\textsuperscript{161} The Professor of Zoology protested and argued that the biological sciences should be accommodated in the central group of buildings to "preserve the essence of the original concept." He understood that objections had been raised about "unsightly out-houses being necessary," but he argued that the greenhouses "could either be integrated into a pattern which would be Architecturally pleasant or (if prejudices are insurmountable) could be somewhat hidden."\textsuperscript{162} The Buildings and Grounds Committee eventually reversed its earlier decision and resolved that the Biological Sciences Building should have first priority and should occupy the fourth position in the semi-circle.\textsuperscript{163}

There were some advantages gained from the delay in construction. In 1950 the Professor of Zoology informed the University authorities that the pre-war plans for the building were "only of historic interest,"\textsuperscript{164} and they were completely revised after the architects were instructed to commence detailed planning at the end of 1954.\textsuperscript{165} The lesson concerning flexibility of internal layout had finally been learnt, and in due course the architects reported that

It is intended to use fixed partitions in the new building only around staircases, the various service ducts and lifts … All other partitioning will be of the modular screen

\textsuperscript{157} J. D. Story, "University Buildings and Sites," Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533 [156].
\textsuperscript{158} Professor of Physics to Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, 26 February 1954, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Physics, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{159} Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, to Registrar, University of Queensland, 11 June 1954, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Physics, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{160} H. C. W., "Physics Department Moves to St. Lucia," University of Queensland Gazette, no. 33 (December 1955): 4.
\textsuperscript{161} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 28 April 1952, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{162} W. Stephenson, Professor of Zoology, to Secretary, Buildings and Grounds Committee, 15 March 1954, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{164} W. Stephenson, Professor of Zoology, to Registrar, University of Queensland, 22 September 1950, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{165} Fourth Report (1954) of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Senate Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
type to facilitate erection and subsequent rearrangement of rooms … as this becomes necessary in the future.\textsuperscript{166}

Another useful lesson was that, with careful planning, a building did not have to be fully complete before it came into use. It was decided at an early stage that two departments (Agriculture and Zoology) would move into the building while work was still in progress.\textsuperscript{167} The Biological Sciences Building also benefited from the increased funding available from the Commonwealth Government after 1958, and it was built in its entirety (albeit slowly) to become the largest of the buildings of the semi-circle.

Excavation work began in 1955.\textsuperscript{168} Construction commenced late the following year,\textsuperscript{169} but even before that date the academic staff were warning that the projected building would need a larger lecture theatre.\textsuperscript{170} Soon after work had begun, the architects approached Professor Stephenson concerning carvings to decorate the exterior stonework, and he and his staff suggested (among other motifs) "spectacular native fauna" and busts of Linnaeus, Darwin and Mendel. However the Buildings and Grounds Committee decided to defer action on this matter,\textsuperscript{171} and it would not be until 1989 that Rhyl Hinwood would complete the sculptures of Darwin and Mendel which now flank the entrance.\textsuperscript{172}

The Agriculture Department moved into the building in 1959. The Professor of Agriculture later recalled that his staff

occupied part of what was euphemistically called "the lower ground floor," i.e. the basement … Morale in the Department was low. However, being in the basement of the building had one advantage: there was nowhere to go but up!\textsuperscript{173}

Early in 1960 the Zoology Department followed, and the final departments, Botany and Entomology, moved in 1961.\textsuperscript{174} The official opening of the building took place on July 9, 1962, where the Premier reported that the total cost of the building had been £873,000.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{166} L. J. Drinan, Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., to Co-ordinator General of Public Works, 6 June 1956, copy in Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{167} J. A. Holt, Co-ordinator General of Public Works, to Registrar, University of Queensland, 4 February 1957, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{168} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 20 June 1955, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{169} Courier Mail, September 11, 1956, 3.
\textsuperscript{170} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 14 May 1956, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{171} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 22 October 1956, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{172} Pascoe, Guide to the Great Court, 64.
\textsuperscript{174} Thomis, Place of Light and Learning, 263.
\textsuperscript{175} "Opening of Biological Sciences Block, St. Lucia," University of Queensland Gazette, no. 51 (September 1962):1-2.
One of the differences between the science buildings of the semi-circle and the buildings of the frontage lay in the use of the roof space. The humanities and law academics who, along with the Administration and Library, occupied the front range of buildings, had no use for the roofs above their heads, and would probably have opposed any attempt to mar the façade of the University by erecting structures on the roof. However to the scientists the roofs of their buildings were a resource to be utilised. When a request was made in 1957 to erect two 15-foot masts atop the Physics Building to support a 105-foot aerial for lightning research, Cummings decided that "it would not detract from the appearance of the building," and approval was given.177

The academics housed in the Biological Sciences Building had more ambitious plans for their roof. Rain-water tanks were only the beginning. In 1960 the Zoology department proposed the erection of a temporary animal house on the roof, using cases which "are not so unsightly as might be expected" to accommodate toads, bandicoots, magpie larks and flying foxes.178 This request was approved by the Buildings and Grounds Committee, on the understanding that the cases "will be hidden from view from below."179 By the following year, plans were in place for the addition of an insectary, a glass house and a solar energy project.180

However by now the University had its own dedicated architect, James Birrell, who was opposed to at least some of these plans. Birrell suggested locating the animal house near the

---

176 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AC/P/80.
177 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 23 September 1957, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
178 M. C. Bleakly to Registrar, University of Queensland, 1 June 1960, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
179 Registrar, University of Queensland, to Professor of Zoology, 14 June 1960, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
180 Registrar, University of Queensland, to Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, 18 May 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
river and the development of a "service industry" zone around Rock Street.\textsuperscript{181} Clearly there would be conflict between the practical requirements of the science departments and the desire of the architects to protect the façades and roofscapes of the Great Court buildings.

With the completion of the Biological Sciences Building in 1962, the Great Court was no longer a building site, for the first time since 1938. It was finally time to think seriously about the layout of the grounds. In 1955 Story had reminded the Buildings and Grounds Committee that "in the original concept it was intended that, at the opportune time, the Great Court should be properly laid out with paths, lawns and flowering trees and should serve also as a centre of relaxation and meditation for students."\textsuperscript{182} However the Committee had already received reports that the rock formation near the surface would make it very difficult to plant trees in the Great Court.\textsuperscript{183} This proved to be correct, and the Great Court would remain a largely treeless expanse for many years. The topsoil on the Front Lawn below the Main Building was not much better than in the Great Court and tree growth in front of the Great Court complex would also be a challenge.\textsuperscript{184}

\textbf{Death of an Architect}

The final years of Jack F. Hennessy make a rather sad story. Following the outbreak of the war in 1939, building activity not directed towards military purposes quickly declined, and Hennessy's professional activity eventually came to a standstill. With the end of the war in 1945, he must have expected that he would resume his position as one of Australia's busiest and most successful architects, but it was not to be. He had fallen out with his powerful patron in the Catholic Church, and he was no more fortunate with the insurance industry. In the difficult economic environment of post-war Britain, the Colonial Mutual company were not able to revive their pre-war building plans. Even in Australia it would be quite some years before the building of large office blocks resumed, and when it did, Hennessy was apparently seen as too old-fashioned and out of touch with the new realities of the post-war world to receive any major commissions.

He reinforced this impression in November 1952, when he appeared before a standing committee of the Commonwealth Parliament to criticise estimates for a new taxation building in Brisbane. He made the characteristically sweeping statement that "there is no one in either the Federal or State public service with an elementary knowledge of building economics," and claimed that air-conditioning was "practically useless" in a humid climate.\textsuperscript{185} Air conditioning experts appearing before the committee rebutted his claims,\textsuperscript{186} which were

\textsuperscript{181} J. P. Birrell, University Architect, to Registrar, University of Queensland, 22 September 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Biology Block, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
\textsuperscript{182} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 28 March 1955, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{183} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Accommodation Sub-Committee, Minutes, 5 December 1951, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{184} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 28 March 1955, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Courier Mail}, November 12, 1952, 6.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., November 14, 1952, 5.
ultimately rejected by the committee. And when controversy erupted in 1954 over the winners of the Blake Prize for religious art, Hennessy (who had not even viewed the exhibition) publicly denounced it and fumed that "if they are going to allow Communism to get into religious art they will soon end all religious art."  

If Hennessy was courting media attention, he can only have been gratified by the extensive, Australia-wide coverage that he received in 1950, when he sued Archbishop Duhig for unpaid fees. It was almost unheard of for a prominent Catholic layman to take legal action against the Church, and in the highly sectarian environment of post-war Australia the case must have been followed with shocked fascination by Catholics and prurient glee by Protestants. The fees were in connection with the design of the Holy Name Cathedral, and it appears that Hennessy, having finally realised that the cathedral would never be built, determined to extract full payment for the extensive work that his firm had put into the abortive project.

The court found in Hennessy's favour and he was awarded the very significant sum of £25,720, but it was a Pyrrhic victory. As Duhig's biographer puts it, "they decided for Hennessy; yet oddly, Hennessy left the court under a cloud." Certainly the authorities of the University of Queensland would have been very displeased at this public and unseemly dispute between the architect of their new campus and the Archbishop, who had been a Senator of the University for decades and was an important supporter and donor.

---

187 Ibid., March 27, 1953, 5.
188 Sun Herald (Sydney), March 21, 1954, 62.
189 Building and Engineering (Sydney), December 24, 1951, 26.
190 James Boland, James Duhig (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986), 336. Boland gives a very detailed account of the case. There was also extensive coverage in the contemporary press during May 1950.
Jack F. Hennessy died of heart disease on September 4th, 1955, at the age of 68.\textsuperscript{191} In Queensland the firm of Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. continued to operate under the leadership of the respected Leo Drinan. The opening of the Biological Sciences Building in 1962 largely ended the firm's involvement with the University, but they continued to be consulted on matters relating to the extension or alteration of the Great Court buildings. Their only other significant commission at the University was the Catholic women's college, Duchesne, which was opened in 1958.\textsuperscript{192}

Leo Drinan died on February 28th, 1967. The headline in the \textit{Courier Mail} read: "Architect of Varsity Dies," and the obituary referred to the deceased as "the architect who conceived the magnificent sandstone main buildings of Queensland University at St. Lucia."\textsuperscript{193} Hennessy would have been outraged, but there was probably much justice in this posthumous recognition of Drinan's immense contribution to the design and construction of the Great Court.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{191} Death certificate of Jack Francis Hennessy, New South Wales, registration no. 1955/020263.
\item \textsuperscript{192} \textit{Duchesne College, 1937-1989: From Acorn to Oak} (Brisbane: Boolarong, 1989), 66-69.
\item \textsuperscript{193} \textit{Courier Mail}, March 2, 1967, 5.
\end{itemize}
6. THE 1960s

The opening of the Biological Sciences Building in 1962 marked the final step in the implementation of Hennessy's vision for St Lucia. His plan was by no means fully realised, but this was as far as the University and the State Government would go in implementing it. After more than a quarter of a century, the 1936 concept was long out of date. New buildings were being erected outside the Great Court in a variety of styles, "along a perimeter road, one after the other, as if they were on separate subdivisions" as James Birrell put it. The Hennessy era was well and truly over.

And yet in another sense the Hennessy vision lingered on. The Great Court remained the heart of the University, the architectural set-piece around which all else revolved. As these buildings moved through their lifespan – from new to outmoded, and then to unsatisfactory, and finally to renovated, and ultimately to heritage status – they became an increasingly indestructible artefact with which all architects and planners employed by the University had to come to terms. The architectural history of the Great Court during the subsequent half-century is the story of how these buildings were adapted to meet the needs of an expanding university in an ever-changing educational and research environment.

The University Architect

As early as 1954 the Vice-Chancellor, J.D. Story, had felt that the University needed its own architect to guide the development of the St Lucia campus. R.P. Cummings, the Professor of Architecture, had been providing architectural advice on the St Lucia project since 1938, and staff in the Accommodation Section within his department played an increasing role in this area in the post-war years. However when the campus began to expand rapidly in the late 1950s, following the infusion of significant Commonwealth Government funds, it became clear that the architectural services available to the University administration were inadequate.

In 1960 the University decided to engage the services of Leighton Irwin, a prominent Melbourne architect with a successful practice specialising in hospital architecture. As architect consultant to the University, his role would be to "preserve to the institution such architectural character and dignity as it presently possesses," and his immediate task was "determining the siting for the Great Hall in relation to the main block of the university.

---

1 James Birrell, A Life in Architecture: Beyond the Ugliness (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2013), 74.
2 Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland, to Co-ordinator General, 4 May 1954, Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533 [135].
buildings." Ultimately Irwin's impact on the development of the campus was limited, partly because he was based in Melbourne, and partly because he was in declining health. His relationship with the University was terminated shortly before his death in 1962.

When Fred Schonell replaced Story as Vice-Chancellor in 1960, he soon moved to create a post of University Architect. The role was envisaged as an advisory and co-ordinating one, but the University Architect would also be required to provide architectural services himself on specific projects. Schonell wisely insisted that the University Architect's professional standing must be such "that it would command the respect of private architects and the officers of the Department of the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works." To attract a suitable candidate, the salary was set at that of a Reader (i.e. an assistant professor), in the vicinity of £3,000 per annum. It was intended that the appointee would be independent of the University's Department of Architecture and that the University would no longer require architectural services from staff in that department.

When the post was advertised, Schonell was able to report that there was an "exceptionally strong field of applicants" for the position, and James Birrell was appointed as the first University Architect from July 1, 1961. Birrell, born in 1928 and trained in Melbourne, had worked with the Commonwealth Department of Works before taking up a post with the Brisbane City Council in 1955. In Brisbane he had attracted considerable attention (and some controversy) with his striking designs for buildings such as the Centenary Swimming Pool, the Wickham Terrace Carpark and the Toowong Public Library.

Birrell's five years at the University of Queensland were very productive, but his position was always an awkward one. Although he was employed by the University, he was on occasion required to design specific buildings, and in the latter role his client was not the University, but the Co-ordinator General's Department, which remained the constructing authority for the St Lucia campus. Thus when there was conflict between the University and the Co-ordinator General, Birrell was trapped between his employer and his client. Like Hennessy before him, he fell victim to the perilous intricacies of the Queensland bureaucracy, and it was this which eventually led him to resign from the University in March 1966. He went into private practice but did further work for the University as architect of the Agriculture and Entomology (Hartley Teakle) Building.

---

7 Staff News (University of Queensland), no. 5 (April 1961): 3.
8 Ibid., no. 7 (June 1961): 3.
9 Andrew Wilson, "Birrell, James," in Goad and Willis (eds.), Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture, 84-5. For Birrell's own account of his years at the University of Queensland, see chapter 5 of his A Life in Architecture.
It is important to understand just how significant the construction projects at St Lucia were to the local economy. Brisbane in the early 1960s was still a large provincial city and only on the threshold of its boom years. In 1965 the executive director of the Master Builders Association was able to report that "the biggest concentration of modern buildings in Brisbane was at Queensland University." In these circumstances, it is unfortunate that the position of University Architect remained vacant for more than three years after Birrell's departure. Kelvin Crump was acting in that role until James Maccormick commenced work in October 1969.

Problems of Space

The 1960s were years of rapid expansion for the University of Queensland. Total enrolments surged from 8,700 in 1960 to 15,000 in 1969. It was impossible to erect new buildings quickly enough to accommodate the swelling student body. In 1965 the Vice-Chancellor reported that "buildings which even seven years ago were thought to be big enough for any foreseeable expansion are now either extended or about to be extended." At the beginning of the 1967 academic year there were newspaper reports of students unable to obtain seats in lecture theatres. Throughout the decade the University authorities pinned their hopes on the

---

10 UQ Archives, S135. Photo credit: Brisbane Telegraph.
11 Sunday Mail (Brisbane), June 20, 1965, 29.
12 University of Queensland News, no. 6 (September 1969): 6.
14 Telegraph (Brisbane), February 27, 1967, 3.
opening of a second university in Brisbane, but even after a site was chosen at Mt Gravatt, construction proceeded very slowly.

From 1959 all significant building projects at St Lucia were funded by the Australian Universities Commission, which had been set up to channel Commonwealth Government grants to the universities. The Commission initiated a series of three-year plans, which created a cumbersome and often slow process for the approval and construction of new buildings. The State Government was required to match the Commonwealth funding, so the University now had to deal with both a remote bureaucracy in Canberra and a parsimonious Cabinet in Brisbane.

In the Main Building, the only way to find more space was to extend upwards. J.D. Story suggested the addition of a third storey to the building at a Senate meeting in 1961, and when Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. were consulted, Leo Drinan replied that it would indeed be possible to add a light-framed construction, set back from the existing parapets and crowned by a receding copper roof. The Buildings and Grounds Committee supported the proposal, but the Australian Universities Commission were not impressed with the idea, so the University abandoned the project, in favour of a submission to obtain an annexe for the Social Sciences Building.

The opening of the Social Sciences Building (designed by Goodsir and Carlyle) in 1964 removed some of the pressure on the Main Building, as did the opening of the Shared Lecture Theatre (designed by Birrell, and soon to be renamed the Abel Smith Lecture Theatre) in 1966. In October 1965 the University's Administration Section, which had occupied the western half of the ground floor and part of the upper floor of the Main Building, moved into the new J.D. Story Building (also designed by Birrell), and it was announced that £3,000 would be spent on renovation of the vacated sections of the Main Building. Major beneficiaries of this project were the Law School and the Department of External Studies, both of which had large libraries which had been stored in very cramped conditions.

However the respite was short lived. Enrolments in the Arts Faculty continued to rise steeply and by 1969 the Main Building (which had been renamed the Forgan Smith Building in 1967) was again seriously overcrowded. It was reported that "rooms once intended for single occupancy by Arts lecturers now have several lecturers and tutors using them." Relief would only come with the construction of the proposed Western Arts Building, which will be discussed in more detail later.

---

15 Senate Minutes, 5 October 1961, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
16 Hennessy, Hennessy & Co. to Registrar, University of Queensland, 16 October 1961, draft in Story Papers, UQ Archives, UQA S533, item 191. For illustration, see Figure 6.4.
18 Telegraph (Brisbane), October 4, 1965, city final edition, 10.
19 Staff News (University of Queensland), no. 39 (September 1965): 15.
20 Courier Mail, February 26, 1969, 3.
The buildings of the semi-circle which housed the science departments were all experiencing similar problems. In 1961 the University began planning a First Year Science Block (which would eventually become the Priestley Building), for which Bligh, Jessup, Brentnall were appointed architects. The original intention was that this building would remove pressure on the buildings of the semi-circle by providing accommodation for the large first-year classes. However none of the science departments was enthusiastic about this plan, and by the time the building finally opened in early 1964 it had been decided to house the Mathematics Department in this building, with one floor allocated to the Geology Department. The latter department fared badly in terms of accommodation: its own building (the Richards Building) was never extended, and Birrell’s plans for a large Geology Annexe fronting Circular Drive were never realised (see Figure 6.14). The Geology Department had to be content with promises of future expansion into the original Chemistry Building once the new Chemistry Building should be completed.

The original Chemistry Building (renamed the Steele Building in 1966) had never been completed, and the south-east corner of the building would remain a gaping hole for decades. Birrell’s plan for a Chemistry Annexe, facing Circular Drive and balancing his proposed Geology Annexe, was not implemented. The head of the Chemistry Department was persuaded that, rather than complete and refurbish the Steele Building, it would be preferable to construct a completely new building. In 1967 the firm of Cross and Bain began preparing plans for a new Chemistry Building to be located near the emerging precinct of biomedical buildings across the Circular Drive south of the Biological Sciences Building. However the Chemistry Department were not satisfied with the initial plans, and construction was delayed. The new Chemistry Building finally opened in 1971.

The Physics Department was more fortunate. The Australian Universities Commission approved the construction of a Physics Annexe immediately at the rear of the Physics Building (later renamed the Parnell Building) and work began late in 1964. The design was the work of Bligh, Jessup, Brentnall. Unlike most of the other new buildings of the 1960s, the Physics Annexe was built within the semi-circle formed by the Circular and Front Drives, and was thus virtually a part of the Great Court complex. Despite the sensitivity of its location, the building is an uncompromisingly 1960s edifice, built of reinforced concrete and surfaced in exposed aggregates of different types, "to make the building harmonise with the original stone-faced University buildings which are in close proximity." Much of the ground floor was left open as an undercroft, thus keeping the view through to the cloister.

---

21 Staff News (University of Queensland), no. 6 (May 1961): 3.
22 H. C. Webster, A History of the Physics Department of the University of Queensland (St Lucia: The Department, 1977), 33.
23 Barry Chiswell, A Diamond Period: A Brief History of the Chemistry Department of the University of Queensland from 1910-1985 (privately printed, 1987): 70.
24 Staff News (University of Queensland), no. 51 (April 1967): 14.
25 Sunday Mail (Brisbane), October 26, 1969, 8.
26 Courier Mail, March 26, 1965, 9.
unimpeded. Birrell saw the area between the Physics and Geology Buildings as an important pedestrian precinct, and the design of the Physics Annexe reflects this.

![Figure 6.2: The Physics Annexe, about 1975](image)

**Figure 6.2: The Physics Annexe, about 1975**

Designed by Bligh, Jessup, Brentnall

The Biological Sciences Building, the youngest and largest of the science buildings in the Great Court, was opened in 1962, but even it soon became overcrowded. The University's solution was to erect a new building for the Agriculture and Entomology Departments (later named the Hartley Teakle Building), located north-west of the Main Building, near the main approach to the campus. This building was designed by James Birrell's firm after his departure from the University, and it is now regarded as one of his most impressive buildings. It was occupied early in 1969.

**The Library Extension**

Nowhere was the problem of overcrowding more obvious than in the Main Library. As we have seen, the two-storey building erected before the war had proved quite unable to cope with the expansion of the post-war years, and mezzanine floors had been inserted to provide additional space. However after 1958, with the increasing funds available from the Commonwealth Government to purchase material for the Library collection, and with the rapidly increasing student numbers, extension of the Library was urgently required.

In 1962 the Australian Universities Commission agreed to provide funding for the addition of further floors to the Library building, although Harrison Bryan, the University Librarian, wanted a completely new building, on an adjacent site. In later life, he was able to reflect philosophically that the additional upper floors

---

28 UQ Archives, S971p711.
were always seen as needed to balance the height of the central tower of the main building, at the end of which the temporarily truncated Library squatted. They would be considered over the years really only for this aesthetic reason rather than in terms of the Library's needs and, indeed, it was this consideration that would secure them in the end although, ironically, by that time all informed opinion (at any rate all informed Library opinion) would favour the University cutting its losses and building a new Library.29

Bryan, who had savagely criticised the original Hennessy design of the Library,30 was very happy to have the services of Birrell in the design of the extension. Hennessy had not prepared any detailed plans for the projected three upper floors of the Library, but a basic floor plan suggests that these floors were designed purely for book stacks, with book lifts but no passenger lift provided.31 The high ceilings and the large light well in the centre of each floor combined to create a design that was absurdly wasteful of space.

In its place, Birrell proposed an extension of much the same height, but with five additional floors, instead of three. These floors would have ceiling heights of around nine feet and would be served by passenger lifts.32 Extensive use of fluorescent lighting removed the need for natural lighting. Externally, Birrell's plan was a modified extension of the design of the existing floors, with a large panel of windows in the northern frontage, extending through most of the floors, and with smaller windows in the remaining walls. Although his design was similar to the original Hennessy design, he felt that "some simplification of detail may assist the design to bridge the stylistic gap between its conception in 1935-6 and the present day."33

However Birrell was about to discover that things were not that simple. He was merely the University Architect. The constructing authority for the extension was the Co-ordinator General's Department, and they contacted Hennessy, Hennessy & Co., as the original architects for the building, to advise on the external design of the extension. Leo Drinan produced a rather different plan, much closer to the original concept.

---

30 See Chapter 5.
31 University of Queensland Property and Facilities, plan no. 010480.
33 University Architect to Vice-Chancellor, 14 November 1962, Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, box 4, folder 1.
Figure 6.3: Birrell’s plan for the Library extension\textsuperscript{34}
Combined section and elevation of the main northern frontage. Note also the projected third storey (designed by Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.) on the adjacent Main Building.

Figure 6.4: Drinan's plan for the Library extension\textsuperscript{35}
Drinan's projected third storey for the Main Building is also visible.

\textsuperscript{34} Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, folder 25.
\textsuperscript{35} Courier Mail, October 25, 1963, 5.
Birrell's role was restricted to the internal layout of the building, causing him to complain that the Buildings and Grounds Committee seemed to see him as "acting in the capacity of an interior designer only." Bryan joined him in protesting about the unsatisfactory definition of relative responsibilities that seemed to persist with reference to the University Architect and the Librarian on the one hand and the office of the Coordinator General on the other, not to mention the quite astonishing relationship of Messrs Hennessy and Hennessy to the whole project.

This separation of responsibility for the external and interior design was inevitably problematic. The fenestration would prove to be the most contentious issue. Birrell complained that in Drinan's plan there were no windows at all on the upper floors. He reported that "these were filled in upon recommendation of Hennessy & Hennessy who claimed they could not design windows to suit the new floor heights," whereas Birrell wanted to provide access to the "splendid views." The Vice-Chancellor supported Birrell, and it appears that Birrell decided to insert the main central windows on the north and east sides. There were still complaints from senior academics that this was inadequate, but the librarians, on the other hand, were generally of the opinion that artificial lighting was preferable to direct sunlight.

Ventilation was provided by air-conditioning, which was still seen as something of a luxury. The University Registrar was obliged to assure the Co-ordinator General that the air-conditioning of the whole building was essential to preserve the valuable collection of books. The comfort of Library staff and readers was not a concern.

Internally, Hennessy's light well was dispensed with. The original glass ceiling, with sandblasted motifs taken from Aboriginal artworks, which had been intended for removal and re-use when the upper floors were built, was demolished. Yet the original plan for the light-well continued to exert a baleful effect, because the building had been designed without any central load-bearing structures. This meant that it was necessary to leave a circular opening in the middle of the third and fifth floors. Perhaps the architect was just making the best of a bad job when he declared that "penetration of floors by open mezzanines gives a lofty character to the reading areas." Even on the other floors, the central area was not strong enough to support book stacks and could only be used as a reading and study area.

36 University Architect to Vice-Chancellor, 14 November 1962, Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, box 4, folder 1.
37 University Librarian to Chairman of the Library Committee, 25 January 1963, Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, box 4, folder 1.
38 University Architect to Vice-Chancellor, 30 April 1964, Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, box 4, folder 1.
39 Registrar, University of Queensland, to Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General of Public Works, 4 February 1963, Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, box 4, folder 1.
40 Clive Moore, *The Forgan Smith: History of a Building and its People at the University of Queensland* (St Lucia: School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland, 2010), 44.
The lower ground floor of the building was "transformed into one of the prestige areas of the University," a role which Hennessy had always envisaged for the foyer on this level. This floor took on a new life as the Open Reserve Collection of books in heavy demand from undergraduates, accessible to students but with tight security control, and with provision for reading desks. On the ground floor, the small entrance from the cloisters was replaced by a more substantial entrance, with turnstiles and staffed exit-control.

Construction of the extension began early in 1964, and some of the new floors were available for occupation by the end of the following year. It was not until 1966 that the building was fully functional, and it would take longer still for the freestone facing to be completed.

42 Ibid.
The Missing Link: The Western Arts Building

Once construction of the Biological Sciences Building was completed in 1962, there was only one remaining gap in the D-shaped Great Court complex, namely the site at the western end of the Main Building where Hennessy had intended that the Great Hall should stand. For more than twenty years it had been an article of faith with the University authorities that the hall would arise here, as the heart and soul of the University. However by the late 1950s some were beginning to ask whether this site could not be better used for other purposes.

In 1959 it was suggested that a Humanities block of four floors could be built here, to provide relief to the overcrowded Arts Faculty. At around the same time the Vice-Chancellor suggested using the site for an Administration building. However at the end of 1959 the Accommodation Steering Committee of the Buildings and Grounds Committee decided that "erection of a Humanities Wing on the western end [of the Main Building] is a practical departure from the Hennessy concept" and this became the official policy.

---

43 “The Great Hall—St. Lucia,” [undated memo, ca. November 1959], Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
44 Memo by Vice-Chancellor, 13 November 1959, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
45 “The Great Hall,” minute dated 29/12/59, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
At a meeting of the Steering Committee the following July, some members expressed the view that the humanities block should not be built "unless it was in line with the original concept, namely that a freestone structure be erected." However it was clear that the Commonwealth Government would not provide funding for lavish freestone buildings, so by 1961 it had been decided to erect a cheaper humanities building in a less prominent location on Circular Drive, opposite the Library. This new humanities building, designed by the firm of Goodsr and Carlyle, was to be known as the Social Sciences Building. Construction began the following year.

This meant that the original Great Hall site was still unallocated. There were plans to move the Dental School from its location in the city to St Lucia, and in 1963 Birrell developed a plan for a new Dental School at the western end of the Main Building. It would be slightly detached from the Main Building, eight floors in height (which would make it taller than the Tower), and standing on piers placed on a podium. However the Australian Universities Commission was not favourable to the idea of moving the Dental School, so by February 1965 the University was again considering using the former Great Hall site for the ever-expanding Arts Faculty, and Birrell adapted his design to make it suitable as a Western Arts Building. By the end of 1965 these plans had reached their final form, and Birrell later described them in the following terms:

It was to be slightly detached from the other connecting buildings by a short cloister, with a grand stair from Front Drive, now University Drive. The building of two wings in a ‘T’ configuration was to rise from a random stone-faced base forming an elevated deck. Great piloi, or piers, supported the office blocks above. These were to be inverted, steep triangular pyramids with concave paraboloid sides so that the interior ground floor would have a form similar to a ceiling of a Baroque or Rococo church … I was going to promote these spaces for galleries and the Great Hall.

The building would have five floors above the basement level, to match the height of the Library building (which was then being extended upwards), while still remaining below the height of the Tower. It was thus respectful of the massing of the main frontage in Hennessy's original design, while the stem of the T-shaped building projected westwards, to create an attractive entrance to the Great Court from Mill Road. The use of stone to face both the ends of the building and the central lift-tower provided a point of connection with the other buildings of the Great Court. Attractive as it was, this design was for some at the University too radical a departure from the style of the remaining Great Court buildings. Birrell resigned from the University in March 1966, a few months after submitting the plans, and the project lapsed.

46 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Accommodation Steering Committee, Minutes, 6 July 1960, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
48 See plans in Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, folder 24.
49 Birrell, A Life in Architecture, 82-83; for the original plans see Birrell Papers, Fryer Library, UQFL117, folder 24.
However by September 1966, despite the temporary respite provided by the removal of the Administration staff to the new J.D. Story Building, the accommodation problems of the Arts Faculty in the Main Building were too serious to ignore, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee resolved to request funds for the construction of a Western Arts Building.\footnote{Deputy Vice-Chancellor to Vice-Chancellor, 5 December 1966, Buildings Major Works St Lucia: Michie Building, 1966-1969, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.}
Funding was provided by the Australian Universities Commission to construct the building during the 1967/69 triennium, and when this was publicly announced in February 1967, the University published one of Birrell's drawings of the proposed building, stressing that "the design of the new building may be very different from the one shown here, which serves only to indicate where the new block will fit in."53

Two weeks later the Registrar wrote to the Co-ordinator General, explaining that the University wanted to build an Arts Building in the location originally planned for the Great Hall, and that they had come to the conclusion that an economic [building] could be designed which while not necessarily of the same appearances as the original design would still be compatible with the neighbouring building and still satisfy functional requirements.54

He emphasised that the University wanted the building to be stone-faced, to match the other buildings of the Great Court, but he suggested that the building could be erected with the exterior unfinished, to be faced later as funds permitted. There was no possibility that the Commonwealth Government would provide funds for such an opulent finish, but the University optimistically felt that "since the [State] Government of the day back in the 30's committed the University to stone-facing in this area, there is no doubt that the Government will accept the responsibility to finish it eventually."

There was also the question of choosing an architect to design the building. The Registrar expressed doubt that Hennessy and Hennessy would now have the capacity to deal with such a large project. He was probably not even aware that Leo Drinan, the long-serving manager of the Queensland office of Hennessy and Hennessy, had died the previous day.

However following Drinan's death the Hennessy firm was quickly taken over by the Brisbane architect Martin ("Bill") Conrad, who continued to use the Hennessy & Hennessy name for some years until forming the new partnership of Conrad, Esler and Simpson.55 So after the State Cabinet decided to proceed with the erection of the building and to award the commission to Hennessy and Hennessy,56 it was Martin Conrad who designed it, assisted by his future partner Bob Esler.

Conrad initially proposed a tall building of eight storeys, to balance the Library building at the other end of the frontage, but with a lower extension westward to Mill Road of five-storeys. The complex would have a light-well or courtyard at the centre. As the rooms would have much lower ceiling heights than in the Main Building, he recognised that there would be

53 Courier Mail, February 15, 1967, 12.
54 Registrar, University of Queensland, to Co-ordinator General of Public Works, 1 March 1967, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.
56 Co-ordinator General to Registrar, University of Queensland, 16 March 1967, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.
some problems with the fenestration. The Arts departments required many small rooms for staff offices or tutorial groups and Conrad saw no way of economically accommodating these without air conditioning. He was also concerned that the Tower in the centre of the Main Building would be "overpowered by the mass of the wings at either end."57

![Figure 6.9: Conrad's original plan for the Western Arts Building, June 1967](image)

Air conditioning proved to be the sticking point. The Australian Universities Commission refused to provide funding for air conditioning, except in specific circumstances.59 Without air conditioning, Conrad felt that it was impossible to fully utilise the site, and he was forced to redesign the main eight-storey block to maximise the use of natural ventilation by adopting a narrower frontage "closely matching the dimensions of the library at the other end."60 Aesthetically, this was probably an improvement on the original design, but the University authorities were more concerned about accommodation than aesthetics.

Although objecting to the attitude of the Universities Commission towards air conditioning (especially as funding was readily available for heating the university buildings which were being erected in southern states), the University decided to proceed with the construction of the eight-storey building, with a five-storey western extension, and Conrad was asked to prepare detailed plans.61 Excavation of the site was conducted during the long vacation at the end of 1968, but construction did not finally begin until the end of 1970. In the interim, the University decided that the funds earmarked for the five-storey western extension should be diverted to more urgent projects.62 Soon afterwards it was decided to construct a Biological Sciences Library in the general area west of the Main Building, so the five-storey extension was abandoned altogether and only the main eight-storey block was constructed.63 The large,

---

57 Martin L. Conrad to Deputy Vice-Chancellor, 7 June 1967, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.
58 UQ Archives, S234 [24].
59 Secretary, Australian Universities Commission, to Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland, 12 July 1968, UQA 33150/36425.
60 Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland, to Secretary, Australian Universities Commission, 22 July 1968, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.
61 Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator General to Hennessy and Hennessy, 3 October 1968, UQ Archives, UQA 33150/36425.
flat expanse of open ground west of the Michie Building is a continuing reminder of Conrad's original plan.

The final design of the building was functional but unattractive. Birrell, whose own plan had been rejected, was of course no disinterested critic, but it is nonetheless hard to argue with his description of the building which Conrad designed as "blind to all views from it and with no distinction internally or externally." Birrell, A Life in Architecture, 83. The design was a product of a time when the University was rapidly expanding and, as Conrad himself said, "the aim … was to provide the maximum amount of accommodation in the area available." The ground floor, at cloister level, made only the slightest attempt to create an impression, with its 9½ foot ceilings and 8 foot wide passageways. The entrance to the Anthropology Museum provided little external display space and the lift lobby was unimpressive. The semi-circular internal stairway was the best that could be offered as an "interesting feature."

On the upper floors, the 8 foot ceilings and 5 foot wide passageways made maximum use of the available space. The mostly small rooms, separated by modular partitions, were at least functional. Only the rooms which lacked windows were air conditioned. The windows themselves were kept small to reduce sunlight penetration, with only venetian blinds to provide shading, even on the large western frontage of the building, on the grounds that "any other form of sunlight shading would be out of character with the existing buildings." The exterior surfaces were of brick, contained within a reinforced concrete structural framework. The windows were of a bronze-coloured aluminium, in an economical imitation of the windows of the Main Building.

The omission of the five-storey western extension left the western side of the building as "a large blank façade," as the University's Professor of Architecture had predicted. It was also a heat trap and, without air-conditioning, rooms on this side of the building were very uncomfortable in the summer. The building was opened in 1972, and named the Michie Building. With its uncladded brick and concrete exterior it was an eyesore, and would remain so for some years to come.

---

64 Birrell, A Life in Architecture, 83.
67 Ibid.
The Front Lawn and the Elusive Great Hall

It is a paradox of the St Lucia site that, despite its extensive acreage, it contains only limited land suitable for building. Much of the site is subject to flooding, even though such events are fortunately rare. As early as 1944 the Buildings and Grounds Committee urged the State Government to acquire more land on the high ground to the west of the University site. As the University began to expand rapidly in the late 1950s, the authorities had to confront the fact that they were running short of space on which to erect new buildings.

The original plans for the campus had envisaged the lawn in front of the Main Building as an open space, providing an unimpeded view of the façade of the Great Court complex. Until the 1960s, virtually all traffic to the University approached the campus via St Lucia Road (later renamed Sir Fred Schonell Drive), and it was assumed that this would remain the case, unless and until the bridge from Boundary Street at West End was constructed. From either approach, the impressive mass of the Main Building would dominate the landscape, as long as the Front Lawn was kept clear of buildings. However as building land became scarce,

---

69 UQ Archives, S909 p31.
70 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 3 May 1944, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
there were those who began to think the unthinkable. Even building in the middle of the Great Court was openly canvassed as a possibility.

When Leighton Irwin was appointed architect consultant to the University in 1960, these were the issues which he was required to address. In May 1961 he submitted a memo on the Great Hall, expressing the opinion that, if it was sited in the centre of the Great Court, this would produce "a very dignified result," but acknowledging that this option was not acceptable to the authorities. Instead he suggested that the area in front of the Tower should be developed as a courtyard, with the Great Hall to the east, so that "the Great Hall will be seen on entering the campus, backed by the main building." The following month he submitted sketch plans of this proposal.

![Figure 6.11: Leighton Irwin's proposal for siting of the Great Hall, June 1961](image)

Birrell, recently appointed as University Architect, was generally favourable to the proposal:

> Aesthetically, the siting in front of the Main Building does help to develop a sense of arrival at the main entrance to the University. At present the central staircase has nothing but itself to define it, and leading into an empty court at the rear, it produces no real reason to the visitor for its existence once it is entered. Placing the Great Hall as suggested by Leighton Irwin will help this situation …

---

71 Leighton Irwin & Co., "University of Queensland Great Hall," 30 May 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.

72 Site plan dated 7 June 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.

73 University Architect to Vice-Chancellor, 7 July 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
However the members of Senate were not impressed with the plan. It was criticised at the meeting on July 6, and was the object of more sustained attack at the meeting on August 3, culminating with a statement from the former Vice-Chancellor, J.D. Story, now 91 years of age, who had been associated with the University from its foundation. Story told the senators that

The long façade of the Main Building, the openness of the surroundings, and the generous spaciousness were supposed to be symbolic of the broad sweeping areas of Queensland … For himself, he had never deviated from the view that the Great Court and the Front Lawn should be kept sacrosanct. If utilitarianism were permitted to infiltrate, the Front Lawn and Great Court would possibly go, piece by piece; symbolism, individuality and beauty would decay; the renown of St. Lucia would pass.74

There was no dissenting from such a plea. Sir James Holt, the Co-ordinator General, supported Story and the Senate asked the Buildings and Grounds Committee to give the matter further consideration.

At a meeting between Leighton Irwin and University officials the following month, the possibility of locating the Great Hall elsewhere, perhaps on the other side of the Circular Drive, was discussed. Irwin dismissed this idea: "Any site across the Circular Drive would only be suitable if the Great Hall could be envisaged as of minor importance."75 Cummings, the Professor of Architecture, supported Irwin's position:

the Great Hall should have both a functional and an architectural relationship to the Main Tower Entrance to the University. The value of this important relationship would depend upon the layout and formal treatment of the space or area between the Main Tower Entrance and that of the Great Hall.76

The question was debated at great length at the Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting in October. There was general agreement that the Great Hall could not be located on the western side of the Front Lawn, as that would obscure the façade when viewed from St Lucia Road. In view of the Senate's opposition to the site proposed by Irwin on the eastern side of the Front Lawn, the committee was beginning to favour a site across Circular Drive. Birrell did not have a strong view on the subject:

One architect might wish to place the Great Hall as near as possible to the Main Building, as he felt his design had a sense of affinity with the Main Building; and

74 Senate Minutes, 3 August 1961, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
75 Minutes of Meeting of Leighton Irwin with University Officials, 13 September 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
76 R. P. Cummings, "Site for the University Great Hall at St. Lucia," 20 September 1961, Building Accommodation (St. Lucia)—Great Hall, UQ Archives, UQA S130.
another might feel that his design would be better in contrast to the Main Building, and therefore needed greater space between.\footnote{Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 23 October 1961, UQ Archives, UQA S15.}

Opinion in the Senate was now quite firmly opposed to the Irwin proposal. At the meeting on November 27, 1961 Senate approved a motion by Holt "that the site for the Great Hall be on the North Eastern side of Circular Drive."\footnote{Senate Minutes, 27 November 1961, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} The following year, the prominent Brisbane physician and member of Senate, Jarvis Nye, attempted to set the decision in concrete by proposing a motion recommending that no future Senate should allow any building to be erected between the Circular Drive and the Main Building, or in the Great Court. The Senate endorsed the sentiment, but did not feel that it could impose obligations on future Senates.\footnote{Staff News (University of Queensland), no. 15 (August 1962): 3-4.}

If these debates had finally settled the question of the location of the Great Hall, there would be no need to recount the further history of that elusive building. A location north-west of the Social Sciences Building would have placed the Great Hall well away from the Main Building, and the Great Hall would have played no role in the history of the Great Court complex. However future developments would show that the location of the Great Hall was far from settled.

Having decided on a site for the Great Hall, the University was now keen to move to construct the building. There was no longer any question of using Hennessy's original design (see Figure 4.2), which the University's historian would later compare to "the inside of a London railway station."\footnote{Malcolm I. Thomis, \textit{A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy-Five Years} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 166.} Instead the University held an architectural competition, to which 120 designs were submitted. On April 22, 1963 the first prize of £1,000 was awarded to a Melbourne architect, Stuart McIntosh.\footnote{"Great Hall for the University of Queensland," \textit{Architecture in Australia} 52, no. 3 (1963): 150-53. See also Igea Troiani, "McIntosh, Stuart," in Goad and Willis (eds.), \textit{Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture}, 443.}

Birrell described McIntosh's design as "spectacular,"\footnote{Birrell, \textit{A Life in Architecture}, 83.} but when tenders for construction were called, they came in well over the estimated cost, a fact which McIntosh attributed to "several unusual features which might have appeared more difficult than they would ultimately be."\footnote{Courier Mail, December 16, 1964, 3.} At the University's request, McIntosh revised his design, but the University finally abandoned the project late in 1965,\footnote{Thomis, \textit{Place of Light and Learning}, 272.} and there the matter would rest for another five years. There were many who felt that McIntosh had been treated very badly by the University, and he himself would later say that "winning the [Great Hall] competition was the most unwise thing he had ever done."\footnote{Telegraph (Brisbane), November 18, 1968, 5.}
The appointment of a new Professor of Architecture in 1968, following the retirement of R.P. Cummings, gave the University an opportunity to obtain fresh ideas for the campus. Gareth Roberts was an English architect who had worked with the National Capital Development Commission in Canberra since 1959, and he was particularly interested in urban design. The University asked him to prepare a report on the planning of the campus, but with particular reference to the question of the Great Hall, and in October 1969 he submitted a lengthy report.

Four years previously, Birrell had argued for the need to "reduce vehicular traffic within the built-up areas and to construct buildings about pedestrian precincts." Roberts developed this idea further, suggesting the closure of some roadways and the extensive use of landscaping and walkways to create precincts which he called "courts." He opposed any construction within the Great Court, but argued that "the appearance of the court itself would be greatly improved if the landscaping were strengthened" and highlighted the need "to create points of interest desirable in so extensive a space." Although some plantings of trees and shrubs had been made in the Great Court in 1963, it was still a very bare space.

Roberts described the northern façade of the Great Court complex as "a fine architectural composition in the classical tradition," but considered it doubtful that the "retention of the open space necessary to provide a proper setting for a façade of this length is justified and capable of being sustained in view of the pressures for accommodation now confronting the

---

86 UQ Archives, S908 p81.
88 Courier Mail, April 15, 1969, 9.
90 Birrell, "Neighbours on the Campus," 153.
University." He proposed an elaborate plan for the development of the space in front of the Main Building, which recognised the importance of the main visual axis centred on the Tower, and he insisted that no new building should interrupt the view of the Tower or dominate it.

Figure 6.13: Roberts' plan for the Entrance Court

The proposed new buildings on the left of the forecourt are Library buildings. On the right is the proposed Law School, with the proposed Great Hall at the front, parallel to the Main Building.

In addition to this grand Entrance Court, Roberts also proposed a smaller Library Court to the east, made up of the existing Library and Social Sciences Buildings, plus two new Library buildings. Similarly, to the west, he proposed a Great Hall Court, bounded by the existing Veterinary School, the planned Western Arts Building, and his proposed Law School and Great Hall.

It was never to be expected that the University would implement Roberts' plan in anything like its entirety. Replacing roads with pedestrian precincts was still a visionary concept in Brisbane in 1969. Nonetheless there are many elements of the plan which clearly influenced later development of the campus, and not the least of these was the ending of the taboo on the development of the Front Lawn. J.D. Story had been dead for three years, and there was no one left with sufficient influence to argue against the pragmatism of Roberts' plan.

---

94 Ibid., 35.
The Back Door to the Great Court: Circular Drive

As new buildings began to appear along Circular Drive in the late 1950s, it started to become a significant thoroughfare. By 1964 the volume of traffic was so great, and was generating so much noise, that the University installed boom-gates at the entrance of Circular Drive so that only senior staff would be allowed to drive along it and park there. With so many of the University community using Circular Drive to access the University, it is surprising that so little attention was paid to the question of how the Great Court buildings presented themselves when viewed from this perspective. Amid all the debate about the preservation or development of the Front Lawn, little attention was being paid to the "back door" to the Great Court.

However this was an issue which had not escaped Birrell's attention. About 1965 he made tentative plans for annexes to both the Geology and Chemistry Buildings. These were to be tall buildings which would front Circular Drive and fill the empty spaces at the rear of the existing buildings. They were sited to flank the axis running down from the Great Court to the lake, which Birrell saw as a particularly significant precinct. These plans were never realised.

![Figure 6.14: Birrell's plan for the Geology Annexe and Chemistry Annexe](image)

With the completion of the Library extension, the busy pedestrian precinct between the Library and the Chemistry (Steele) Building, which connected the Student Union and Abel Smith Lecture Theatre with the Great Court, was an area in need of beautification. The Australian Federation of University Women obligingly provided the sum of $2,000 to erect a

---

95 *Telegraph* (Brisbane), February 27, 1964, city final edition, 12.
small fountain here. It was designed by the acting university architect, Kelvin Crump, and was inaugurated in July 1969.\footnote{\textit{Telegraph} (Brisbane), July 9, 1969, 3 and 11. See the detailed description in Susan Pechey, \textit{Impressions of the University of Queensland: A Collection of Drawings by Christopher McVinish} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 25.}

The Steele Building itself was gapingly incomplete when viewed from Circular Drive. The final south-eastern quadrant would never be completed, and the exposed brickwork and temporary structures which occupied this space would be an eyesore for decades.

Between the Steele and Richards (Geology) Buildings was a large area which had been earmarked for the Bookshop. When construction began in 1958, members of the University community were very critical of this "squat and unattractive" brick building.\footnote{\textit{Semper Floreat}, April 10, 1958, 2. A photograph of the original building can be seen in Thomis, \textit{Place of Light and Learning}, 261.} The building was altered and extended in 1964, to designs prepared by Birrell, and the resulting structure was certainly more attractive than the original.\footnote{\textit{Staff News} (University of Queensland), no. 24 (October 1963): 2; ibid., no. 27 (April 1964): 8.} Nonetheless Roberts would later deplore the siting of the Bookshop and adjacent University Press, which "interrupts what would otherwise have been a most attractive view of the lagoon and the outlying grounds of the campus through the cloisters in the Great Court."\footnote{Roberts, "University of Queensland: Observations," 48.}

Because the Richards Building was the smallest of the buildings on the semi-circle, the area behind it was only too suitable for the erection of temporary structures. Roberts was critical of the many ugly temporary buildings which dotted the campus in the late 1960s, and he illustrated this with a photograph of a demountable building standing between the Richards Building and the Physics Annexe.\footnote{Ibid., 23.} It would remain a fixture for decades to come.

The Physics Annexe, as we have seen, was virtually part of the Great Court complex, yet built in a strongly contrasting style. It had been designed to allow easy access along the pedestrian corridor between the Richards and Parnell (Physics) Buildings. Roberts suggested that the space between the Richards and Parnell Buildings "lends itself to a more formal landscape treatment in view of its scale, form and axial location."\footnote{Ibid., 52.}

He saw even more potential in the space between the Parnell and Goddard (Biological Sciences) Buildings, particularly if Circular Drive was pedestrianised.\footnote{Ibid., 51.} He was not the only person to have noted the potential of this area. Late in 1969 it was reported that the Alumni Association had donated funds for the landscaping of a courtyard here.\footnote{\textit{Courier Mail}, October 30, 1969, 3.}

The Goddard (Biological Sciences) Building had been fully built up to the perimeter of the Circular Drive. Between it and the end of the Main Building was the area which would soon...
be occupied by the Western Arts Building. In the intervening space was the vehicular access to the Great Court itself, a roadway which, as Roberts pointed out, was badly in need of paving.¹⁰⁵ Even after thirty years of construction, there were still parts of the Great Court complex which had a sadly provisional appearance.

The 1970s were an era of mixed fortunes at the University of Queensland. In the early years of the decade enrolments continued to increase steadily. The election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 promised well for the future of the university sector, especially when the Federal Government assumed full responsibility for university funding in 1974, the same year in which it abolished tuition fees for universities. At the University of Queensland, the resulting surge in demand for university places was only partly offset by the long-awaited opening of Griffith University in 1975.

This period of expansion came to a sudden end later that year, when the government’s budgetary problems required the suspension of the triennial funding system for universities. The election of a conservative government in the federal election at the end of 1975 did nothing to improve the financial situation of the universities, and for the rest of the decade the University of Queensland marked time, with static enrolments and little prospect of obtaining badly needed new buildings. The only positive development was a noticeable increase in postgraduate enrolments, albeit from a very low base.

The severe floods which struck Brisbane in January 1974, inundating much of the St Lucia campus, were a reminder why the Great Court had been situated on the highest point of the site. Those who saw the campus under water realised just how little good building land was left for future development.

![Figure 7.1: The Great Court, 1970](image)

Showing the tent community set up as part of the Moratorium movement opposing the Vietnam War

---

1 Fryer Library, UQFL479 PhS225.
The University Architect and the Master Plan

The University Architect throughout most of the decade was James Clayton Maccormick, who was 43 years old when he took up the position in October 1969. Maccormick had been principal architect with the Commonwealth Department of Works in Canberra, and had made his name with designs for the Australian pavilions for the world expositions in Montreal in 1967 and Osaka in 1970. He would remain at the University until November 1978, when he resigned to go into private practice.

Maccormick arrived at the University at an auspicious juncture. The new vice-chancellor, Zelman Cowen, took up his duties in 1970, determined to remedy the chronic overcrowding under which the University laboured. In May of the same year, the Co-ordinator General's Department, which had been responsible for all building work at St Lucia since the war, delegated authority for construction to the University. This significantly increased the size of the University Architect's office, with the appointment of a controller of works (managing a team of fifty staff), a projects manager and a cost clerk. Ultimately this structure proved unwieldy, and in 1974 it was decided (despite Maccormick's opposition) to transfer some of the University Architect's responsibilities to a newly created post of Director of Buildings and Grounds.

One of the recommendations of the 1969 Roberts report had been to "prepare a detailed master plan for the future development of the campus." Maccormick described the Roberts report as "a remarkable public relations document which contributed to breaking down some of the conservative attitudes which have plagued University planning for years." He particularly endorsed the suggestions for the pedestrianisation of Circular Drive, for erecting buildings in front of the Forgan Smith Building, and for the creation of courtyards of open spaces. Early in 1971, as a preliminary step, the University commissioned Wilbur Smith & Associates to report on traffic and parking conditions at the University, then late in 1971 Maccormick was able to set up a team to work on the development of a master plan. It was eventually published as two site planning reports in March and April 1972.

The first of these reports was an extensive collection of data and observations on the current state of the campus. The second report was the more interesting, as it laid out preferred alternatives for the rectification of existing problems and for the future development of the

---

4 Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 3 December 1974, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
6 "New Kind of Campus Revolution," 11.
7 Ibid., 12.
The "master plan," as it was generally called, was an impressive and well thought-out document, but it contained some controversial suggestions. By the time of its publication the University had already accepted that the Front Lawn was too valuable a building site to remain undeveloped, and the recommendations for development in this area were not generally disputed. The most contentious issues concerned traffic and parking. In the Brisbane of 1972 the notion of a pedestrianised campus, with car parking restricted to peripheral areas and hidden from view by landscaping or in multilevel parking stations, was simply too futuristic. There were probably many who shared the distaste of one senior academic for "the acres of shining cars we see everywhere," but there were few who were prepared to renounce their inalienable right as Australians to park their cars wherever they could find a space to do so.

As a result there was widespread opposition on campus to these aspects of the plan. In November 1972 the Senate accepted the plan, with some revisions, but noted that "construction of multi-storey parking buildings will be delayed as long as possible," and pressed the need for improved public transport to the campus. The recommendations for pedestrianisation were not ignored, but it would be another five years before the University would proceed tentatively in that direction.

The final element in the planning process was a comprehensive landscaping plan for the campus. This was prepared by the firm of Buchan, Laird and Buchan and published in August 1975. Another visionary document, it did not attract as much controversy as the 1972 plan, and the Senate finally accepted it "in principle" in May 1977. Few of its recommendations were ever implemented.

The North Precinct

The first building project to break the taboo on the development of the Front Lawn was the Central Library. With the existing Library Building unable to cope with the expansion in the book stock and the rapidly growing number of readers, there was urgent need for a new building in a central location. In August 1969 the Australian Universities Commission provided two million dollars for the first stage of this project, and in his report of November that year Professor Roberts envisaged the Central Library as consisting of two separate and

---

10 Dorothy Hill, "A Personal View of This University's History," University News (University of Queensland), no. 66 (June 2, 1976): 3.
11 Senate Minutes, 22 November 1972, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
12 "University of Queensland Landscape Masterplan" (report, Buchan, Laird & Buchan, August 29, 1975). Hereafter cited as "Landscape Masterplan."
contrasting buildings, similar to the Fisher Library at the University of Sydney, and sited on the Front Lawn immediately north of the existing Library Building.\textsuperscript{14}

The Library Committee were opposed to Roberts' plan. They wanted a large building, to allow for future expansion of the Library, and they believed that a building in the location suggested by Roberts "could not be built above a certain height because of aesthetic considerations."\textsuperscript{15} However they were overruled, and in March 1970 the Senate approved the site at the eastern end of the Main Building but noted that the plan should allow for "future horizontal expansion" and need not adopt Roberts' concept of two buildings of differing height.\textsuperscript{16}

When the project was awarded to the Brisbane architect Robin Gibson, he found an elegant solution in a low, simple, rectangular building, which could be divided into four equal parts and constructed piecemeal. The cladding would be done in a pre-cast concrete, which on two sides would be non-structural and detachable, to allow for later expansion. The first section to be built would be the south-west corner (Central Library Stage 1). The Senate approved these plans in May 1970, construction began the following year, and the building was opened at the beginning of 1973.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure72.png}
\caption{Central Library (Stage 1)}
\end{figure}

Designed by Robin Gibson and here viewed from the Duhig Building. The further stages were never constructed.

\textsuperscript{14} Roberts, "University of Queensland: Observations," 36-37.
\textsuperscript{15} Senate Minutes, 12 March 1970, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Fryer Library, UQFL466 AG/P/20.
Gibson’s design for the exterior of the Central Library employed a series of vertical concrete panels, separated by narrow windows. As he explained it, "we took the rhythm which is in the Forgan Smith windows and we echoed this rhythm in this library façade." Following Roberts’ idea of using courtyards to link buildings, Gibson’s design provided for a lower court linking the Central Library to the original Library Building (now renamed the Duhig Building). However this was only partially successful because of the continued existence of the busy Circular Drive on the eastern side of this space.

His upper courtyard was more successful. This linked the main entrance of the Central Library to the Arts Entrance of the Forgan Smith Building. For the walls of the Central Library, Gibson had chosen a light aggregate, coloured to be in sympathy with the freestone of the Great Court buildings. In the upper courtyard he used the same concrete as a paving panel "which ran across and joined the existing Forgan Smith building so that the buildings were completely in dialogue." For this area he was fortunate to obtain a fountain created in memory of the former Vice-Chancellor, Sir Fred Schonell, and designed by the sculptor Inge King. This fountain had originally been intended to stand at the eastern end of the Great Court, but its relocation to Gibson's upper courtyard created an attractive piazza-like space.

![Figure 7.3: Schonell Fountain and front entrance to Central Library](image)

The fountain was designed and constructed by Inge King. The Arts Entrance of the Forgan Smith Building is just out of sight to the left.

---

19 Ibid.
20 *Courier Mail*, August 23, 1971, 8.
21 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AF/P/11.
Vice-Chancellor Cowen was so pleased with Gibson’s design for the Central Library that he asked him to prepare a design for the long-delayed Great Hall. It was the question of funding which had foiled all previous attempts to construct this building, and with only $600,000 available, Gibson had to work within a tight budget. Roberts had suggested siting the Great Hall on the western side of the Front Lawn, parallel to the Forgan Smith Building and close to the Agriculture and Entomology (Hartley Teakle) Building. He envisaged a new Law School between the Forgan Smith Building and the Great Hall, at right angles to both, with a courtyard to the west.

Maccormick preferred to locate the Great Hall closer to the Forgan Smith Building, balancing the Central Library at the other end. Roberts was vehemently opposed to this suggestion, believing that in such a site the Great Hall would be architecturally overwhelmed by the Forgan Smith Building. Vice-Chancellor Cowen reminded him that the available funds would not provide for “a 'great' hall in the true sense of the word,” so the hall would inevitably be subordinate to the existing buildings, and Cowen himself favoured a location close to the Forgan Smith Building. This recommendation was approved by the Senate in July 1970, but Roberts would continue to oppose it until he left the University in 1972. By the time construction began late in 1971, it had been decided to name the building after the donors of the St Lucia site, and the Mayne Hall was completed at the same time as the Central Library, for the beginning of the 1973 academic year.

Figure 7.4: The Mayne Hall in 1977
Designed by Robin Gibson

25 Senate Minutes, 2 July 1970, UQ Archives, UQA S2.
26 UQ Archives, S909 p2160b.
The sandblasted ribbed concrete monoliths of the northern wall of the Hall were, like the cladding of the Central Library, coloured so as to have an affinity with the freestone of the Forgan Smith Building.

The vertical elements [of the northern wall] are intended … to reflect the strength and shape of the main tower in the Forgan Smith Building. The architect sees a dialogue between this tower and the Hall, which he likens to the relationship between a Norman castle and its keep.27

On the southern side of the Hall a large glazed wall gave a fine view of the Forgan Smith Building, across the Front Drive, lined with parked cars. Gibson hoped that a reflecting pool would be built between the two buildings,28 but nothing more than a grassed area eventuated once the Front Drive was closed at its western end. An essential part of Gibson's vision was the pedestrian mall envisaged in the master plan, which would replace the Front Drive and link the Mayne Hall to the Central Library and the Forgan Smith Building. As he put it:

The hall has been incorporated in the overall plan so as to be associated with the movement of people entering the university along the pedestrian mall. The Biological Sciences Library presently being constructed adjacent to the western end of Mayne Hall will form the visual and physical stop at the western end of the mall.29

The Biological Sciences Library, also designed by Gibson, and in a style similar to that of the Central Library, was opened at the beginning of 1976. But the pedestrian mall remained an architect's dream.

![Figure 7.5: Master Plan sketch for the western end of the Pedestrian Mall](image)

---

28 Ibid.
30 "Site Planning Report 2," facing p. 36.
Even when these buildings were a \textit{fait accompli} and an established part of campus life, they remained contentious. Two later architectural historians were not alone in regarding them as "pompous and clumsy additions in front of the Forgan Smith Building."\textsuperscript{31}

As already noted, the issue of traffic and parking was the most contentious aspect of the master plan. For the area north of the Forgan Smith Building the plan recommended both a pedestrian mall along the front of the building and, at a lower level, a ceremonial plaza in the area between the Mayne Hall and the Central Library. Vehicular access would be via an axial road which would extend from the riverside (Sir William MacGregor Drive), following an imaginary line at right-angles to the Forgan Smith Building and centred on the Tower. It would provide a "superlative view of the University at a distance of 600 yards."\textsuperscript{32} Circular Drive would be completely pedestrianised. An underground car park beneath the Ceremonial Court was also suggested as a desirable feature.

![Master Plan model for the North Precinct](image)

\textbf{Figure 7.6: Master Plan model for the North Precinct}\textsuperscript{33}

Given the level of opposition to the master plan, it seemed unlikely that this new road layout would be implemented in the immediate future. However it was necessary to provide some form of vehicular access to the front of the Forgan Smith Building, because the eastern end of Front Drive had been closed when work began on the Central Library in 1971, and the

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ibid., 31.
  \item Ibid., facing p. 35.
\end{itemize}
western end was closed in 1974, when construction began on the Biological Sciences Library. As a temporary expedient, a new access road was constructed across the Front Lawn from Circular Drive, following the western side of the Central Library and joining what remained of Front Drive. In 1976 the Front Lawn was further sacrificed to add a turning loop (with kerbside parking). This "temporary" access road has proved more durable than the grand designs of the master plan; in 1980 it was renamed University Drive.

It has also proved more durable than the Arcadian visions of the 1975 landscape masterplan. The latter replaced the straight axial road with a curvilinear approach road. It envisaged a small lake ("Mill Pond") at approximately the intersection of Mill Road and Circular Drive. A water feature between the Central Library and the Mayne Hall would be linked by a series of cascades to this lake. 34

Other Developments

In 1971 the Professor of Regional and Town Planning, Lewis Keeble, described the St Lucia campus in the following terms:

It is probably one of the most beautiful university sites in the world. The original groups of buildings, although old-fashioned, are quite nice and simple … But the new buildings have no relationship to each other. 35

Unfortunately the original buildings were now starting to show their age. When Cowen assumed the vice-chancellorship in 1970, he commented that

behind the impressive façade of our Main Building there are slum conditions; there is obsolescence and serious inadequacy … Enormous classes with hundreds of students packed into ill-ventilated lecture theatres … 36

In 1976 one senior academic, who had known the University since it was based at George Street, regretted the deterioration in the Great Court buildings:

Expediency always seems to have deplorable effects on the claims of proportion, as has been so often so unfortunately shown in the original St. Lucia buildings which had beautifully proportioned rooms but which have been subdivided, ruining all the serenity the original architects had striven for. 37

However there were other academics who criticised the original design of the buildings, and found it difficult to teach in the lecture theatres, with their "narrow seating" so heavily raked

34 "Landscape Masterplan," 37-38.
35 *Sunday Australian*, November 28, 1971, 8B.
36 *Courier Mail*, April 30, 1970, 12.
as to be "almost vertical." Modification of the buildings continued in an often haphazard manner: the 1972 master plan complained of the "clutter of many roofscapes." 

Overcrowding continued to be a problem, despite a spate of new building in the early years of the decade. However as enrolments levelled out in the later years, Maccormick optimistically predicted that student numbers would probably now remain around the current figure of 20,000.

In the Forgan Smith Building the accommodation problem eased after the opening of the Michie Building in 1972. However the Law School remained an area of concern, and in particular the Law Library, located at the western end of the upper floor, was the object of frequent complaints. In 1970 a mezzanine was inserted into the Law Library: a now familiar

---

41 *Courier Mail*, March 25, 1977, 7.
means of trying to squeeze extra space out of Hennessy's generously proportioned rooms. When the Thatcher Library (the external students' library) moved to the Duhig Building in 1973, the Law Library gained some space for expansion, but the problems remained. Significant improvement had to wait until 1979 when the Law Library expanded into the ground floor of the Forgan Smith Building, almost doubling in size.\footnote{University of Queensland Library, Annual Report of the University Librarian, 1979: 22.}

The Darnell Art Gallery in the central foyer on the upper floor of the Forgan Smith Building was also running into difficulties. This space was completely lacking in security or supervision, an unsatisfactory situation which was highlighted in 1970 when a painting was vandalised,\footnote{\textit{Courier Mail}, September 12, 1970, 3.} and again in 1972 when a painting was stolen.\footnote{Ibid., April 6, 1972, 1.} When the Architecture Department vacated the Tower upon completion of the new Architecture/Music Building (later named the Zelman Cowen Building), the University decided to convert the upper three floors of the Tower into a new University Art Museum.

This awkward space, originally designed as a bell-tower, and later converted into unsatisfactory teaching rooms and offices, challenged Maccormick and his team. The University Architect reported that "the most difficult design operation was the simplification of internal spaces, which were complex with many changes in the planes of walls and ceilings."\footnote{University News (University of Queensland), no. 68 (June 16, 1976): 3.} However the end result was a very attractive gallery, extending over two floors with an internal stairway, and an additional floor for offices and teaching spaces.\footnote{Nancy Underhill, "University Art Museum, St Lucia, Queensland," \textit{Art and Australia} 15 (June 1978): 366-73.}

When planning for the new Central Library began, the existing Library Building was renamed the Duhig Building, in honour of the Catholic Archbishop who had played an important, if controversial, role in the establishment of the St Lucia campus.\footnote{See chapter 3.} Once the Central Library was opened at the beginning of 1973, work began on refurbishing the Duhig Building to turn it into an Undergraduate Library, with the lower ground floor assigned to the Thatcher Library, which served the needs of external students.

The University Librarian, Derek Fielding, was just as critical of Hennessy's design for this building as his predecessor had been. Fielding's comment on Hennessy's monumental reading room was that "we were unable to afford the carpet on this floor which would have lifted the environment by covering the hospital waiting room rubber tiles and warming the shire council-chamber marble."\footnote{Derek Fielding, "The University of Queensland's Undergraduate Library: Cotton Purse out of Sow's Ear," \textit{Australian Academic and Research Libraries} 5, no. 2 (1974): 61-2.} The foyer on the lower ground floor, which was designed as the main entrance to the Library Building, had been seen as a significant space by both Hennessy and Birrell. However those using this entrance were now confronted with a large blank partition wall, with a small locked door giving access to the Thatcher Library: a sad fate for
Hennessy's grand foyer. On the upper levels, the weakness of the structure continued to restrict the use which could be made of these floors.

The 1972 master plan noted that "the completion of the Old Chemistry [Steele] building would be aesthetically desirable."49 When the new Chemistry Building opened in 1971, the Steele Building was refurbished to provide expansion for the Geology Department, located in the adjacent Richards Building, and also to allow the Pharmacy Department to relocate from George Street. This finally completed the transfer of the University of Queensland to St Lucia, almost forty years after the State Government had first announced its intention to develop the new campus there. The firm of Walduck and Ucinski were appointed project architects for the Steele Building refurbishment,50 and also for a second phase of alterations in 1973.

Maccormick's plan for the Alumni Court, to be located between the Physics (Parnell) and the Biological Sciences (Goddard) Buildings, was accepted in May 1970.51 One of the more unusual features of the plan was a curved perimeter wall on the south-western side, as a shield from westerly winds. The planned water feature did not eventuate and, in the face of opposition from the Physics Department, the removal of the blockhouse-like Radon Laboratory would have to wait for several more decades.52 The Alumni Court was opened in 1971. The 1975 landscape master plan identified the Alumni Court as a major community area, once Circular Drive could be closed.53

![Image of James Maccormick and his model for the Alumni Court, 1970](image)

**Figure 7.8: James Maccormick and his model for the Alumni Court, 1970**54

---

49 “Site Planning Report 1,” section 3.04.04.
51 *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), May 24, 1970, 6.
53 "Landscape Masterplan," 46.
54 Fryer Library, UQFL466 AK/P/163.
The area between the Physics (Parnell) and Geology (Richards) Buildings was another area in need of further development. A donation from Mrs May Hancock allowed the construction of a fountain here in 1975, to a design by Maccormick, inspired by the Sibelius Monument in Helsinki. Paving and landscaping completed the project and the result was an intimate and restful courtyard.\textsuperscript{55}

In the early years of the decade, the ugly exterior of the Michie Building was a constant reminder of the State Government’s unfulfilled promise to pay for the freestone cladding of this, the last of the buildings delimiting the Great Court. In the tense Queensland political climate of the 1970s the University was not viewed favourably by the conservative Bjelke Petersen government, which was reluctant to provide the two million dollars which would be required. Eventually, in 1974, the State Government gave the go-ahead for the project.\textsuperscript{56} This was somewhat in the nature of a parting gift, as the Commonwealth Government had recently assumed full responsibility for university funding. When it was finally completed in 1978, the cladding added distinct vertical lines to the façade and some rather repetitive sculptural decoration in the spandrel panels. The only other adornment was an inscription over the front entrance consisting of a quotation from Alexander Pope, “All Our Knowledge is Ourselves to Know.”

The only remaining gap in the cloisters was the area between the Goddard and Michie Buildings, where the service road entered the Great Court. In 1973 Martin Conrad was instructed to prepare plans for the completion of the cloisters here, with a double entrance.\textsuperscript{57} When it was announced in 1974 that the State Government would provide funding to complete the freestone cladding of the Great Court, this project gained a new lease of life. For years there had been calls to appoint a stone carver to replace Muller and continue his work, and in 1976 the University organised a limited competition to choose a sculptor to produce grotesques to be erected on the final section of the cloister. The competition was won by Rhyl Shepherd (later Hinwood), who as a schoolgirl had watched Muller carving the column capitals in the Great Court.\textsuperscript{58} She was commissioned to produce a total of eight grotesques, and her work was so widely admired that she would continue working on sculptural adornments to the Great Court for many years to come.

\textsuperscript{55} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 29 July 1974, UQ Archives, UQA S15; Susan Pechey, \textit{Impressions of the University of Queensland: A Collection of Drawings by Christopher McVinish} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 33-34.
\textsuperscript{56} Malcolm I. Thomis, \textit{A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland’s First Seventy-Five Years} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), 355.
\textsuperscript{57} Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 17 September 1973, UQ Archives, UQA S15.
Finally in March 1979 the work was finished and the Great Court was now complete: it had taken more than forty years to realise Hennessy's vision. On August 4 a ceremony was held in the Great Court itself to mark this milestone. An exhibition relating to the history of the Great Court was mounted in the former Darnell Gallery on the first floor of the Forgan Smith Building, and a twenty-nine page Guide to the Great Court was published by the University. These were all significant steps in fostering wider awareness of the heritage value of the complex.

Throughout the 1970s the Great Court itself changed little. The hard underlying Brisbane tuff had always challenged the gardeners, and pedestrians wore their own paths into the lawn. The 1972 master plan was very critical of this area: "Vastness of space forbidding. No focal points. No shade. Very little movement or activity." The proposed solution was to import topsoil and form it into mounds to create intimate spaces and promote tree growth. A central feature, such as a fountain, would serve as a focal point.

---

60 "Site Planning Report 1," section 3.03.13.
61 "Site Planning Report 2," 41-44.
As an alternative, the master plan also raised the possibility of constructing a new building in the Great Court. A building of suitable size and shape would divide the area into an East Court and a West Court, and if built on raised columns would not impede pedestrian traffic.\footnote{Ibid., facing p. 44.}

The Buildings and Grounds Committee were generally unfavourable to any "remoulding" of the ground in the Great Court, although they accepted that further plantings were required. The majority of the committee were opposed to the construction of buildings in the Great Court, and the Senate were unanimous in their agreement on this point.\footnote{Ibid., 45–46.}

Three years later, the authors of the 1975 landscape masterplan described the Great Court as "a most uncomfortable space … a depressed, depressing space used by few."\footnote{Buildings and Grounds Committee, Minutes, 6 April 1972, UQ Archives, UQA S15; Senate Minutes, 22 November 1972, UQ Archives, UQA S2.} Here again the perceived solution was to subdivide the area "to provide more comprehensible spaces for people to enjoy," and to create "strong new focal points" and a fountain.\footnote{"Landscape Masterplan," 7.} None of these recommendations was implemented, but slow progress was made with tree planting, and a

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{great-court-landscaping-proposal-1972-master-plan.pdf}
\caption{Great Court landscaping proposal, 1972 master plan\footnote{Ibid., 34-35.}}
\end{figure}
surfaced driveway of pre-cast concrete squares was finally built, parallel to the cloisters, to replace the old unsealed delivery road.

The approach to the Great Court from Circular Drive became a little safer and quieter in June 1971, when a system of one-way traffic was introduced.67 The 1972 master plan recommended that most of Circular Drive be closed,68 and the 1975 landscape masterplan recommended that Circular Drive become Circular Walk, the "Main Street" of the campus.69 These proposals were controversial, and it was not until the beginning of 1978 that trial closures of the roadway in front of the Union complex and between the Hawken Building and Physics Annexe were introduced.70 These closures remained provisional for almost two years, until the Senate finally approved permanent closure in September 1979, which allowed the closed sections to be properly landscaped.71 It was a small victory for the planners.

![Figure 7.11: St Lucia campus under floodwater, January 1974](image)

This photograph demonstrates why the Great Court buildings were located where they are, and also the attractiveness of the courtyard and Front Lawn as potential building sites.

67 *Courier Mail*, June 1, 1971, 16.
69 "Landscape Masterplan," 45-46.
71 Ibid., no. 129 (June 6, 1979): 1.
8. THE 1980s

The 1980s were in some respects a lost decade at the University of Queensland. Government funding was very limited, especially during the early years, and enrolments remained static, at around 18,000 students. Enrolments actually fell in 1987, when the Federal Government took the first steps towards re-introduction of fees. When, in 1981, construction work commenced on stage two of the Social Sciences Building (later named the McElwain Building), the project was hailed as the first major new building at the University since 1975, but it did not mark the beginning of a new era of development.

These were years of mend and make-do. Lectures were still overcrowded, but the University could offer nothing more than refurbishment of some of the older lecture theatres. In 1986 it was estimated that there was a $13.7 million backlog of rehabilitation and maintenance work on buildings at the University of Queensland.

There was however some progress in the Great Court. New plantings of trees proved successful and, as these developed, they established new vistas and reduced the vast space to a more human scale. Pedestrianisation of the former Circular Drive was continued in 1983 with the closure of the roadway between the newly extended Priestley Building and the Alumni Court. The very name "Circular Drive" was abandoned in 1980, and the residual sections of roadway received new names. By 1989 it could justly be claimed that the campus now possessed "a profusion of greenery and shaded spaces, such as the Alumni Court." To enhance the buildings, Rhyl Hinwood carved further grotesques, and she completed over one hundred heraldic shields for the cloister capitals. In 1989 she sculpted the figures of Darwin and Mendel which flank the entrance to the Goddard Building; this was the first large-scale sculptural project at St Lucia since Muller's death in 1953.

The lack of funding for new buildings meant that the University was forced to revert to the erection of temporary buildings. One such structure was a hut erected for the Computer Science Department between the Physics Annexe and the Bookshop. This temporary building became much more permanent in 1984 when the Senate approved its refurbishment to provide premises for the Uni Credit Union.

In 1988 the situation began to change for the better. After years of neglect, the Federal Government decided that higher education should become a growth area, and it launched the

---

2 Sunday Mail (Brisbane), February 5, 1984, 5.
3 Australian, April 16, 1986, 15.
5 Ibid., no. 143 (March 12, 1980): 2.
6 "The University of Queensland, St. Lucia Campus, Site Development Plan 1989" (report, Planning Working Party of the University of Queensland, October 19, 1989), 48. Hereafter cited as "Site Development Plan 1989."
7 University News (University of Queensland), no. 308 (May 17, 1989): 1, 6.
8 Ibid., no. 230 (October 19, 1984): 11.
so-called "Dawkins Reforms" which in 1990 would lead to the amalgamation of the University of Queensland and the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton. By 1989 the University was experiencing a building boom, with the largest capital works program since the early 1970s.

The 1989 Site Development Plan

The 1972 master plan for the campus had been written at a time of expansion, and the aim of the plan had been to ensure that development occurred in a managed and rational manner. As we have seen, expansion came to an end in 1975. For a decade and more thereafter, new development was rare and ad hoc. Master plans were a luxury in an era of retrenchment. However with the much improved budgetary position after 1988, the University administration correctly foresaw another surge of development, and it was concerned to maintain control of this process. A Planning Working Party was set up, convened by Greg Berkman, who in 1978 had replaced James Maccormick as University Architect. The working party presented their report on October 19, 1989 and it was approved by the University Senate on October 30.

As with the 1972 master plan, the most controversial issue proved to be the question of traffic and parking. The concept of multi-storey car parks, which had seemed futuristic in 1972, was no longer unthinkable in 1989. However the only means of paying for the construction of these buildings was to charge for parking on campus, and this suggestion was anathema to much of the University community. The Senate deferred decision on this question pending further investigation, but it was an idea whose time had finally come.

With regard to the Great Court, there was nothing controversial in the 1989 site development plan. The Great Court, the Alumni Court and the forecourt on the western side of the Michie

---

9 Photographer: Michael Keniger.
Building (in front of the Biological Sciences Library) were all identified as areas of special environmental or cultural value which should be preserved. The upward extension of the western end of the Forgan Smith Building was already in progress when the report was prepared; other areas for new development were identified in the still unbuilt south-east corner of the Steele Building, and in the spaces immediately behind the Parnell and Richards Buildings. The Bookshop was considered to have "redevelopment potential." It must have been reassuring to traditionalists that one of the recommendations of the 1989 plan was that "infill projects and extensions [should] relate to existing buildings."

One interesting feature of the plan was the suggestion to create covered walkways to connect the buildings on campus. Hennessy had seen the need for such walkways in Brisbane's subtropical climate, and had provided a cloister to link together all the Great Court buildings, but there were few such structures outside the Great Court. The 1989 site development plan proposed a network of covered walkways radiating out from the Great Court. These were never constructed; perhaps aesthetic considerations have trumped the obvious practical advantages of such a scheme.

The 1989 site development plan was very concerned with the frontal aspect of the University:

The façade of Forgan Smith Building was originally intended as the formal or ceremonial front, and its axis was the visual and symbolic approach to the campus. This should now be reinforced in planning, road pattern and landscaping, so that this façade is clearly identified as the formal entrance to the University.

The 1972 master plan and the 1975 landscape master plan had recommended a driveway to approach this façade from the proposed outer ring road along Sir William Macgregor Drive. In the intervening years, the outer ring road had been abandoned in favour of an inner ring road along Blair Drive and College Road, but the 1989 plan still advocated the need for "a broad, landscaped entrance boulevarde." The report's authors wrestled with the problem presented by the Front Lawn:

The major unresolved item of the campus landscape remains the axial area between the Forgan Smith Building and the river. Here the open park landscape competes with conflicting roadway systems unrelated to the geometry of the axis … A bold stroke is needed to resolve this important entrance to the University.

---

10 “Site Development Plan 1989,” 46.
11 Ibid., 54.
12 Ibid., 8.
13 Ibid., 44.
14 Ibid., 35.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 49.
This was a matter which required "more detailed study." The plan provided no solutions, apart from the rather bizarre suggestion that the entrance to the Forgan Smith Building "be considered as a future public transport access point."

The Law School Extension

In the Great Court complex, the only visible effect of the 1989 building boom was the extension and refurbishment of the western half of the Forgan Smith Building to provide additional accommodation for the Law School. In earlier years, various proposals for a new Law School building had been made, but these had come to nothing, and the University had finally taken the radical step of extending the existing building upwards. As we have seen, proposals to add another floor to the Forgan Smith Building had been seriously considered in the past, taking advantage of the existing parapet to partially hide the new structure.

![Cross-section of the Law School refurbishment, 1989](image)

Architect for this award-winning project was Robert Riddel, who would go on to become a leading authority on heritage conservation. He inserted an additional floor above the ceiling

---

17 Ibid., 5.
18 Ibid., 37.
19 This is illustrated in Drinan’s perspective drawing of the Library extension: see Figure 6.4.
20 University News (University of Queensland), no. 304 (March 22, 1989): 3.
of the upper level, and erected a steel portal frame to carry the low walls and mansard roof of the new third level. The original parapets made the extension almost invisible from below and it had minimal impact on the roof line of the Forgan Smith Building, while increasing the floor space of the Law School by over 50%. The two lower levels had been extensively modified since their original construction, and the restoration and reinstatement of the interiors on these levels was also undertaken. The refurbished building was opened in February 1990.

9. THE 1990s

The 1990s were years of expansion at the University of Queensland. Student numbers were increasing, and in its 1990 budget the Federal Government unveiled plans for major growth in postgraduate teaching and research. In 1992 research expenditure at the University exceeded $100 million, an unprecedented sum.¹

The building boom which had begun in 1989 continued unabated, in an attempt to cope with the rapid expansion in teaching and research activity. In August 1991 it was reported that more than $41 million of building projects were underway at St Lucia and other sites.²

A significant milestone was reached in 1990 when the National Trust of Queensland added the Great Court to its register of places worthy of preservation as part of the national heritage.³ However some years later, when the Queensland Heritage Council proposed that both the Great Court complex and adjacent areas of the Front Lawn be added to the Queensland Heritage Register, the University objected, fearing that this would unduly restrict possible further building activity.⁴ The listing was confirmed in 2002 and currently covers the area bounded by the former Circular Drive and the former Front Drive, plus the Front Lawn, including the buildings located immediately in front of the Forgan Smith Building.

Throughout this decade, the Great Court buildings experienced regular, and often piecemeal, refurbishment. One of the most significant of these projects took place in the Steele Building, where the firm of Phillips Smith Conwell found an imaginative way of repurposing Hennessy's two tall, steeply raked lecture theatres to create new theatres on two levels. When these new spaces opened in 1995, they contained the latest electronic teaching aids.

The sculptor Rhyl Hinwood continued to embellish the Great Court with carvings. In recognition of her outstanding work, the University asked her to carve a grotesque of herself, to be mounted on the wall of the Goddard Building. This was completed in 1993.⁵ In 1995 the Senate authorised further work on the friezes on the Forgan Smith Tower, which had been neglected since Muller's death. Hinwood hoped to create a large frieze on the theme of knowledge, but it was never executed.⁶

In the immediate vicinity of the Great Court, the Bookshop opened an outdoor eating area named Wordsmiths Café in 1994. This was the precursor of several such developments around the campus and demonstrated a new way of utilising the University's many attractive open spaces. At Wordsmiths Café Hinwood was able to make further contributions to the

¹ *University News (University of Queensland)*, no. 383 (November 10, 1993): 15.
³ Ibid., no. 335 (November 14, 1990): 15.
⁵ *University News (University of Queensland)*, no. 372 (April 21, 1993): 16.
beautification of the campus by carving literary themes into blocks of sandstone set into the retaining walls around the café.\textsuperscript{7}

Figure 9.1: Plan for the refurbishment of the Steele Building lecture theatres\textsuperscript{8}
Designed by Phillips Smith Conwell

The 1996 Site Development Plan

In 1996 John Hay was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University. His influence on the architectural development of the campus during the ensuing twelve years would prove to be extremely significant. No previous Vice-Chancellor was as successful as Hay would be in attracting funding for new buildings, and none, with the possible exception of Story, took so personal an interest in the design of those buildings.

Soon after arriving at St Lucia, Hay wrote that

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., no. 422 (May 22, 1996): 8-9.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{B+G News} (University of Queensland, Buildings and Grounds Division), no. 7 (September 16, 1994): 3.
The St Lucia campus has, at its centre, an Australian icon: the Great Court and the buildings that surround it … We have obligations to the present and to posterity to ensure that the built environment of the St Lucia campus is coherently and systematically enhanced.\(^9\)

The Senate approved Hay's proposal to develop a strategic plan for the St Lucia campus, and work soon commenced on a new site development plan. The final document was largely the work of the University's Site Planner, Ross Meakin. It was completed in November 1996.

The 1972 site planning report and the 1975 landscape masterplan had been very dismissive of the Great Court. By contrast, the 1996 site development plan refers to it as "the 'green' heart of the campus."\(^\text{10}\) This change in attitude is striking. It clearly reflects the transformation achieved by tree plantings over the previous quarter of a century, but it probably also reflects an awareness that open space on campus was becoming precious.

The 1996 plan repeatedly refers to the Great Court complex as part of the "hill town" core of the campus. The "hill town" image is perhaps a little fanciful, but it was an attempt to make sense of the symbolic role of the Great Court within the University as a whole. As a marketing ploy it had obvious appeal and made it easier to argue the need to "preserve the Great Court as the Campus Heart"\(^\text{11}\) and to ensure that all new buildings "shall have a contextual relationship with the Great Court."\(^\text{12}\)

The old Circular Drive was now referred to as "the main pedestrian street" which defined the central core of the campus. This was where central activities common to all staff and students should be concentrated.\(^\text{13}\) This artery was also identified as the backbone of the pedestrian circulation system and it was recommended that "pedestrianisation of open space shall be a priority."\(^\text{14}\)

We have seen that the authors of the 1989 site development plan wrestled with the problems presented by the main northern approach to the Forgan Smith Building. This question remained a major issue in the 1996 plan. As always, it was also of concern to the wider University community, and at the Senate meeting on June 4, 1998, an amendment to the plan was adopted which specified that the area between Mayne Hall and the Central Library, and from the sports oval leading up to the front of the Forgan Smith Building, "be preserved in perpetuity as civic space." At the same time, proposed new building sites east of the Hartley Teakle Building and west of the Colin Clark Building were modified.\(^\text{15}\)

---

\(^\text{10}\) "The University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, Site Development Plan 1996" (report, Planning Services Section, Property and Facilities Division, University of Queensland, November 1996, published 1999), 82.
\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., 10.
\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., 9.
\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 50.
\(^\text{15}\) University News (University of Queensland), no. 458 (June 14, 1998): 15.
The revised site development plan, as published in 1999, contains a concept plan for the St Lucia campus front which includes an avenue following the axial line passing through the Tower, with landscaping and a pool in front of the Tower. New building sites are identified on the northern section of the Front Lawn, but these are set back so that they would not impede the view of the Tower.

Figure 9.2: Detail of 1996 concept plan for St Lucia Campus front

The Library Refurbishment

Although all the buildings of the Great Court were subject to some degree of refurbishment during this decade, it was only the Duhig Building which underwent complete internal reconstruction. It had become obvious that the long awaited extension of the Central Library was unlikely to be realised, so it was decided instead to combine and rationalise the services provided in the Central Library and Duhig Buildings.

16 "University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, Site Development Plan 1996," 98.
In 1996 the University allocated $9.8 million for the refurbishment of the two buildings and planning began in earnest. The contract for the design was awarded to Wilson Architects. It was Blair Wilson, principal architect in this firm, who originally suggested that the two buildings be combined by constructing a link between them,\(^{17}\) and his son, Hamilton Wilson, was given responsibility for the project. For Hamilton Wilson this proved to be career-changing and it led to many further commissions at the University of Queensland and elsewhere.\(^ {18}\) It is interesting to remember that his grandfather, R. Martin Wilson, had prepared the first plan for the development of the St Lucia site.\(^ {19}\)

Wilson's design did not call for any major change to the façade of the Duhig Building, except for the construction of the Link building, a low structure which ran from the north-west side of the lower ground floor across to the south-east corner of the Central Library. Because of the heritage value of both the Duhig Building and the adjacent Forgan Smith Building, this new structure had to be discreet and of low profile, to the point where it appears underground when approached from the west. On the eastern side it is partly obscured by vegetation.

![Figure 9.3: Aerial view of the Library Link Building, July 1998](image)

After completion of the refurbishment in 1998, the Duhig Building (henceforth referred to as the Duhig Tower) was effectively no longer a building in its own right, but part of a larger complex. For years after the refurbishment, it was not uncommon for confused readers to circle the former Central Library building (now referred to as Duhig North), peering through

\(^{17}\) Janine Schmidt, "From the University Librarian," *Links* (University of Queensland Library), no. 496 (November 5, 1998): 8.


\(^{19}\) See Chapter 2.
windows, trying to find their way in, not realizing that the only public entrance was via the Duhig Tower, one hundred metres away. This problem was finally resolved in 2009 when the former south-east entrance to the Central Library was reopened and a new exit from the Link was created nearby.

The attractive courtyard which Robin Gibson had created between the Central Library and the Forgan Smith Building largely disappeared. The Schonell Fountain survived, but it was reconfigured to create a smaller water feature above the Link building.

Within the Duhig Building, Wilson revived Hennessy's grand vestibule inside the entrance to the lower ground floor, albeit in a more modern idiom, with a broad new staircase ascending to the cloister level. On that level, Hennessy's impressive reading room was converted to accommodate an information technology help desk, with surrounding reading areas and a training room. Most of the expensive Ulam marble was removed, surviving only on the pillars around the central octagon.

The attractive silky oak doors which Birrell had inserted as the main entrance from the cloisters now led into a café, which was also accessible from inside the Library. This café expands outwards, with open-air seating in the adjacent corner of the Great Court, and it enhances the perception of the Great Court as an enjoyable public open space.²⁰

Figure 9.4: Library Café, 2004

While the Duhig Building was being refurbished, the area between it and the Steele Building was being landscaped to a design by Ian Garton.\footnote{Lyn Griffiths and Alasdair McClintock, The McClintock Years, 1995-2008 (St Lucia: Property and Facilities Division, University of Queensland, 2008), 50.} This project was typical of a renewed awareness of the important role which the spaces between buildings played in creating the amenity of the campus.
The new millennium brought no abatement in the pace of development at the University of Queensland. Student numbers continued to rise and research activity mushroomed. In October 2009, the University of Queensland was ranked 41st in the world according to the university rankings compiled by the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, and in the following year the University celebrated the centenary of its foundation. Established in 1910 as a small, malnourished provincial university, it was now, even by global standards, a major educational and research institution.

Until his retirement at the end of 2007, Vice-Chancellor Hay maintained his very successful efforts to obtain funds for new development on campus, and he kept a close watch on the architectural quality of the new buildings. Professional recognition of these achievements came in November 2008, when the Queensland Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects awarded its President's Prize to the University of Queensland for the creation of a high-quality built environment at its campuses.1

**The Northern Frontage**

The long-running saga of the University's Great Hall entered a new phase with the opening of the UQ Centre in September 2002. The Mayne Hall had proved to be an underused asset, and the University had decided to build a larger and more flexible venue on the north-eastern fringe of the campus, designed by PDT Architects. This allowed the redevelopment of the Mayne Hall as an art museum, a project entrusted to Wilson Architects with a budget of $6.5 million.

Hamilton Wilson inserted a timber-battened structure inside the Mayne Hall to create two levels of gallery space. The exterior of the building was little altered, but a large water feature was constructed along the southern side of the building, facing the Forgan Smith Building and thus strengthening the relationship between these two important structures. When the James and Mary Emelia Mayne Centre was opened in April 2004, John Hay declared that "the architects … have created a new and distinctive visual identity while recognising the building's cultural history and the importance of preserving the outer envelope."2

---

2 Ibid., no. 534 (April 2004): 5. See also Margie Fraser, "Revelatory Make-Over," *Indesign*, no. 20 (February 2005): 80.
Wilson Architects were also entrusted with the 2005-2006 refurbishment and extension of the Biological Sciences Library, the building which closes the vista at the western end of the precinct in front of the Forgan Smith Building. As part of this project, the overhead walkway linking the Biological Sciences Library and the Michie Building was removed, allowing the construction of a new front entrance to the Michie Building and so giving the latter a more pronounced identity.

In 2007-2008 Wilson Architects sealed their ownership of this portion of the campus by developing a new landscape plan for the Forgan Smith forecourt (including the Front Lawn). This was a modest project, involving the removal of certain trees, with new plantings, seats and lighting.\(^3\)

A more significant development was the construction of a large new building on the eastern side of the Front Lawn, immediately north of the Duhig North Building (the former Central Library). The General Purpose North 4 Building (GPN4), designed by Richard Kirk Architects and ML Design, was completed in July 2008. The following year it was officially named the Sir Llew Edwards Building. This six-storey, V-shaped building opens onto the Front Lawn and is carefully sited so that it does not obscure the view of the façade of the Forgan Smith Building. Because of the slope of the land, it does not tower over the existing buildings of the northern frontage. The colouring of its cast concrete panels is reminiscent of the sandstone of the Great Court.\(^4\)

---

\(^3\) Lyn Griffiths and Alasdair McClintock, *The McClintock Years, 1995-2008* (St Lucia: Property and Facilities Division, University of Queensland, 2008), 55.

\(^4\) See also Andrew Leach, "GPN4: Richard Kirk Architects and ML Design's New Work at the University of Queensland," *Architecture Australia* 98, no. 4 (July/August 2009): 55-61.
The 2006 Site Development Plan

In 2006 the University's Site Development Plan was revised, and a final updated version was published in October 2010. It robustly defends the heritage value of the Great Court, with statements such as "the clarity of the original Great Court shall remain,"\(^5\) and "the preservation of the Great Court and surrounding sandstone buildings will contribute to the sense of place."\(^6\)

The precinct plan for the Great Court, as amended on September 27, 2010, is of interest. It indicates an approved building site north of the Mayne Centre (but sited so as not to obscure the view of the Forgan Smith façade) and proposes that University Drive be realigned to loop from Campbell Road to Mill Road, making room for a substantial pedestrian plaza in front of the Forgan Smith Building. It also provides for a western extension of the Physics Annexe, and suggests that ultimately the Bookshop should be removed to create an open space between the Steele and Richards Buildings.\(^7\)

---

\(^5\) “St Lucia Campus, Site Development Plan 2006” (report, Planning Section, Property and Facilities Division, University of Queensland, December 2006, revised October 2010), 2.

\(^6\) Ibid., 3.

\(^7\) Ibid., 41.
Other Developments

The 2006 Site Development Plan insisted that "the design of open space and landscape is now of major cultural and social significance as the campus continues developing as a high density environment." Major landscaping projects around the Great Court during this decade reflect this priority. The landscaping of the Forgan Smith forecourt has already been mentioned.

Significant redesign and landscaping of Chancellors Place, designed by Daryl Jackson Architects and Tract Consultants, took place in 2003-2004. This included a new ramp to enhance the vehicular entrance to the Great Court between the Michie and Goddard Buildings, which also serves as the main entrance to the Great Court for all those approaching from the bus station in Chancellors Place. Tract Landscape Architects were also responsible for the subsequent upgrade to the Michie Building forecourt.

---

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 32.
11 Ibid., 54.
The Alumni Court (between the Goddard and Parnell Buildings) underwent a major renovation in two stages between 2006 and 2008, to a design by Brannigan Architects. The second stage involved the conversion of the old Radon Laboratory (one of the original Hennessy buildings) into a pergola, while maintaining the original sandstone facing of the piers, upper walls and parapet.\textsuperscript{12}

![Figure 10.4: The former Radon Laboratory in the Alumni Court](image)

Refurbished to a design by Brannigan Architects

In the Great Court itself, the loss of six trees during a severe storm in January 2004 was a reminder of how difficult it is for trees to establish themselves in the tough substrate of Brisbane tuff.\textsuperscript{13}

Internally, all of the Great Court buildings continued to be subject to refurbishment. Mark Jones Architects designed a number of projects for the Arts Faculty in the eastern wing of the Forgan Smith Building, Level 3 of the Michie Building and, most significantly, in the Forgan Smith Tower, where the removal of the Art Museum to the new Mayne Centre allowed the redevelopment of the three upper floors into an Arts Faculty Research Precinct, which was opened in September 2005.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 52-3.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{UQ News}, no. 532 (February 2004): 9.

\textsuperscript{14} Griffiths and McClintock, \textit{The McClintock Years}, 66.
Mark Jones Architects were also responsible for projects in the Parnell Building, including new laboratories on Level 1 and a refurbished lecture theatre.\textsuperscript{15}

Phillips Smith Conwell were architects for refurbishment projects in the Steele and Richards Buildings in 2002. These included the redevelopment of an internal courtyard in the Steele Building to provide both attractive display spaces for the Geology Museum and to create a range of informal seating places, partly under cover and partly in the open air.\textsuperscript{16} In the Richards Building, prominent fire stairs were added at the rear of the building.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{steele_building_courtyard_sketch}
\caption{Figure 10.5: Perspective sketch of the refurbishment of the Steele Building courtyard}
\label{fig:steele_building_courtyard}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
Designed by Phillips Smith Conwell
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 64.
11. AFTERWORD

It would be an interesting study to understand the psyche and motivation of the architects who have worked on the St Lucia campus. The Great Court, a pastiche of Oxbridge and Smithsonian vernacular, is Disney-esque in that it gave us instant tradition. Walk through it and you can dream up gowns and dons. Each year, we even enact the *Chariots of Fire* race through the cloisters to perpetuate that fantasy.¹

Written in 2005, these comments by Alasdair McClintock, then Director of Properties and Facilities at the University, express clearly the ambivalence of much informed architectural opinion with regard to the Great Court. Recently one of the University’s historians has been rather more critical, finding "a hint of grand fascist-style architecture" in the Great Court buildings.² The latter comment cuts uncomfortably close to the bone, because in the 1930s Jack F. Hennessy was an admirer of Hitler's regime in Germany.³

However to most casual observers, the Great Court is simply a photogenic collection of heritage buildings and an attractive green space. To students, its shaded lawns are a popular place to meet and relax on fine days, and new graduates are keen to be photographed in their caps and gowns against the backdrop of its sandstone surfaces. To academics in the arts disciplines, an office in the hallowed Forgan Smith Building is much preferable to accommodation in one of the newer (and often more comfortable) buildings on campus.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 11.1: Lunchtime in the Great Court, August 2014*

¹ *Property Press* (Property and Facilities Division, University of Queensland), no. 50 (May 2005): 1.
² Clive Moore, *The Forgan Smith: History of a Building and its People at the University of Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld: School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland, 2010), 8.
Heritage listing of the Great Court complex by no means signifies that these buildings are museum pieces, to be kept unchanged for future generations. On the contrary, the University authorities are determined that they continue to earn their keep as functioning spaces for teaching and research, and recent developments in the precinct underline this point.

The new Global Change Institute, designed by the HASSELL practice (with Mark Roehrs as the principal architect and building designer) was opened in 2013. It snugly occupies the unfinished corner of the Steele Building, and the bronzed finish of its sunshades, combined with the generous use of freestone over the main entrance, makes it very sympathetic to the original Hennessy design.

![Figure 11.2: Global Change Institute, 2013](image)

The Learning Innovation Building, designed by Richard Kirk and reminiscent of his work on the Sir Llew Edwards Building, was completed in 2012. It replaced the ugly temporary buildings which for so long occupied the space between the Richards Building, the Physics Annexe and the Bookshop. In the same year, an internal reconstruction of the Michie Building, designed by Wilson Architects, created more attractive spaces on the entry levels of that building and extended the lower floors to the west. On the façade to Chancellors Place, Hamilton Wilson used aluminium composite panels in shades of brown and green to clad the extension. By thus replacing the granite and sandstone facing at the lower levels, he significantly altered the western elevation of the building, no doubt to the distress of traditionalists.

After all this new construction, the sole remaining development site within the immediate Great Court precinct is a small space at the western end of the Physics Annexe. This means that the only way to extend the Great Court complex now is to go upwards. Robert Riddel,
who designed the 1989-1990 addition of a third floor at the western end of the Forgan Smith Building, has developed a scheme for the upward extension of the buildings on the semi-circle. While not unobtrusive, it at least eliminates the infelicities of the current roovescapes and offers a uniform treatment of buildings which were originally designed to a uniform plan. The first fruits of Riddel's scheme, using a perforated copper screen to shield the new structure and a clerestory to achieve greater roof height in the central area, can be seen in the Goddard Building extension, which was completed in 2014.

Figure 11.3: Perspective views of proposed rooftop extensions, 2011
Designed by Riddel Architecture

The great unresolved issue in the design of the Great Court complex is the northern façade of the Forgan Smith Building. This has long been regarded as the "front entrance" to the University, and successive architects and planners have struggled to find a suitable configuration of this space. The Front Lawn is now widely considered as a sacred site. Although there are long-term plans to develop a section of the lawn to insert a building north of the Mayne Centre, such a structure would be sited so as to avoid obstruction of the view of the Forgan Smith façade.

But is the concept of a "front entrance" to the University still meaningful? With the opening of the CityCat ferry service in 1996 and the Eleanor Schonell Bridge and the Lakes Bus Station in 2006, it is clear that the majority of those approaching the campus today do not do
so via Sir Fred Schonell Drive. The University now has many entrances: does it make sense to distinguish one of these entrances as the main entrance?

Having said that, there is no question that the northern prospect of the Forgan Smith Building, as viewed across the grassy expanse of the Front Lawn, is an important heritage feature which deserves to be preserved and exploited. As we have seen, many different proposals have been made for the development of this space over the last eighty years. This is a conundrum which remains to be solved. Whatever is required for this hallowed space, it is certainly not the turning circle and rows of parked cars which currently disfigure it.