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WISDOM HAS BUILT HER HOUSE: PETER CHAMBERLIN'S DESIGNS FOR NEW HALL, CAMBRIDGE (1958-1968)¹

In 2019 Murray Edwards College celebrates its 65th anniversary. Its original name, New Hall, underlined the novelty of this institution as back in 1954 it was the first women's college to be founded after Cambridge had approved the admission of women as members of the University in 1947.² From its inception it was directed by Rosemary Murray who assumed the title of President in 1964, acted as the first female Vice-Chancellor of the University between 1975 and 1977 and was made Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1977.³

Dame Rosemary had ambitious plans right from the start. Although in 1954 New Hall could not house more than 15 undergraduates in its original premises on Silver Street,⁴ the development plan of 1955 envisaged a total of 250 undergraduates and in 1959 a Grace was passed that allowed an increase in student numbers to 300.⁵ Consequently a new college building needed to be constructed. It had to fulfil the functional requirements of a traditional Cambridge college, but at the same time the new building offered the opportunity to make a bold and progressive statement about the role of women in a predominantly male academic environment.

When the buildings designed by Peter Chamberlin were officially inaugurated by the Queen Mother in June 1965,⁶ a heated public debate about the merits and defects of the structure ensued. The impressiveness of the design was generally recognized but belittled by ironic comments that suggested the unsuitability of these premises for women.⁷ The gendered perception of the college prevented an unbiased critical discussion of its architecture.

Although Chamberlin's pivotal importance for British architecture during the 1960s and 1970s is undisputed, his Grade II listed college building has received relatively little scholarly attention.⁸ The architecture of New Hall would deserve a book-length study as it's not only a signature building by an eminent modern archi-

tect, but can also be read as a 'built manifesto' about the role of women at Cambridge University and within academia in general. Instead, up to now the College has only been discussed in passing in surveys on modern architecture and Elain Harwood's monograph on Chamberlin, Powell & Bon,⁹ but there are no in-depth studies of the building complex. This is all the more surprising as the college archives contain a wealth of documentary materials pertaining to the design and construction process.

Harwood and Ayrton have quoted solely materials from box 6 of Rosemary Murray's papers which is labelled "Building".¹⁰ However, tucked away in other series of the large archive there exist many more documents and designs referring to the building process. The written and drawn records are so rich that it is possible to reconstruct the factors that conditioned the design process and to gain detailed insights into the interaction between the architect and his clients. In this paper I can only scrape the tip of the iceberg, but I hope to be able to present a more detailed account of my findings in the not too distant future.

Instead of outlining the whole design process, I will focus on some particularly interesting episodes in order to elucidate the following five aspects: 1. Discarded early designs, 2. Obstacles in the design process, 3. The interaction between the architect and his patrons, 4. The original concept of the building complex and 5. The critical reception of the college architecture.

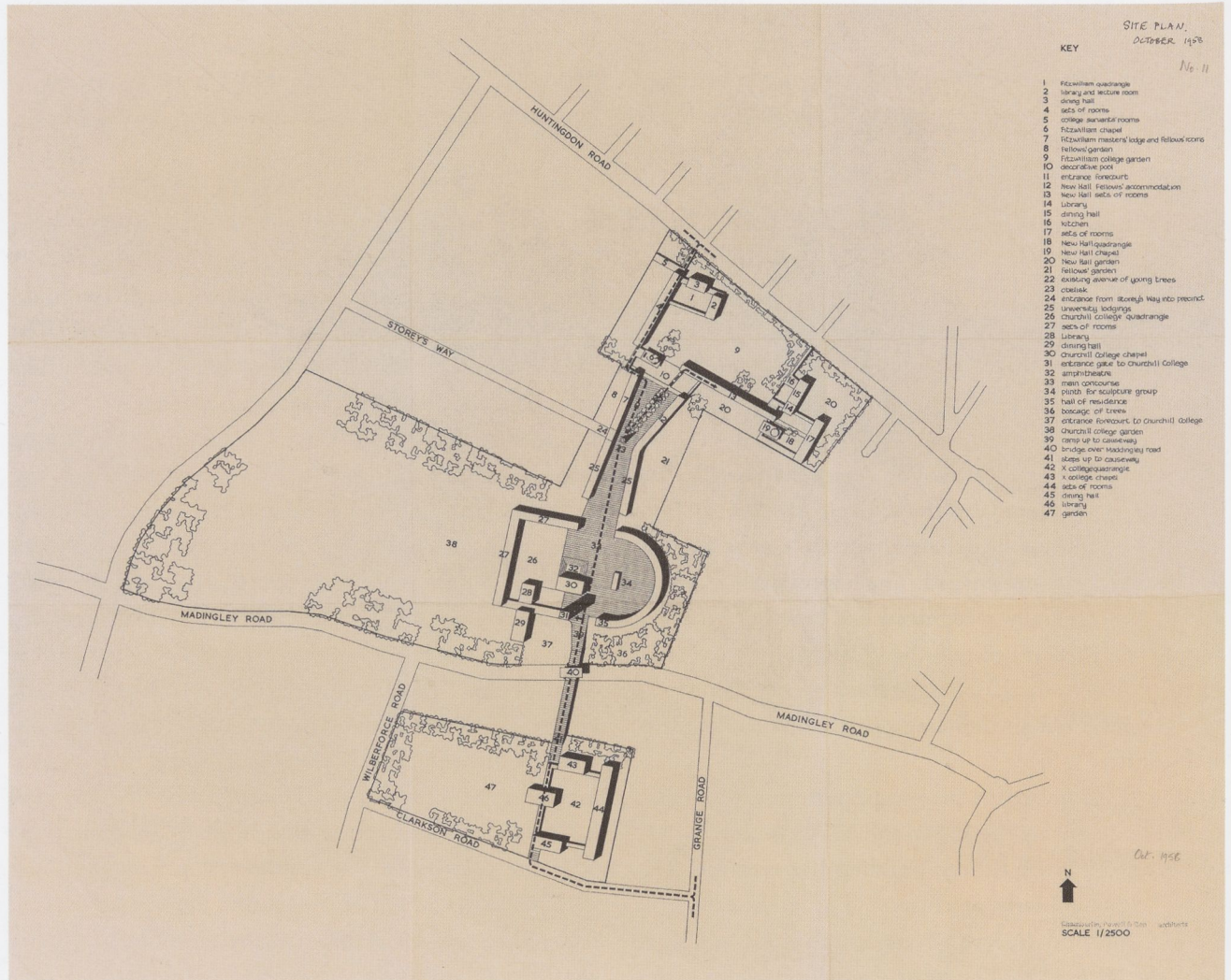
In order to understand Peter Chamberlin's conception it is vital to consider not only the single buildings, but their relationship. Thus the paper reconstructs the performative aspect of his work by tracing the visitor's route and the intended perception of the interrelated elements of the building complex. In addition, the essay identifies essential points of reference and Roman Baroque sources of inspiration for Chamberlin's design. Although the eclectic character of his architecture has repeatedly been noted,¹¹ this claim has not yet been substantiated with precise references to his architectural models. New Hall is an erudite architecture that brims with quotations from the masterpieces of continental architectural history. Moreover, it will be shown that the underlying *con-cetto* or key concept of the structure can be related to the continental Baroque, too.

1. Discarded Early Designs

As is well-known, Peter Chamberlin originally wished to develop a master plan for the three colleges that were being planned simultaneously from 1958: New Hall, Fitzwilliam and Churchill College.¹² Churchill had the largest site and could count on generous financial support;¹³ thus it figures most prominently on Chamberlin's site plan of October 1958 (fig. 1).¹⁴ New Hall and Fitzwilliam were to be located on two adjacent properties to the North of Churchill college. In 1953 New Hall had been granted the freehold of "The Orchard" in Huntingdon Road by the daughters of Horace and Ida

Darwin.¹⁵ In 1957 the University bought a property called "The Grove" which bordered on "The Orchard" towards West.¹⁶ The Grove site was intended to be distributed between New Hall and Fitzwilliam House and soon became a matter of contention.¹⁷ Peter Chamberlin began the planning of New Hall and Fitzwilliam House contemporaneously.¹⁸ In August 1958 he visited the New Hall site and presented his first ideas in October.¹⁹ In September 1958 he had submitted his designs for Fitzwilliam House which were however rejected when Denys Lasdun received the commission in November.²⁰ The Churchill competition started officially only in January 1959, but even before that

Fig. 1 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Site plan showing Churchill College, Fitzwilliam House and New Hall, October 1958. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, no. 11. © 1958, CP&B



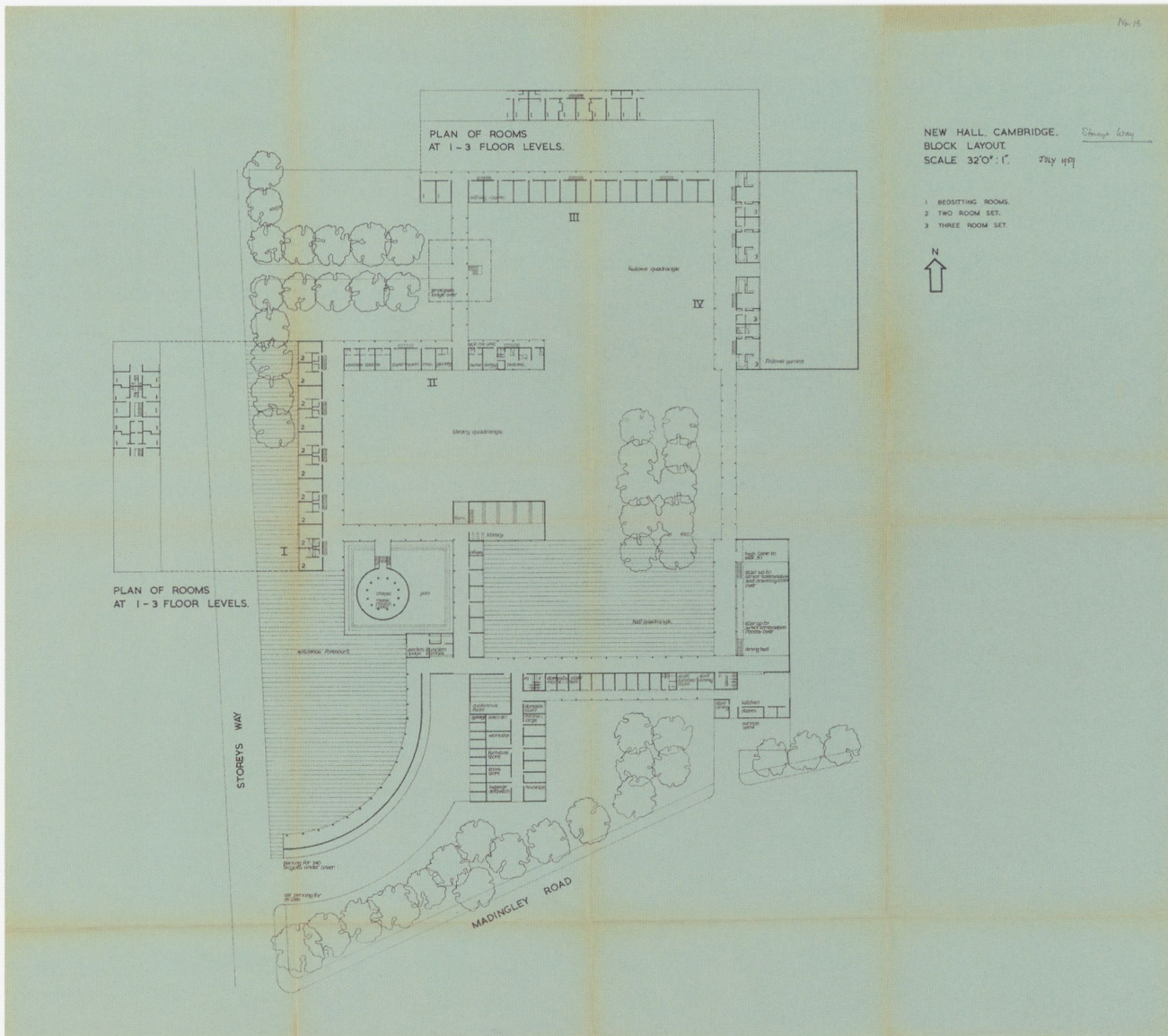


Fig. 2 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, New Hall Cambridge Block Layout, July 1959. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 18. © 1959, CP&B

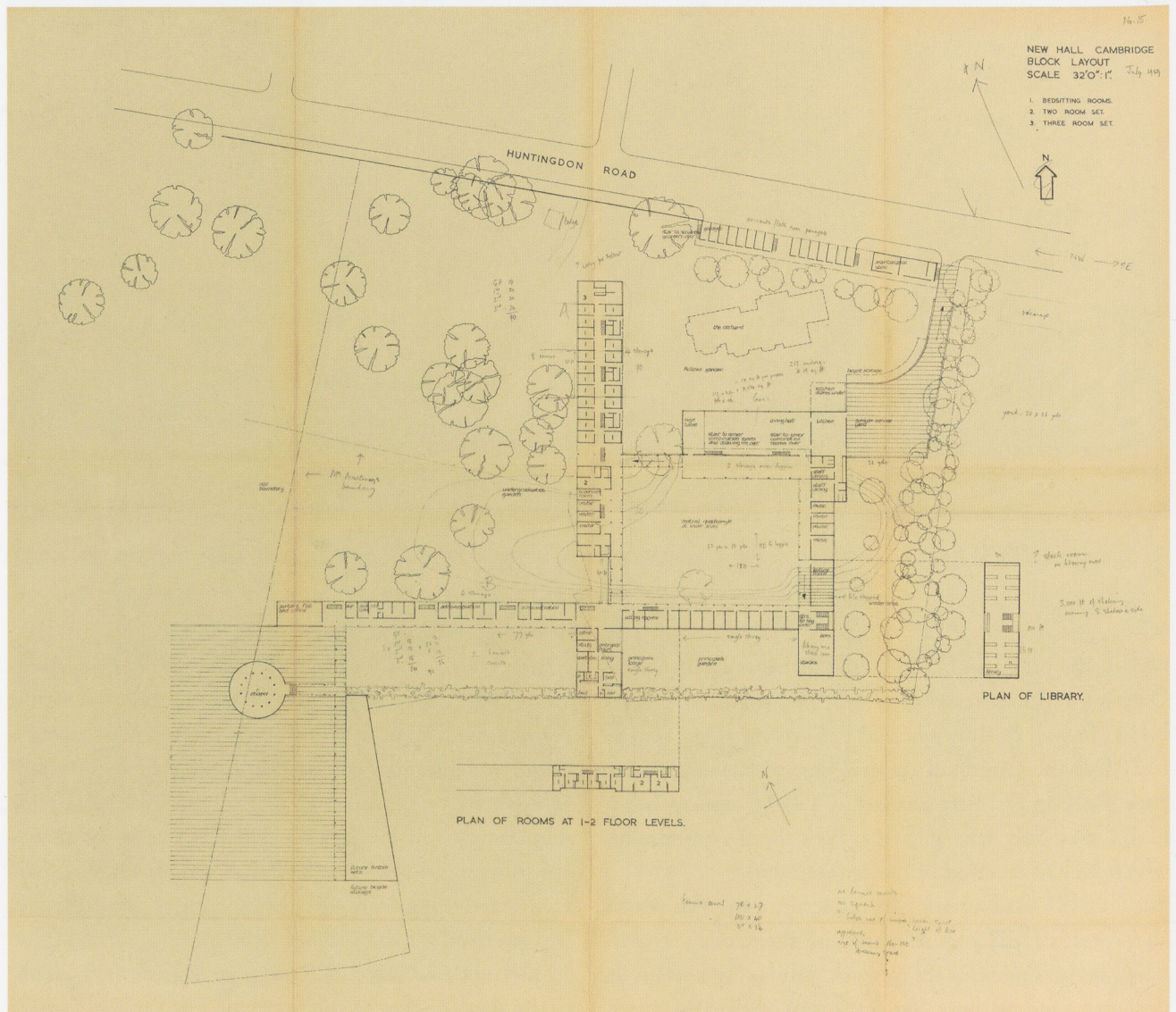
date it was on Chamberlin's mind as his master plan of October 1958 indicates (fig. 1).²¹ His practice "Chamberlin, Powell & Bon" reached the second stage, but finally lost the Churchill competition to Richard Sheppard, Robson and Partners in July 1959.²² Thus Chamberlin was only left with the New Hall commission which he had received in December 1958.²³ Early in 1959 Rosemary Murray wrote a brief in which she specified the requirements of the College,²⁴ and Chamberlin's practice set to work, producing numerous designs. One of these (fig. 2) is still oriented towards

South, with the main approach situated towards Churchill College and the University Library.²⁵ A visitor coming from that direction would have encountered a grand semicircular colonnade leading to the Porter's Lodge and a cylindrical chapel placed in a large pool. The library and the hall were planned as fairly unobtrusive buildings of rectangular shape, while a spectacular lodge hovering over the crossing of two walkways was reserved for the College Principal. In a letter dated July 23rd Rosemary Murray told Chamberlin that the area to the South of The Orchard would

not be available for financial reasons,²⁶ and thus an alternative design restricted the College buildings to a narrower strip of land (fig. 3).²⁷ The plan features still a circular chapel, though in a less grandiose setting. Library and hall were now integrated into a fairly conventional quadrangle. Nevertheless this plan is particularly interesting, not least because it shows the exact location of the Victorian building belonging to the Orchard site which was later demolished in the building process. In August 1959 Chamberlin discussed this plan (fig. 3) with the New Hall Council which voiced a number of

criticisms documented in a written memorandum.²⁸ Its first point refers to the position of the Porter's Lodge that appears next to the chapel: "It was stressed that access from the Huntingdon Road is important for road traffic and for those pedestrians and cyclists who are approaching along this road. At the same time it is expected that the majority of undergraduates will approach the college from Storey's Way in the south. For this reason it was suggested that the Porter's Lodge should be in a more central position." After various other points the memorandum returns to the chapel and states: "It is felt

Fig. 3 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, New Hall Cambridge Block Layout, July 1959. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 15. © 1959, CP&B



terior hides a dome supported by an undulating structure that resembles petals.³²

A closer look at Chamberlin's design reveals that he intended to place the High Table in the centre of the blossom, elevated on a raised central platform (fig. 6).³³ Rosemary Murray disliked this idea,³⁴ and in December 1959 she wrote on behalf of the New Hall Council that a traditional layout with the High Table on one side of the room was preferable: "We are now quite certain that we do not want a Dining Hall in which the High Table is in the centre. It may be that a satisfactory solution is possible with a round or oval interior shape and the High Table at one side or end, and we would like you to think of alternatives. We appreciate and agree with your reasons for suggesting a round external shape for the Dining Hall but we think the spaces where the round fits into the square group look as if they would be inconvenient."³⁵ However, this was not the only problem that remained to be resolved in December 1959. Much more pressing became the question of how New Hall and Fitzwilliam House should relate to each other.

2. Obstacles in the Design Process

As mentioned above, the Grove Estate had been bought by the university in 1957 and needed to be distributed between New Hall and Fitzwilliam. Thus in 1958 the Grove Estate Committee had been set up, consisting of high-ranking administrative officers from several colleges plus Leslie Martin, Professor of Architecture.³⁶ The committee asked the two architects, Chamberlin and Lasdun, to cooperate,³⁷ but in December 1959 it declared that it was not entirely satisfied with the spatial relationship of their designs. In order to understand their point it is useful to consult a drawing that maps Chamberlin's and Lasdun's designs onto a survey of the Grove and Orchard estates (fig. 7).³⁸ The viewer looks South from Huntingdon Road which is at the bottom of the drawing; thus the plan is upside down in comparison to the previous designs. The outlines of New Hall's block layout can be seen on the left, while on the right of the drawing appears Lasdun's project for Fitzwilliam House in the shape of a giant letter "G". The Grove Estate Committee commented on this situation as follows: "Having considered the two proposals

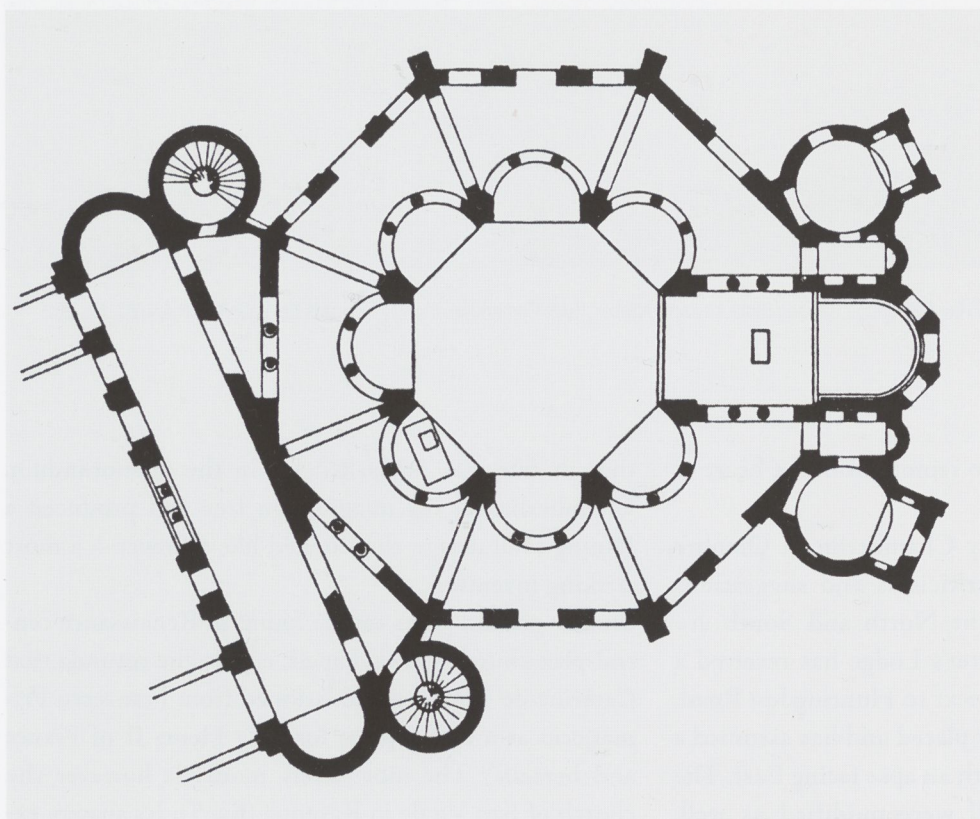


Fig. 5 | Ravenna, San Vitale, ground plan. From Schütz 1990, 255

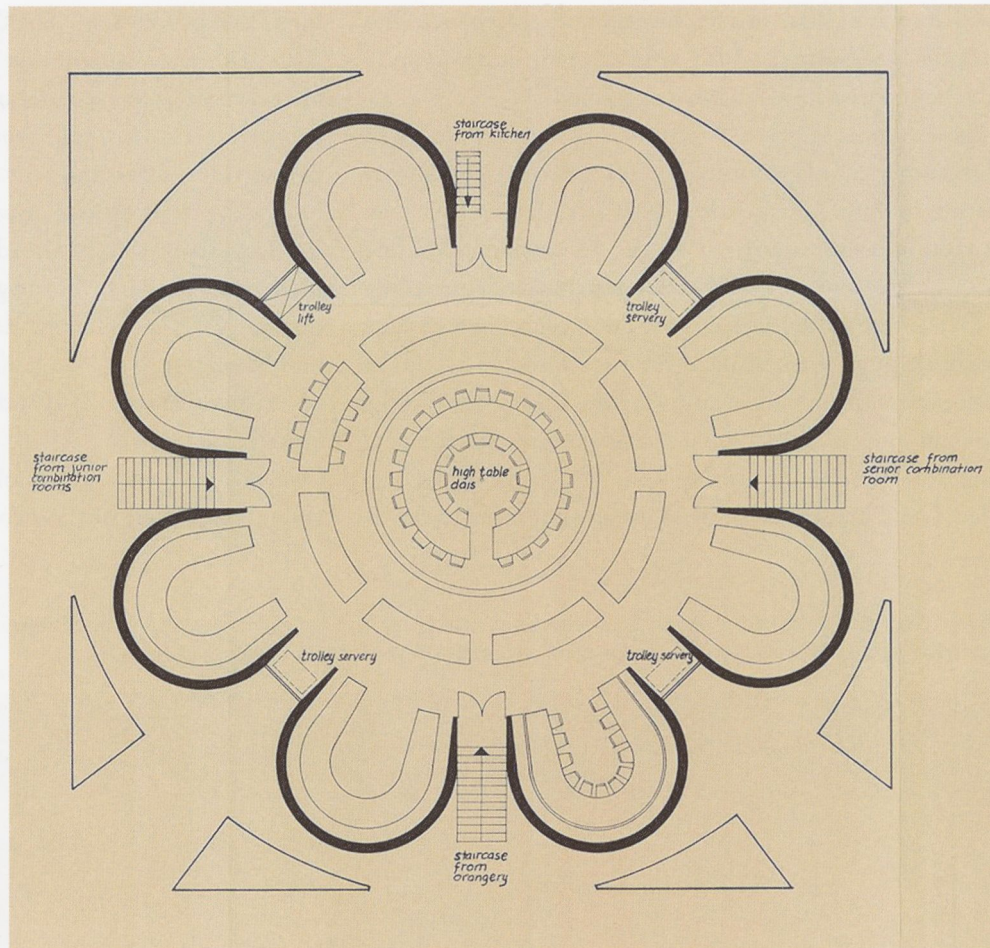


Fig. 6 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Dining Hall, Revised first floor plan, Oct. 1959 (detail). Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 19. © 1959, CP&B

for Newhall and Fitzwilliam House in relation to each other and to the site as a whole, the Committee agreed that the two designs were in general satisfactory but that there were a number of points on which some adjustments seemed necessary.

“The first was that the two groups of buildings stood at the moment in a slightly unfortunate angular relation to one another and the Committee wished to suggest that the architects should consider some slight re-alignment of the two complexes of buildings which would bring them into a happier relationship with each other.

“Secondly the Committee felt that, on the plans as they stand at present, the south-east corner of Mr. Lasdun’s building comes far too near the south-west corner of Mr. Chamberlin’s buildings. Indeed it seemed to the Committee that the two groups would confront each other across a very narrow space indeed. The Committee felt that this situation should be dealt with in two ways.

“In the first place it agreed to ask Mr. Lasdun to consider moving all his buildings some 20-25 ft. towards the western or north-western boundaries of the site.

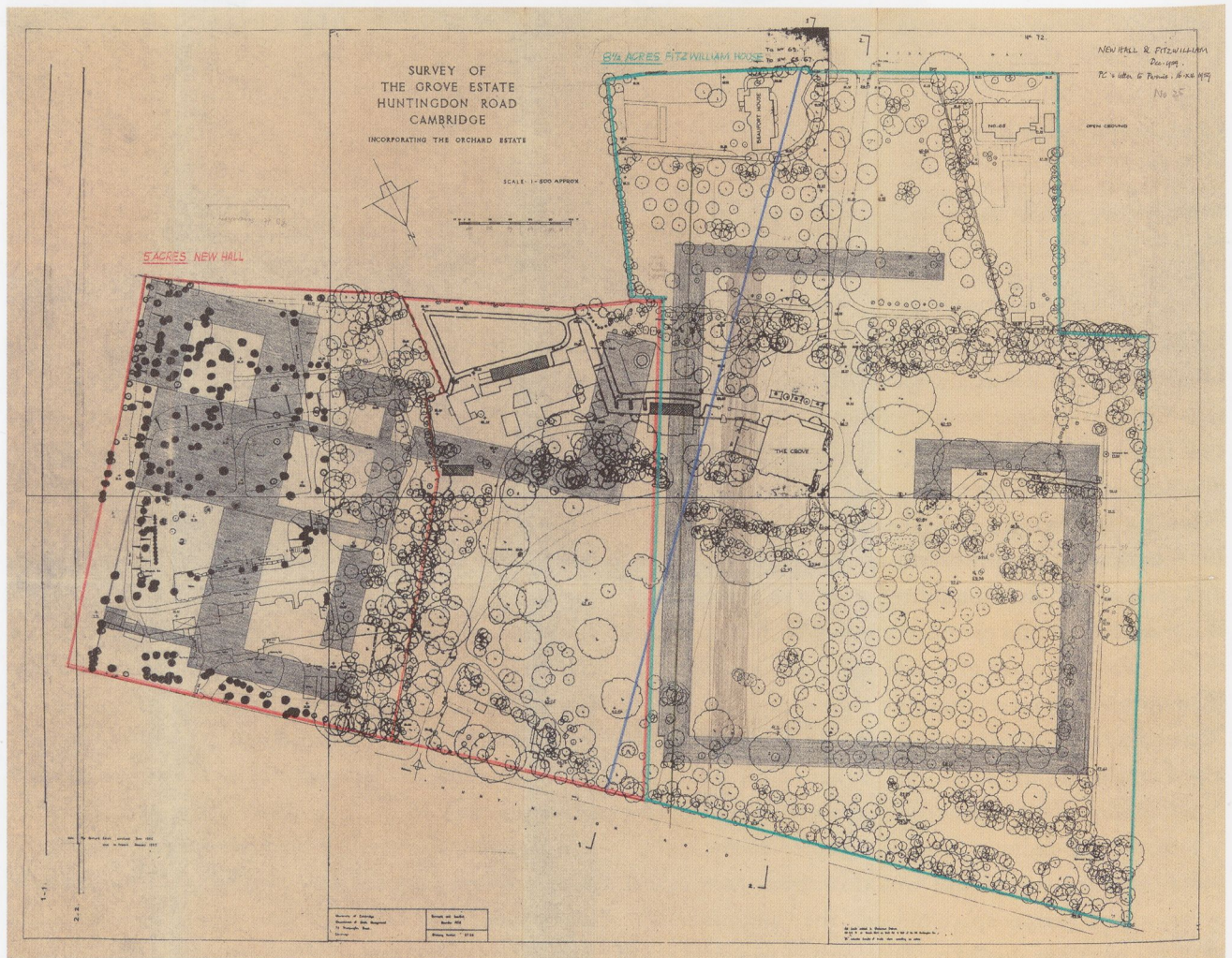
“Secondly, the Committee agreed to ask Mr. Chamberlin to reconsider the whole of the south-western part of his scheme in order to see whether this difficulty could be overcome; whether it might not be possible to re-arrange the building so as to produce some kind of open courtyard of which Mr. Lasdun’s building would provide one side; and whether indeed the whole of the approach to Newhall from Storey’s Way might not be made much more attractive and commanding.

“Thirdly, although it was not wholly within their terms of reference, the Committee wished to draw attention to the fact that Mr. Chamberlin’s block of study bed-rooms on the south-east part of the site comes, as shown, right up to the boundary, and the Committee felt that Newhall might wish to consider either shrinking these buildings to some

extent so as to avoid this or else negotiate agreements with adjacent landowners which would permit building up to the boundaries in the manner suggested.”³⁹ These comments were sent to New Hall in a letter dated December 2nd. On December 11th Rosemary Murray wrote to Peter Chamberlin: “New Hall has not yet seen Lasdun’s layout approved by the Fitzwilliam Building Committee but as I told you I am much disturbed by what I hear of the position of the building which cuts right through the middle of the Estate and so overlooks our garden from end to end. As I measure it the garden is only some 80 yards square which means that a building down one side would remove all privacy in the garden. (And there is no hope of getting anything to the E.

for a Fellows’ Garden). The Council of New Hall has always felt very strongly that a garden, as opposed to a formal court, is an essential amenity of a woman’s college. I myself feel so strongly about this that I feel we ought to consider screening our garden from Fitzwilliam House by resiting our most westerly building. This would probably not be the ideal use of the site but New Hall can’t afford to be neighbourly to its own detriment.”⁴⁰ On the following day Murray received Chamberlin’s plan (fig. 7).⁴¹ In her reply to him she commented: “Frankly I’m appalled and think the present situation quite intolerable.”⁴² Over the next weeks there followed a heated controversy about the resiting of the two colleges and the boundary

Fig. 7 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Survey of the Grove Estate, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, incorporating The Orchard Estate, with projects for New Hall and Fitzwilliam College, December 1959. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 25. © 1959, CP&B



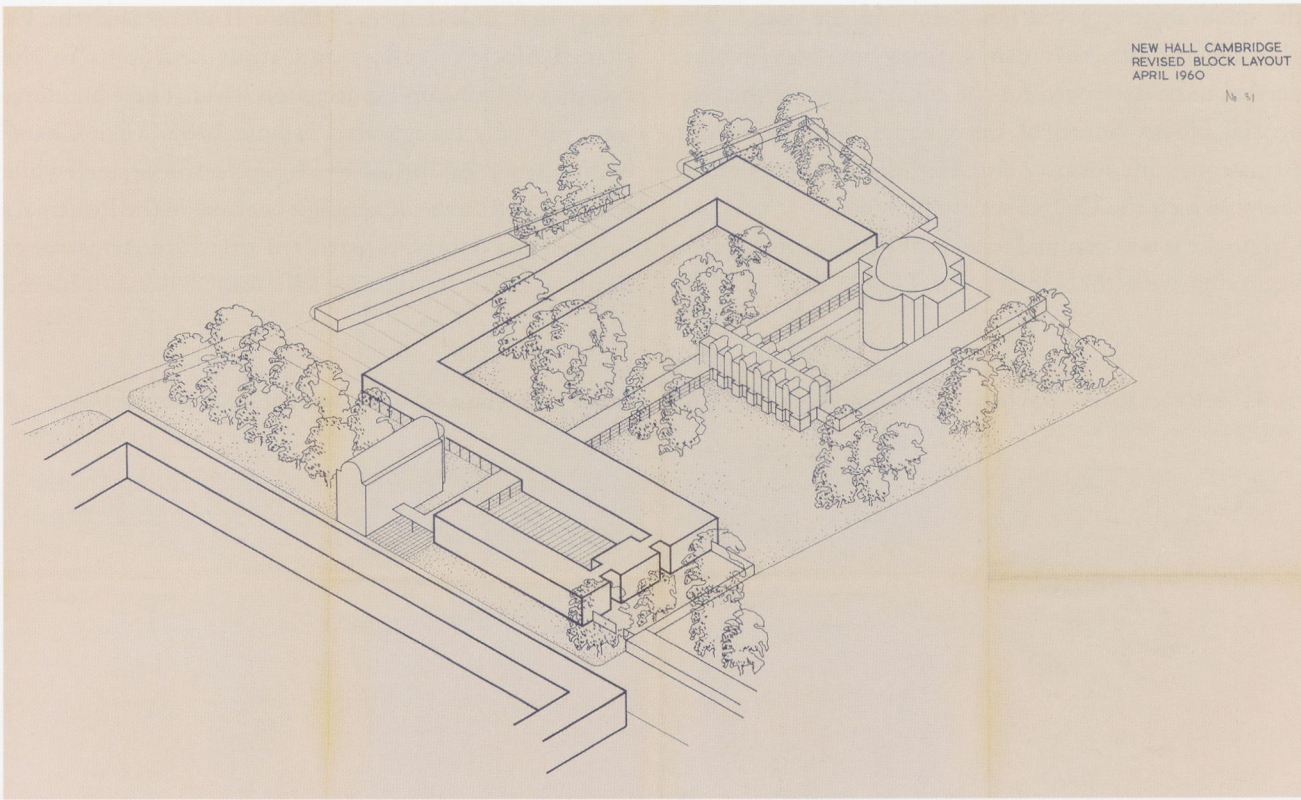


Fig. 8 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, New Hall Cambridge Revised Block Layout, April 1960. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 31. © 1960, CP&B

between them. In February 1960 the boundary was established and it was decided that no building should be erected within 35 feet on either side of the boundary. New Hall obtained a larger portion of the Grove Estate than hitherto envisaged, but for Chamberlin this meant that he had to redesign the college once again.⁴³

The revised block layout of April 1960 shows that Chamberlin followed Rosemary Murray's advice to provide a screen between New Hall and Fitzwilliam (fig. 8).⁴⁴ In the lower left corner of the design the long unbroken wing of Fitzwilliam House runs parallel to the boundary. On the other side of the boundary Chamberlin envisaged a small quadrangle flanking the Principal's Lodge. To the North of this quadrangle he placed the Chapel. The College garden now lies to the East of these buildings. It is screened from view and enclosed by blocks of study-bedrooms. Library and Dining Hall face each other across a sunken court. This general layout comes already quite close to the college as it exists today, though the shapes of the individual buildings presented in the

bird's eye view still differ significantly from their definitive form.

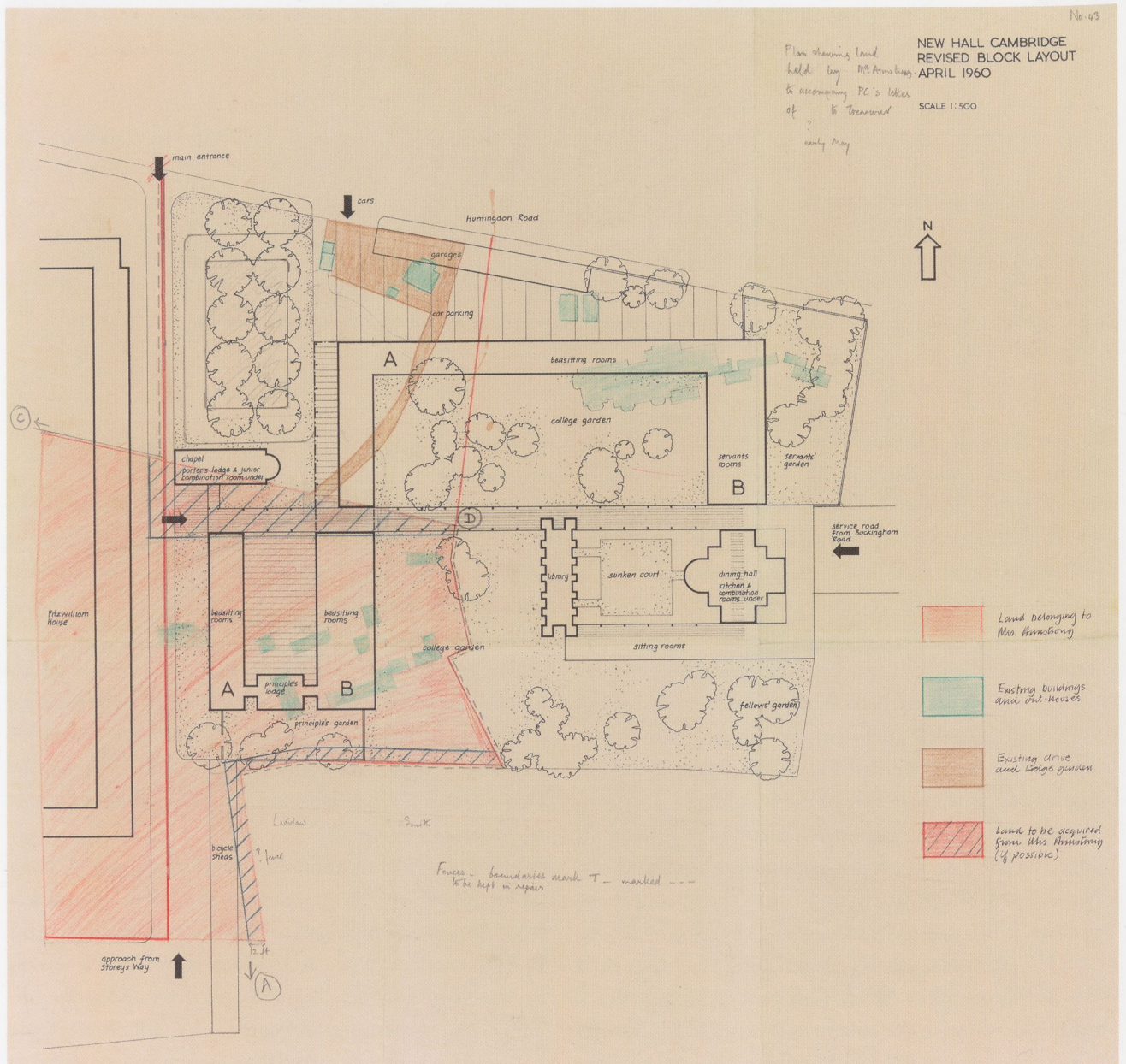
Although the conflict with Fitzwilliam House had been resolved, the survey of 1959 (fig. 7) illustrates a further obstacle in the design process: Mrs. Armstrong's life tenancy. The estate bought by the university in 1957 contained a large house called "The Grove". It is clearly visible in the centre of Lasdun's giant "G". The house which is now part of Fitzwilliam College could not be touched during the building process as it was lived in by Winifred Armstrong who held a life tenancy.⁴⁵ Her part of the Grove estate extended also onto the site which had been allocated to New Hall.

A site plan produced in May 1960 superposes Chamberlin's plans with the portions of land that belonged to Mrs. Armstrong highlighted in a red-brown colour (fig. 9).⁴⁶ To the North of this, an area is traced in a darker brown colour and labelled "Existing drive and lodge garden". Mrs. Armstrong had agreed that this drive could be resited in order to make way for the construction of

the quadrangle situated just below on the plan.⁴⁷ The plan demonstrates that many existing buildings (in blue) needed to be destroyed for the construction of the residential blocks South of the Chapel. Moreover, Mrs. Armstrong's life tenancy also extended over part of the site on which the Chapel was to be built. Originally it was planned to erect the college in 4 stages, beginning with the Library, the Dining Hall and the

wings that linked them.⁴⁸ Phase II comprised the C-shaped block of offices and study-bedrooms to the North, bordering on Huntingdon Road. These buildings were officially inaugurated in June 1965. Then Chamberlin's attention turned to Phase III, the Chapel, while it was clear that the quadrangle centred on the Principal's Lodge could only be constructed after Mrs. Armstrong's death when the life tenancy fell vacant.⁴⁹ But as it turned

Fig. 9 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, New Hall Cambridge Revised Block Layout, April 1960 with additions dating from early May 1960. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 43. © 1960, CP&B



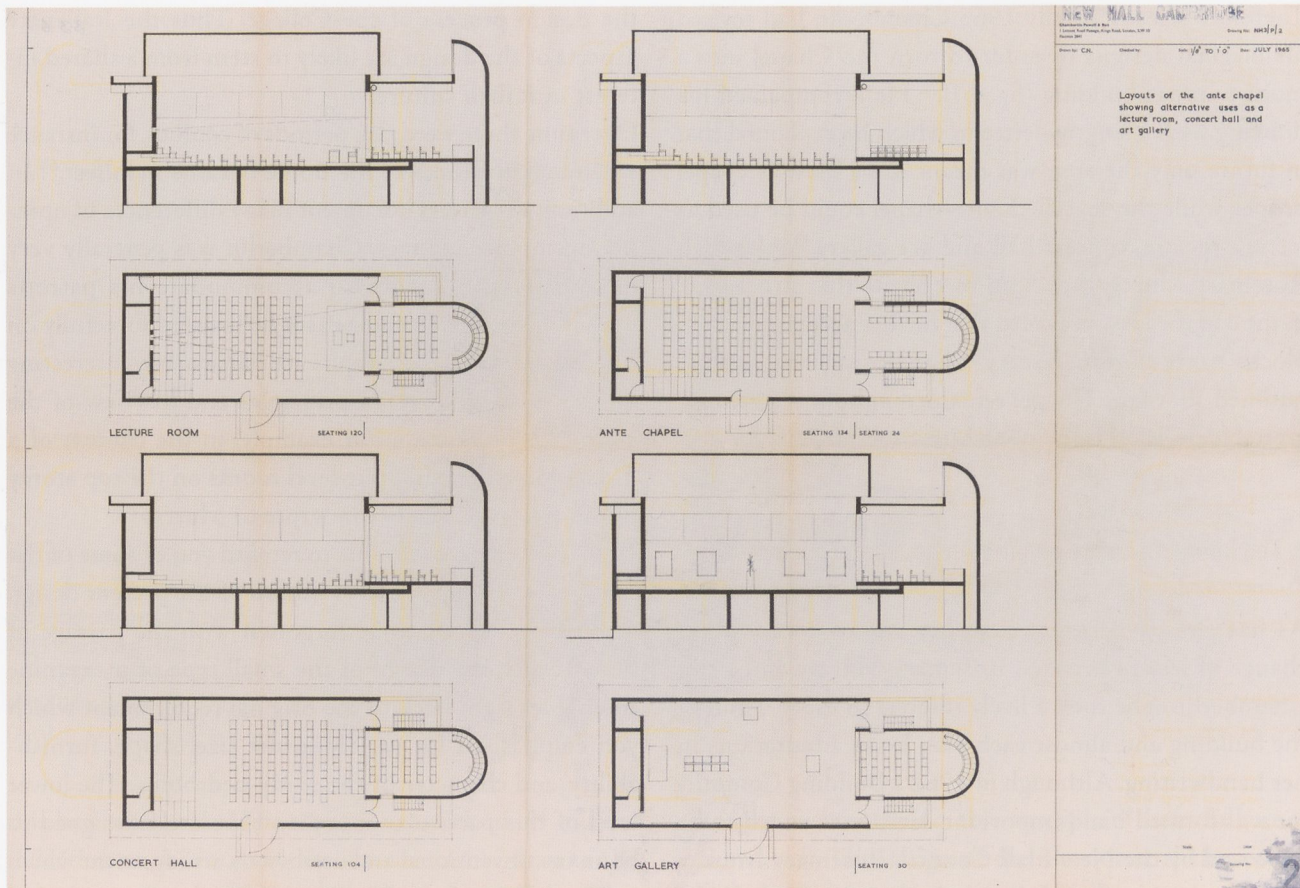


Fig. 10 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Layouts of the ante chapel showing alternative uses as a lecture room, concert hall and art gallery, July 1965. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 336. © 1965, CP&B

out, even the Chapel could not be realized during Mrs. Armstrong's lifetime as she fiercely opposed any alteration of the border and a further resiting of her drive which would have been necessary during the building process.

The archives contain numerous documents relating to lengthy negotiations between Mrs. Armstrong, New Hall and Fitzwilliam College, but in the end it was impossible to reach an agreement. Thus the minutes of the May 1968 meeting of New Hall Council contain the following paragraph: "The President reported that she had written to Fitzwilliam College to ask if they would be willing for Mrs. Armstrong's drive to be diverted temporarily over their land. She had explained the history and background of this request. She had received a letter in return saying that the first concern of Fitzwilliam was to avoid a situation in which Mrs. Armstrong might feel that

pressure was being brought to bear on her. They therefore wished to withhold any definite approval of this proposal. The Council agreed that owing to the impossibility of moving the drive the Porter's Lodge block could not now be built as planned and the instructions to the architect must be cancelled."⁵⁰

However, it appears that not only Mrs. Armstrong's resistance and the unhelpful attitude of Fitzwilliam College prevented the erection of the Chapel, but that there had been also internal disputes about the necessity of this building. From the Council minutes we learn that "the Fellows had disliked the building for various reasons, e. g. that it was too much like a Chapel, that too much money would be being spent on a partially unessential building, that it had been hoped that Mr. Chamberlin might be able to include residential accommodation on the site available."⁵¹

Therefore already in July 1965 Chamberlin had revised his original designs in order to turn the Chapel into a multi-purpose building (fig. 10).⁵² He accompanied his drawing with a lengthy letter in which he explained that in future only the apse was meant to be used as chapel proper while the so-called ante-chapel could be used as lecture theatre, concert hall and art gallery.⁵³ Although Rosemary Murray was keen to execute this structure,⁵⁴ in the end the view prevailed that further accommodation blocks were more necessary.⁵⁵ For the various reasons outlined above the Chapel remained unbuilt – a very regrettable decision from an architectural point of view.

3. The Interaction between the Architect and his Patrons

As has already become clear there was a constant exchange of letters between Rosemary Murray and Peter Chamberlin. She took a lively interest in every detail of the building and almost each plan bears annotations in her handwriting. Although in 1962 a Building Committee was formed⁵⁶ and important decisions needed to be approved by the New Hall Council, Rosemary Murray was the driving force behind the construction of the College from the very start. She gathered information about architects from 1957,⁵⁷ contacted Hugh Casson and invited the practices of Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Denys Lasdun, William Howell and Kenneth Capon to submit their ideas in 1958.⁵⁸ It is to be assumed that she had a large share in the decision to select Chamberlin whom she notified personally.⁵⁹

Her relationship to Chamberlin seems to have been very friendly. For instance, in 1959 she thanked him for the “admirable letter” which he had sent to the Grove Estate Committee.⁶⁰ She must also have told him about her private journeys, because in September 1959 he wrote to her: “I had a very successful holiday which has refreshed me enormously; I am so glad to hear that you had a good time in Italy and look forward to comparing notes.”⁶¹

Chamberlin was very widely travelled and used to send his clients Christmas cards decorated with photographs taken on his journeys. In the 1950s these were mainly photographs from Italy.⁶² The letter just quoted proves that both Chamberlin and Rosemary Murray had first-hand experience of Italian art and architecture during

the design process of the College. Thus the Italianate aspects of the design are likely to stem from a shared interest in Italian culture.

Over time there were also periods of conflict, for instance when massive leaks in the dome became manifest.⁶³ In addition, the letters document many differences of opinion on minute matters. Chamberlin was generally very diplomatic and sought to accommodate his patron's wishes. However, in some cases he insisted forcefully on his designs. Such paragraphs are particularly interesting as they reveal his design principles and his view of the architect's profession. For example, in the context of a discussion about the split-level rooms on the top storey of the college, Chamberlin wrote to Murray:

“It may be advisable for me to remind you of some of the motives which led to the evolution of the present design since these are apt to be forgotten with the passage of time. Firstly, the design of the small type of mezzanine room goes right back to the original requirement which you emphasised for variety in the size, shape, ‘furnishability’ and character of the study-bedrooms. The lower level of this particular room is deliberately designed to be an unconventional and unobvious arrangement which will be different from the planning and designing of other study-bedrooms in the College. Secondly, as opposed to most blocks of study-bedrooms which are in effect boxes with one end largely filled with a window facing the outside, this particular room is designed in the form of a large recess enclosed on three sides by solid wall (the “party” wall, the bed recess wall and the dressing area wall) while the fourth side is blank but brightly lit by the window at one end with, at the opposite end, the door leading into the room. The desk under the window is well lit for working but, when you move into the recessed area of the room for sleeping or social activities, there is intended to be a feeling of enclosure, privacy and an absence of “fishbowl” exposure. I fight shy of using the word “cosy” yet this is the quality which I had hoped would be produced in the bed recess enclosed as it is behind, at the ends, above and below. To convey my meaning I can only call to mind four-poster beds and old Dutch interiors where beds are so often warmly recessed in a niche on one side of a room. Particularly at this time of year, when out of doors is so often grey and unwelcoming, it seems to me that during the day when used as a couch

Fig. 11 | Norah Glover for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, View of the projected entrance to New Hall, 1965. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College (drawing cabinet in the College Library). © 1965, CP&B



this bed recess would be very nice to curl up on and the inflection of the room to the interior rather than to the outside would be very agreeable.”⁶⁴

Chamberlin was quite proud of the varied shapes of the College rooms. In 1960 he stated: “If, therefore, one takes into account the different sizes of the rooms, the different shapes of the rooms, the different positions of fixed furniture, the different orientation, the different prospects attributable to the grouping of the rooms in blocks surrounding courts, one arrives at the rather staggering quantity of no less than 68 different types!

“[...] I do genuinely believe that the actual difference in experience of the various rooms enjoyed by their occupants – coupled with the variety the girls themselves will introduce in their choice and arrangement of curtains, bed-covers, cushions, floor mats, loose furniture, pictures, books, ornaments, etc. – will be greater than [in] any other College of comparable size in the world [...]”⁶⁵

Therefore Chamberlin resisted Murray’s request for further changes of his design and referred to his superior experience: “Architecture is, of course, wholly rational in its origins and in most of its manifestations; to this extent one can try to explain it. Beyond this, however, are certain motives which as an architect one can only feel

are right without being able to explain them fully in a rational way. The design of the interior of these rooms, and their effect on the external elevations, may well be a situation where I must ask you to have confidence in the assumption that (it is to be hoped) I know what I am doing and that the result is likely to turn out all right. I appreciate that this is asking a lot of anybody, but I don’t know what the alternative is other than to risk really messy compromises.”⁶⁶

Similarly, Chamberlin defended his project for the main approach to the College (fig. 11).⁶⁷ When the conflict about the Chapel arose, Murray suggested that additional blocks of accommodation were needed and could be placed on the land that did not fall under Mrs. Armstrong’s life-tenancy.⁶⁸ Chamberlin replied: “The design of the space forming the forecourt off the Huntingdon Road – flanked by the Nuffield block, the entrance block and the eastern most range of Fitzwilliam study bedrooms – was most carefully planned in the spacial [sic] sense. This is the main entrance to New Hall and it seems to me desirable to “announce” this fact in unequivocal terms. For the most part, College buildings consist of study bedrooms which are domestic in scale. The few ‘communal’ buildings – the dining hall, the library and

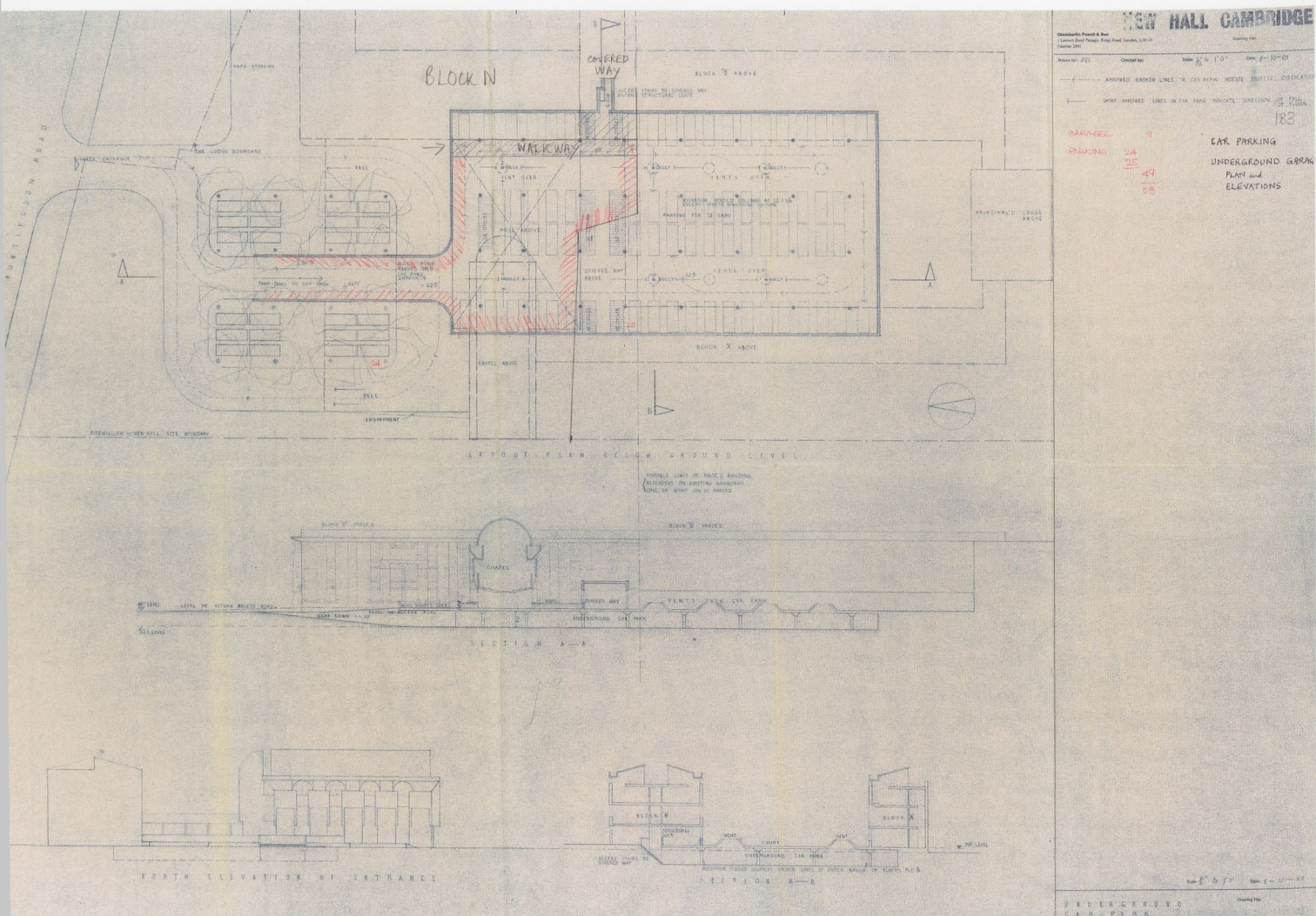
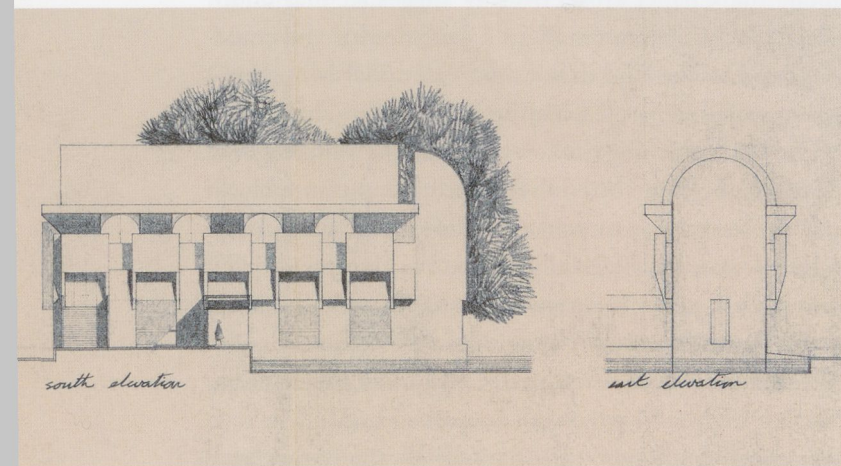


Fig. 12 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Car Parking, Underground Garage, Plan and Elevations, October 1963. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHAR 4/4/20, No. 183. © 1963, CP&B

Fig. 13 | South façade of the Chapel, from: Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Chapel plans, sections and elevations, November 1960 (detail). Cambridge, Murray Edwards College (drawing cabinet in the College Library). © 1960, CP&B



the grouped lecture theatre / music room / art gallery / Chapel – afford the only opportunity for emphasis to ‘leaven the bread’ by lifting the scale of building from that which is appropriate to the individual members of College to that which is appropriate to the College as community. I think the result is of value on two counts: Firstly, it is of immense importance visually to have this contrast of scales introduced in calculated positions within the composition as a whole. Secondly, it is sub-consciously desirable to enable people when they move about a group of buildings, to be able to identify where

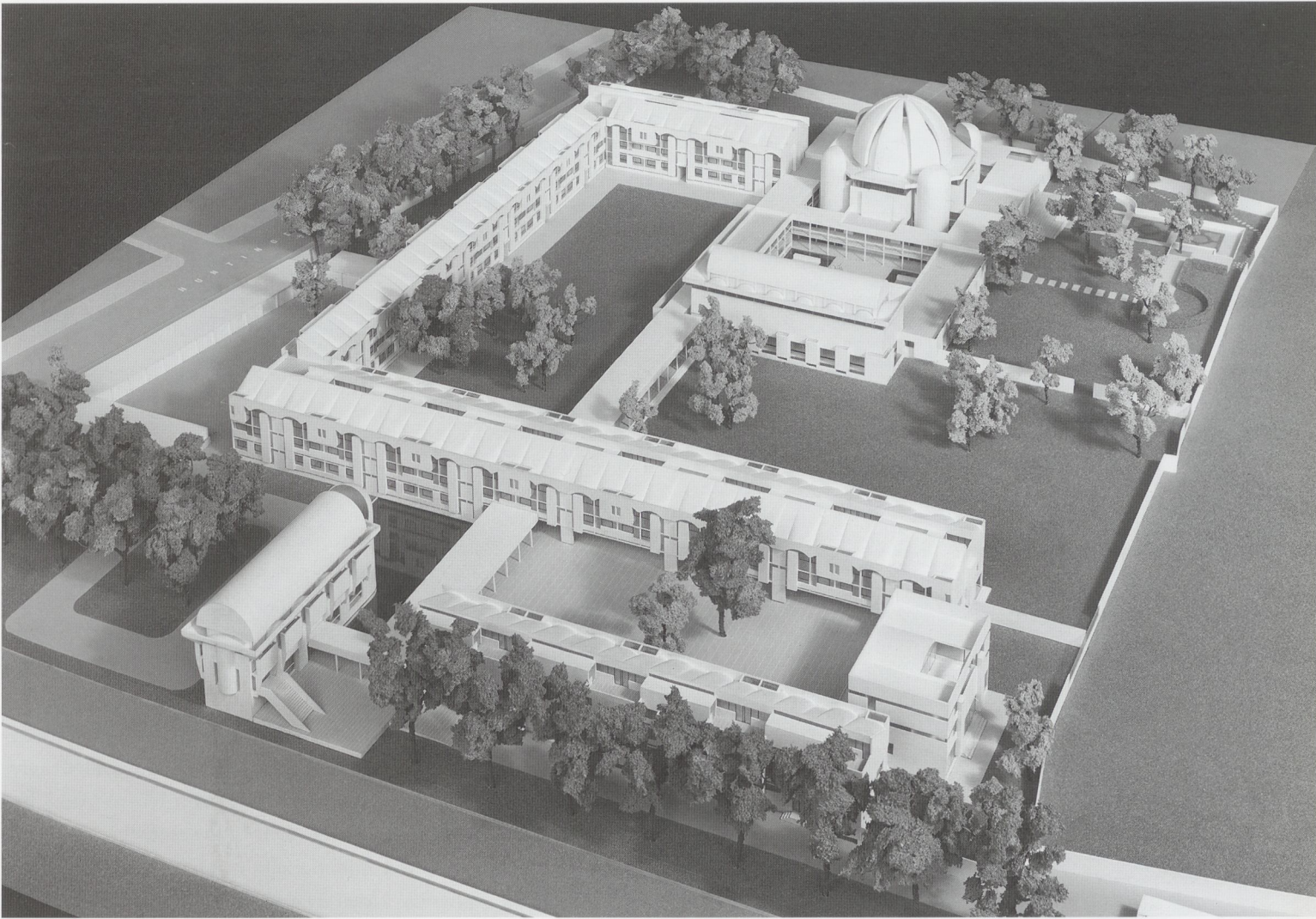


Fig. 14 | Photograph of a (destroyed?) model of New Hall, ca. 1960. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College, NHPH 5/0/2. Photo: John Maltby / RIBA Collections

they are without ambiguity because of the points of reference provided by building elements different in form and scale to the ranges of study bedrooms. It should be remembered that, once the entrance building is erected, practically all future building will, presumably, consist of study bedrooms so that it will be the more important to preserve as much of the 'punctuation' as possible provided by the communal blocks. For this reason, therefore, I think it would be mistaken to substitute, for example, another block of study bedrooms for the entrance block as designed; if this were to be done, the effect of the main approach to New Hall from the Huntingdon Road would be greatly diminished".⁶⁹

4. The Original Concept of the Building Complex

As Chamberlin's plans were discarded, the current approach to the College is from the North-East where the architect had envisaged a simple service entrance. This entrance received a dignified form only in the 1990s when the present rotunda was built.⁷⁰ Originally, the main entrance was meant to be from the North-West (fig. 9). Thus a visitor would have encountered the landmark buildings of the College in exactly the opposite sequence as today, starting with the Chapel and moving past the Library towards the Dining Hall. In order to understand Chamberlin's design it is vital to consider

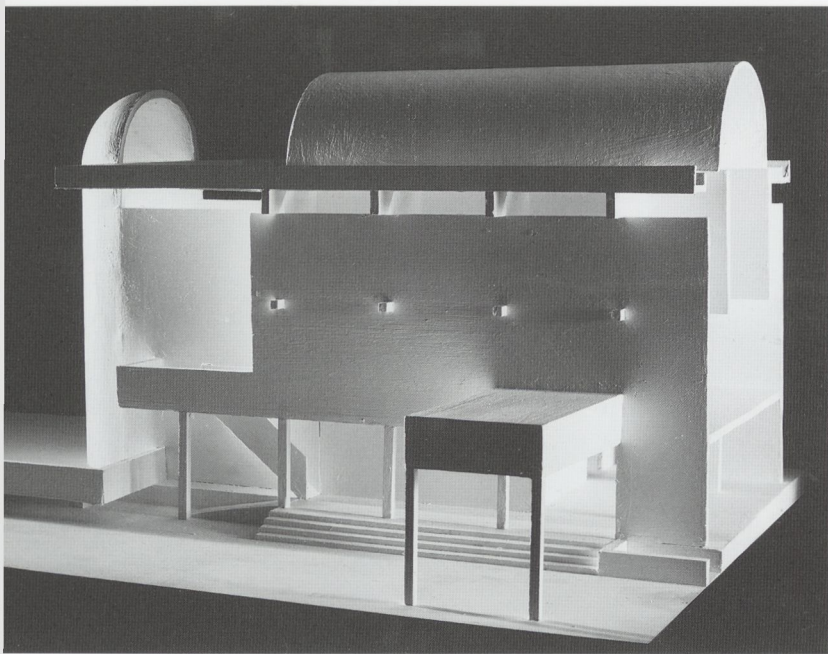
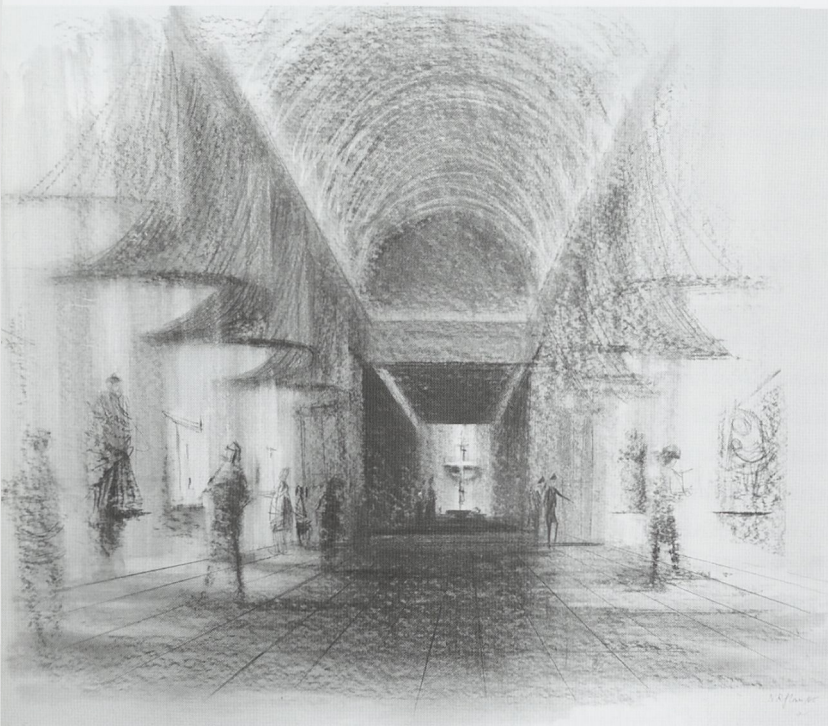


Fig. 15 | Photograph of a (destroyed?) model of the Chapel, View of the main entrance, ca. 1967. Photo: John Maltby / RIBA Collections

Fig. 16 | Norah Glover for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Projected interior of New Hall Chapel, 1965. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College (drawing cabinet in the College Library). © 1965, CP&B



not only the single buildings, but their relationship. This aspect is missing from any previous discussion of the College buildings.

Arriving by car from Huntingdon Road, visitors were expected to enter an underground car park located like a modern crypt underneath the Chapel (fig. 12).⁷¹ Visitors on foot would have gone directly to the Porter's Lodge placed on ground floor level under the Chapel which occupied the first and second floors of the entrance building.⁷² Two drawings of 1960 and 1963 respectively document the original elevation of the Chapel (figs. 12, 13).⁷³ The long walls were structured by a rhythmic sequence of round-headed windows and tall rectangular projections that underlined the verticality of the façade. A contemporary model (fig. 14) clarifies that the projecting elements were meant to introduce light from concealed sky-lights.⁷⁴ Similarly, the vertical side of the semi-dome above the apse was to be glazed so as to enable the daylight to come in. A somewhat later second model of the Chapel shows a simplified elevation, while the gap between the barrel vault and the apse is now much wider, thus allowing even more light to flow in (fig. 15).⁷⁵

It has already been pointed out that the recurring tower-like structures with semi-domes in Chamberlin's *oeuvre* are related to Le Corbusier's designs for Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp (fig. 17).⁷⁶ However, the New Hall Chapel followed intentionally a much more traditional plan. Whereas Notre-Dame-du-Haut conveys no clear sense of direction, in Chamberlin's design the apse formed clearly the focal point of the composition. A drawing by Norah Glover visualizes the staggering light effects that Chamberlin intended to produce in the New Hall Chapel (fig. 16).⁷⁷ Through contrasts of light and shade the visitor's attention would have been focused on the apse where the cross was to have been highlighted mysteriously from the hidden source of light above.

This use of light is a typically baroque conceit. For instance, in the Cappella Raimondi and the Cappella Cornaro Gianlorenzo Bernini famously used hidden sources of light in order to heighten the appeal of his sculptural altarpieces. He created box-like structures behind the altar that were lit from above and thus made his sculptures float mysteriously in divine light.⁷⁸

Despite the decidedly baroque use of light, the architecture of the Chapel had also clearly medieval overtones.



Fig. 17 | Le Corbusier, Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp, 1950-1955. Photo: Wladyslaw (Wikimedia Commons, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Notre_Dame_du_Haut_R%C3%BCckseite\(ws\).jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Notre_Dame_du_Haut_R%C3%BCckseite(ws).jpg))

The slender and tall proportions of the nave evoke Gothic chapels, while the two-storey structure of the building looks back to the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris where the main chapel is also situated well above ground level on the first floor.

The verticality and medieval character of the structure was further underlined by the pool that was meant to surround the apse. In a letter of 1966 Chamberlin referred to it explicitly as “moat”, thus evoking medieval fortresses as his models. He writes: “The pool at the entrance to New Hall, between the Chapel and Block B, has always been an important and integral part of the design of the college as a whole. It serves as a ‘moat’ separating the external forecourt from the paved inner court surrounded by Block A, the President’s lodge, Block Bs and the chapel. Acting as a barrier – yet being at ‘floor level’ – this ‘moat’ does not obscure, from the outside, a view into this first of the sequence of linked courts

which is the theme of the layout as a whole. A grille on the forecourt side of the chapel – as you suggest – would be much more forbidding and less welcoming.

“In addition the water has great value in this position as a reflecting agent; visually it will add considerably to one’s sense of the vertical dimension particularly of the apsidal east end of the chapel block. It is not intended, however, to maintain this as an empty and, perhaps, ‘dead’ looking pool. On the contrary I would hope that particularly – within the eastern half – it would be thickly cultivated with water plants which when mature have a richness all their own.”⁷⁹

To design the entrance to a college through a tall, towering Chapel surrounded by a moat was certainly a highly innovative and bold gesture (fig. 11). Moreover, it had an important precedent in Cambridge, as a large Gothic chapel right in the forecourt and visible from the main road can only be found at King’s College (fig. 18).⁸⁰ To suggest this

comparison was an extremely confident statement on the part of a new women's college expressing its equality with one of the most time-honoured foundations in Cambridge. After this most impressive first perception of New Hall a visitor would have been led into the College via the walkway that runs from East to West (fig. 14). He or she would have caught a glimpse of the stairs ascending to the Chapel before moving on towards the next landmark building, the Library.

In one of his letters Chamberlin stated that "the theme of the layout as a whole" was "the sequence of linked courts".⁸¹ He interpreted this traditional principle of college architecture in an innovative Baroque fashion as each court unveiled a new element of surprise. The first court was meant to be entirely dominated by the Chapel. Only after passing through a block of student accommodation the visitor would have been greeted by a view of the Library which still blocked the sight of the even

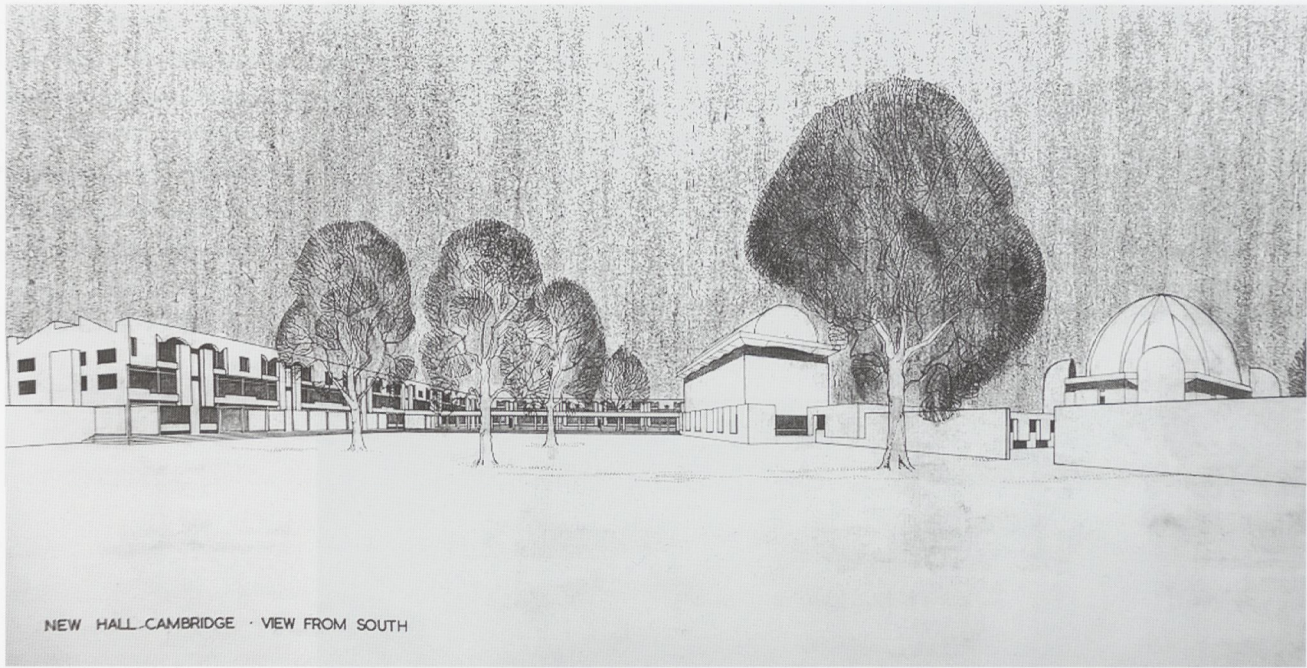
more spectacular dome. The dome hovering over the third, sunken court was intended as the climax of the visitor's experience.

Originally Chamberlin envisaged a library with a rather medieval appearance. A sequence of vertical elements evoked the flying buttresses of a Gothic chapel (fig. 8).⁸² However, it was fairly soon decided to adopt the present simplified exterior design (fig. 19).⁸³ As seen from the walkway, the Library screens the dome from view (fig. 20). Its elevation echoes some of the design features developed for the Chapel (fig. 13),⁸⁴ for instance the round-headed windows just below the large projecting cornice and the barrel-vault. In both cases light was intended to filter in through sky-lights on top of rectangular projections.

From the very start, the Library was planned to house around 70,000 books in total.⁸⁵ Compared to the rather unimpressive libraries of the two new colleges for men

Fig. 18 | Entrance to King's College, Cambridge, with Chapel in the foreground. Photo: Christina Strunck





NEW HALL - CAMBRIDGE · VIEW FROM SOUTH

Fig. 19 | Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, New Hall Cambridge, View from South, ca. 1961. Cambridge, Murray Edwards College (drawing cabinet in the College Library). © 1961, CP&B

Fig. 20 | West façade of the Library as seen from the walkway. Photo: Christina Strunck



that were built contemporaneously, Fitzwilliam and Churchill, the New Hall Library is an extremely large and very imposing architectural space placed at the very center of the building complex. It visualizes the enormous importance attributed to learning within College life. As in the case of his reference to King's College, Chamberlin seems to have chosen ambitious models. The longitudinal, multi-storey and vaulted structure of New Hall Library resembles Trinity College Library in Dublin

and the former Cambridge University Library.⁸⁶ However, there are also significant differences. For instance, in both these libraries the lower storey is equally or even more prominent than the upper storey. By contrast, New Hall has a three-storey library of which the upper two storeys are visually unified by giant arches that present a simplified version of the so-called Venetian or Palladian window (fig. 21).⁸⁷ Therefore the top storeys seem higher and more prominent than the ground-floor level. These



Fig. 21 | Historical photograph of New Hall Library, ca. 1965. Murray Edwards College, NHPH 5/0/2. Photo: John Maltby / RIBA Collections



Fig. 22 | Château de Versailles, Chapel. Photo: Michael Imhof

proportions, the emphasis on the first-floor-level and the prominence of the arcade recall the palace chapel of Versailles (fig. 22),⁸⁸ underscoring the sacred aura of this place of learning. Yet in place of the altar there is the staircase, a highly unusual design element as monumental, centrally placed stairs are uncommon in reading rooms.⁸⁹ At New Hall they seem to allude to princely architecture where monumental stairs signify social ascent.⁹⁰ Just as the stairs to the first-floor Chapel introduced the concept of ‘ascension’, the central staircase in the Library gives an even more striking visual form to the idea that education is all about spiritual and social ascent.

On leaving the Library, the visitor encounters the next visual surprise: the Dining Hall with its dome and staircase turrets towering above the sunken court (fig. 23). This third court has been likened to a medieval cloister,⁹¹ but the comparison does not seem very pertinent as there are walkways only on two sides of the court. Moreover, its architectural layout was clearly inspired by the geometrical *parterres* of Baroque residences.⁹² Equally misleading is the often repeated reference to the four staircase towers as “minarets.”⁹³ Instead they are architectures of ascent, forming a transition between the ground floor level of the walkway and the raised Dining

Hall situated on the first floor. Thus the *leitmotif* of 'ascension' so forcefully announced in the Chapel and Library reaches its final climax in the ascent to the domed Hall. The fairly narrow spiral staircases confront the visitor with contracted spaces that make the first view of the large Hall by contrast even more impressive.

Although the dome is visible from the outside, its interior constitutes a further source of surprise. The cupola seems to hover freely above the Hall, separated from the walls by a continuous band of windows. Eight very slen-

der columns, two on either side of the staircases, appear to be the only support for the enormous weight of the dome (fig. 24).⁹⁴

The construction of the dome (fig. 25) was a remarkable engineering feat inspired by Pier-Luigi Nervi's experiments with concrete.⁹⁵ The petal-shaped segments of the cupola consist of precast concrete and were hoisted individually in place – a new procedure at the time duly commented upon by the first publications on the architecture of the College.⁹⁶ They attributed to the dome a



Fig. 23 | Sunken court and west façade of the Dining Hall as seen from the walkway. Photo: Christina Strunck



Fig. 24 | Dining Hall interior, view towards one of the staircase towers. Photo: Christina Strunck

“split-orange’ formation” or compared it to an astronomical observatory,⁹⁷ overlooking however its main point of reference in architectural history.

As mentioned earlier, Chamberlin emulated Bernini’s use of light in his design for the New Hall Chapel. It has not yet been realized that his concept for the dome looks back to Bernini as well, and more precisely to Sant’Andrea al Quirinale (fig. 26). In this church, Bernini tells the story of an ascension. The painting in the recessed

main altar chapel depicts the martyrdom of St Andrew, mysteriously lit from a hidden light source that alludes to his ascension into heaven. Above the altar, St Andrew appears yet again, now as a white celestial body. Placed on a cloud, he ascends towards the center of the dome where the dove of the Holy Spirit symbolizes his ultimate goal.⁹⁸

Although the cupola at Sant’Andrea is oval in shape, its radiating appearance resembles the New Hall dome.⁹⁹



Fig. 25 | Dining Hall, view of the dome. Photo: Christina Strunck

Bernini designed the cupola so as to visualize the rays of divine light emanating from the Holy Spirit. In my view this Pentecostal meaning also underlies the New Hall dome.¹⁰⁰ Chamberlin's dome summarizes the heavenward moves announced both by the Chapel and the Library; it symbolizes a double ascension, both spiritual illumination and secular enlightenment.

How important the aspect of spiritual illumination was to the College community can be inferred from the proposals for a College motto. When the Fellows were asked for their ideas on a new coat of arms in 1967, the historian Helen Clover came forward with a verse from the biblical Book of Wisdom: "For she [Wisdom] is more beautiful than the sun and above all the order of the stars; being

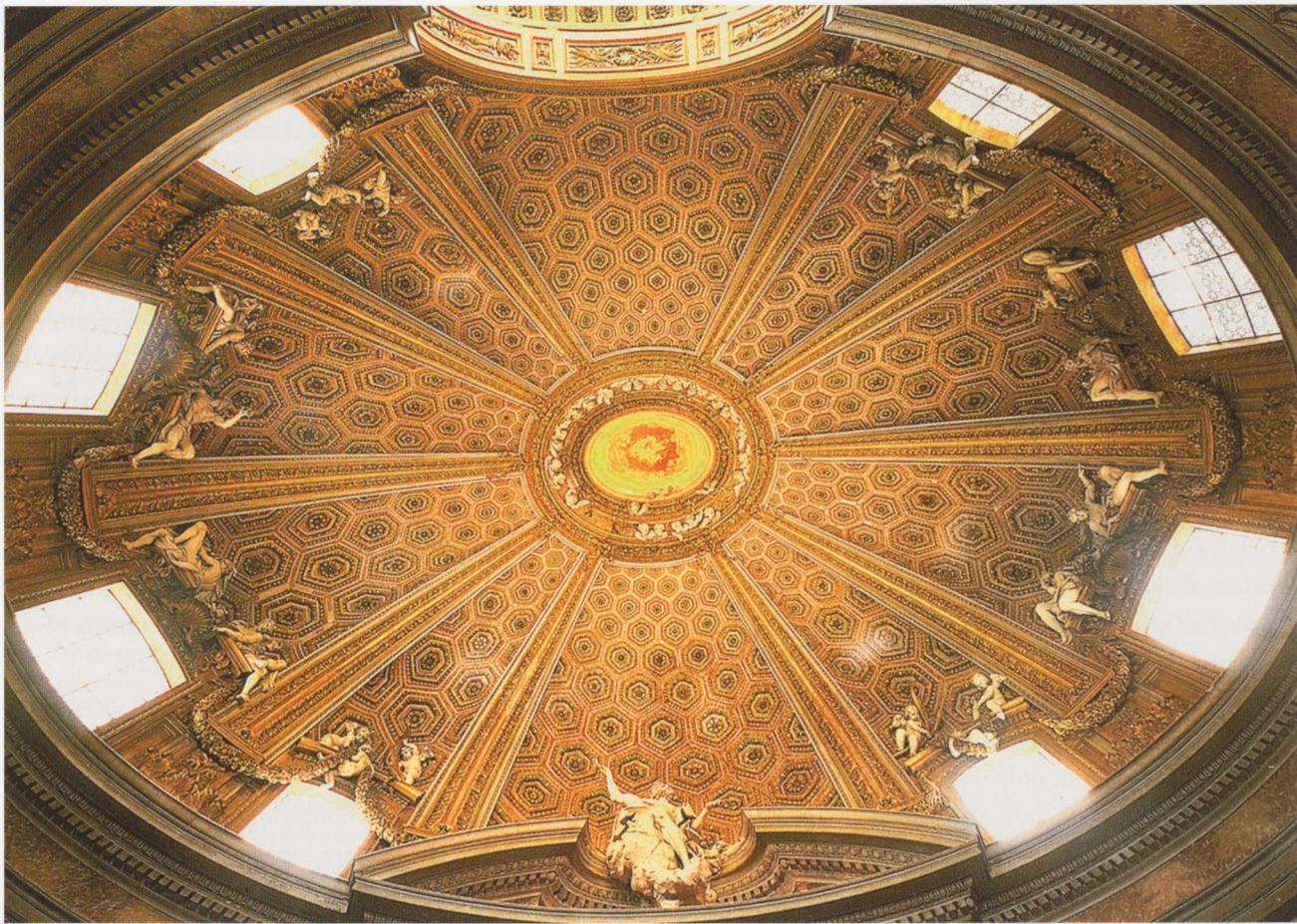


Fig. 26 | Gianlorenzo Bernini, Sant'Andrea al Quirinale in Rome, dome. Photo: Michael Imhof

compared with the light she is found before it".¹⁰¹ In this biblical context, Wisdom is to be understood as divine illumination, superior to any form of earthly light.

At first glance it may seem blasphemous to relate these words to a dining room where a rising servery forms the "liturgical" centre of the room.¹⁰² However, consider the following verses from Proverbs 9 that appear to be particularly appropriate for the Dining Hall of a women's college:

"Wisdom has built her house;
she has hewn her seven pillars.

She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine;
she has also set her table.

She has sent out her young women to call
from the highest places in the town,

"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"

To him who lacks sense she says,

"Come, eat of my bread

and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Leave your simple ways, and live,
and walk in the way of insight."¹⁰³

All in all, Peter Chamberlin has created an erudite architecture that brims with learned quotations. It references medieval models, but the underlying design principles are inspired by Baroque architecture. The build-up of a sequence of spatial entities that reveal one surprise after another and lead to a final climax is a typically Baroque design principle. Equally Baroque is the way in which Chamberlin treats light, following the example of Gianlorenzo Bernini's masterworks. Last but not least it is essentially baroque to express a *conchetto* or key concept in architecture. In the case of New Hall this *conchetto* can be described as the ascent to Wisdom - while the entire building complex with its central Library may be regarded as the House of Wisdom.¹⁰⁴

5. The Critical Reception of the College Architecture

In 1966 the architect Michael Webb labelled New Hall “a daring and successful attempt to recapture the traditional splendour of Cambridge in modern terms”.¹⁰⁵ Architectural historian Nicholas Taylor acknowledged New Hall’s qualities, too, but arrived nevertheless at a negative judgment. In two publications of 1965 and 1966 respectively, Taylor set the tone for much later criticism by attributing “Byzantine whims” and “post-Christian pomp” to the college architecture.¹⁰⁶

A closer look at Taylor’s texts reveals his underlying misogynist attitude. Basically he argues that the buildings are too grandiose for their female occupants. In his article of 1965 he writes: “One does not need to be a dyed-in-the-wool functionalist to suggest that the people who actually live in a building are as important as those who merely stand and gape. It is on basic questions of appropriateness and adaptability that New Hall has doubtful relevance. The hall itself may well mellow into genuine grandeur, but only if meals are made excessively formal, stepping back into a previous era. Otherwise it will be in danger of becoming a dated folly [...]. Most of the library is simply wasted space, with [...] a vast straight staircase of obsolete grandeur occupying much of the centre. The undergraduate rooms [...] are to be clad entirely in exposed white bricks, inside and out, a fact which suggests a mediaeval nunnery rather than a modern college of sophisticated and individual young ladies. This cannot be blamed entirely on the architect; it seems evident that the clients demanded something supremely grand, so that they could identify themselves with previous centuries of collegiate life. Yet, as we have seen, however picturesque the ancient colleges of Cambridge may appear at first sight, apart from King’s Chapel and perhaps four other buildings, they are a rather dry lot and rarely monumental.”¹⁰⁷ In other words: Taylor dislikes New Hall’s ambition to outdo most of the men’s

colleges architectonically. He exonerates Peter Chamberlin and blames the over-ambitious female clients for this ‘defect’.

In a 1966 contribution to *The Architectural Review*, Taylor expanded on the same topic, opposing New Hall’s “post-Christian pomp” to the more modest and in his view superior traditions of the all-male colleges.¹⁰⁸ In order to ridicule the grandeur of Chamberlin’s architecture, he made a number of far-Eastern comparisons, calling the College an “oriental buffoonery”,¹⁰⁹ likening the staircase towers to “minarets” and stating that “it is not far from the elevated cornucopia and the split-orange dome of the New Hall dining hall to the instant-harem world of the Golden Eggs”.¹¹⁰ In addition, he encouraged a sexualized view of the College architecture, speaking of “New Hall’s curvaceous white skin”.¹¹¹ Some years later Charles Jencks continued this line of thought and claimed that the occupants of the College had nick-named the dome “the giant tit”.¹¹²

With reference to the sunken court, Taylor diagnosed “schizophrenia” and criticized the “absurd sacrificial pomp of the central fountain”.¹¹³ Back in 1965 he had already chastised the over-ambitious female patrons, but in 1966 he became yet more explicit, poking fun at Rosemary Murray. Regarding the fountain, he wrote: “the circular basin has a Roman baptismal aura; perhaps the President of the College might dive ceremonially into it at midsummer dawn.”¹¹⁴

By portraying the President of a women’s college in such a ridiculous attitude, Taylor sought to discredit the institution as a whole. Unfortunately his deprecating metaphors caught on, were repeated over and over¹¹⁵ and even conditioned the self-perception of the College, for it was long rumoured that Chamberlin had re-used “a proposal for an institution in the Near East, complete with an Arabian style Fountain Court”.¹¹⁶ This was certainly not the case, as my overview of the design history has demonstrated. Moreover, I hope to have shown that there are other, more adequate ways of looking at the architecture of New Hall.

- 1 The research for this article was made possible by the President of Murray Edwards College, Dame Barbara Stocking, who granted me a Visiting Professorship for the summer term of 2018. I am deeply grateful to her for enabling me to study the New Hall archives. It was a real pleasure to spend mornings and afternoons in the beautiful College Library sifting through the almost 400 plans produced by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon. No less enjoyable were conversations over lunch, when Lydia Hamlett, Alison Wilson and John Guthrie raised interesting questions that stimulated my research. Of the many friendly and helpful members of staff I would particularly like to mention Robert Gardiner, Sarah Greaves and Sam Percival. Thanks to Fiona Duffy's generous support it was possible to obtain professional photographs of the College plans. A very special thanks is due to Kirstie Preest, who clarified copyright matters, and to the heirs of Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, who graciously allowed me reproduce the plans and drawings contained in this article.
- 2 Murray 1980, 2, 10, 17.
- 3 Murray 1980, 31; Wilson 2014, 188-218. Before Murray assumed the title "President", the documents refer to her as "the Tutor".
- 4 Hutchinson 2005, 8.
- 5 The documents within the single files of the New Hall archive are not numerated. It is therefore necessary to quote not only the shelfmark, but also (whenever possible) the date and title of each document. NHAR 1/1/1/6/6 contains a sheet of notes with the title "Ideas on expansion. May '55" and a three-pages typed document "New Hall / Proposed development". The latter is undated, but preceded by a manuscript (filed in the same folder) with the heading "Draft from Kitson Clark after m(ee)t(in)g 17 May '55". A letter of May 31st with which Murray sent her own "draft report" to Mrs. White, the Bursar, documents her handwriting that reappears in numerous other documents quoted below. On the "Grace" of 1959 see Murray 1980, 23.
- 6 On the inauguration of the College see Murray 1980, 35.
- 7 See below, section 5, 156.
- 8 The College was listed Grade II* on 30 March 1993: Harwood and Davies 2015, 235.
- 9 Taylor 1965, 16-17; Webb 1966; Taylor 1966; Webb 1969, 20-22; Taylor and Booth 1970, 161-166; Harwood 2011, 57-65; Iuliano and Penz 2012, 88-91 (catalogue entry by Elaine Harwood); Harwood 2015, 216-218; Harwood and Davies 2015, 235; Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 154-157.
- 10 NHAR 1/1/1/6. Cf. Harwood 2011, 65, notes 21, 23, 35. In addition she mentions Building Committee Minutes (note 30), but doesn't give their shelfmark. See also Ayrtton 2017, 4 (note 1), 6 (note 13), 15 (notes 49, 51) and fig. 14. I am grateful to Constance Ayrtton for having allowed me to read her unpublished first year undergraduate thesis which focuses on the dome of the Dining Hall.
- 11 Taylor 1965; Webb 1966; Harwood 2011, 64.
- 12 Taylor 1966, 17-18; Taylor and Booth 1970, 161; Goldie 2007, 15-16; Harwood 2000; Harwood 2011, 57-65.
- 13 On Churchill College, see Taylor 1965, 18; Webb 1969, 19-20; Taylor and Booth 1970, 133-144; Harwood 2000; Harwood 2011, 57-65; Iuliano and Penz 2012, 80-87 (catalogue entry by Caroline Maniaque); Harwood and Davies 2015, 229.
- 14 The series NHAR 4/4/20 that contains the plans is currently undergoing a process of reorganization so that the numbering of the individual boxes is likely to change. I will therefore reference the plans with the general shelfmark NHAR 4/4/20 and the number of the plan, omitting the number of the box. As all plans are numbered in consecutive order, it will be possible to retrieve them without problems. The plan reproduced as fig. 1 is NHAR 4/4/20, no. 11.
- 15 Murray 1980, 12.
- 16 Murray 1980, 26.
- 17 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from A. E. L. Parnis to P. Chamberlin, 15.12.1958. The quarrels regarding the distribution of the site are discussed below.
- 18 Fitzwilliam received full collegiate status only in 1966; before that date it was known as Fitzwilliam House. (Taylor and Booth 1970, 150.)
- 19 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 19.8.1958 (regarding the site visit) and Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 20.10.1958 (on the presentation of his plans to the New Hall Council). The plans are kept in NHAR 4/4/20, no. 10-13. NHAR 2/8/1/8 contains the accompanying typescript, dated „October 1958“, with the heading "Possible approach to the design of a college for New Hall, Cambridge".
- 20 Chamberlin's designs for Fitzwilliam are described in NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, documents relating to the meeting of the Grove Estate Committee on 15.1.1960. On Fitzwilliam College, see Taylor 1965, 17-18; Taylor and Booth 1970, 150-154; Iuliano and Penz 2012, 70-73 (catalogue entry by Barnabas Calder); *Building Fitzwilliam College* 2013.
- 21 Cf. Goldie 2007, 9: Leslie Martin had been nominated "architectural advisor" for the building of Churchill College in August 1958, and in October of that year the Trustees suggested a "limited competition".
- 22 Harwood 2000, 37, 40, 50-51.
- 23 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 3.12.1958.
- 24 NHAR 1/1/1/6/6 contains the handwritten and undated „Draft for Architects by ARM“ [A. R. Murray] plus two type-written versions of which the last one bears the title „Architects brief. 5.3.59 / and amendment 3.60“.
- 25 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 18.
- 26 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 23.7.1959.
- 27 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 15.
- 28 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, P. Chamberlin, „Memorandum of meeting with Miss Murray re. New Hall“ (undated typescript). The approximate date can be established as the memorandum is mentioned in a letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray of 29.9.1959 (in the same file).
- 29 Memorandum (see previous note).
- 30 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 20.
- 31 First documents referring to this tomb date from 1560/61. The rotunda was designed by Francesco Primaticcio (1504-1570), but its building commenced only after his death in 1572/73: cfr. Lersch 1995, 33-36. On the reception of Primaticcio's design see Strunck 2017, 233-237.
- 32 Cf. Johnson 2018, plate 66.
- 33 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 19.
- 34 This can be inferred from Chamberlin's reply of 19.11.1959 (in NHAR 2/8/1/9/0).
- 35 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 1.12.1959.
- 36 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from A. E. L. Parnis to P. Chamberlin, 15.12.1958: „Pending the allocation of The Grove site between the two institutions concerned, viz. Fitzwilliam House and New Hall, it is under the management of a Committee of the Financial Board consisting of the Bursar of St. John's College, Mr Boys Smith, the Bursar of Clare College, Mr Cooper, and Professor Martin.“ The same file contains the typescript „Grove Estate Committee (Unconfirmed Minutes)“ of 5.12.1959, where the following persons are named: "Mr.

- Boys Smith in the Chair, Professor Martin, Mr Cooper, the Treasurer [Parnis] and Mr. Wilson. In attendance: the President of Queens' College and Mr. Stafford Smith of the Department of Estate Management." On Leslie Martin see Goldie 2007, 10 and Carolin 2012.
- 37 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from A. E. L. Parnis to P. Chamberlin, 15.12.1958.
- 38 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 25. That this plan was produced by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon is confirmed through a Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 11.12.1959 (in NHAR 2/8/1/9/0).
- 39 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from A. E. L. Parnis to R. Murray, 2.12.1959.
- 40 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 11.12.1959.
- 41 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 11.12.1959.
- 42 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Handwritten draft of a letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 12.12.1959.
- 43 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from A. R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 16.2.1960.
- 44 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 31.
- 45 See NHAR 4/4/20, No. 24 and several related documents in NHAR 2/8/1/9/0.
- 46 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 43. The coloured parts of the drawing are labelled as follows: "Land belonging to Mrs. Armstrong", "Existing buildings and out-houses", "Existing drive and Lodge garden", "Land to be acquired from Mrs. Armstrong (if possible)". The plan bears the date "early May" in Murray's handwriting.
- 47 The relevant negotiations are summarized in NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, especially in the "Note by the Treasurer" [A. E. L. Parnis] distributed before the meeting of the Grove Estate Committee of 15.1.1960.
- 48 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 180.
- 49 As it happened, "Pearl House" was only constructed in 1994-1996 with somewhat simplified elevations that make this building much less interesting than its predecessors (Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 156-157). The Principal's Lodge remained unbuilt, while the Kaetsu Centre took the place of the Chapel: cfr. the site plan in Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 155.
- 50 NHGB 3/1/3, pp. 119-121.
- 51 NHGB 3/1/3, pp. 123-125.
- 52 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 263, 264 and 336.
- 53 NHAR 2/8/1/9/11, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 14.7.1965.
- 54 NHGB 3/1/3, pp. 105-107, 109-111.
- 55 NHGB 3/1/3, p. 119: "After some discussion about the possible use of the land between the car park and the Huntingdon Road, it was decided that the President should consult the architect and point out the need for further residential accommodation, a proper Porter's Lodge, and the long-term as well as the short-term needs of the College."
- 56 NHAR 1/1/7/1/1, Building Committee Minutes, 2.8.1962.
- 57 There are numerous notes, letters and newspaper clippings referring to the choice of architects in NHAR 1/1/1/6/6.
- 58 These letters are filed in NHAR 1/1/1/6/1.
- 59 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 3.12.1958.
- 60 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 18.12.1959.
- 61 NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 29.9.1959.
- 62 Harwood 2011, 21-23.
- 63 Wilson 2014, 159-160. On the leaks in the dome see NHAR 1/1/1/6/6, Building Committee Minutes of 22.7.1966, p. 1: "[...] It was reported that leaks in the Dining Hall were worse than before and rain water was coming in all along the joints where the coating material had cracked. Mr. Honer had consulted another roofing expert who considered the material being used was suitable but that it should be applied differently over the joints and that movement through temperature rise could be cut down by painting with a white reflecting paint to decrease heat absorption. An estimate was being obtained for this work. Various other leaks were reported and these were being attended to."
- 64 NHAR 1/1/7/1/1, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 27.11.1963.
- 65 NHAR 2/8/1/9/1, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 9.12.1960.
- 66 NHAR 1/1/7/1/1, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 27.11.1963.
- 67 The drawing reproduced as fig. 11 does not bear a shelfmark; it is kept in the drawing cabinet in the Murray Edwards College Library.
- 68 NHAR 2/8/1/9/11, Letter from R. Murray to the Master of St. John's College, 21.5.1968.
- 69 NHAR 2/8/1/9/11, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 27.6.1968. See also in the same file the Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray of 5.2.1968: "Regarding your comments about the 'complication' of the east end of the chapel – and the possibility of saving some expense by simplifying this – I am not sure what you had in mind. As you would expect me to be, I am rather disturbed at the idea of somehow 'simplifying' the design of part of a building while leaving the rest alone. The entrance block has been most carefully designed over a long period and the present composition of solids and voids is well balanced and appropriate to the part it has to play in the layout of New Hall as a whole. It is no easier to change one part of a building irrespective of the rest of it than it is to alter part of a piece of sculpture or a painting. If such a thing is required it is usually necessary to go back to square one and design the whole afresh."
- 70 Harwood 2011, 62. Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 154, date the rotunda to 1994/95.
- 71 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 183.
- 72 From at least 1960 the Porter's Lodge was meant to be placed under the Chapel as is apparent from two letters kept in NHAR 2/8/1/9/1: Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 9.5.1960 / Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 11.5.1960.
- 73 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 183 and 237.
- 74 Photographs of this early model are kept in NHPH 5/0/2. Some of them bear the handwritten date "about 1960". Cfr. NHAR 2/8/1/9/0, Letter from R. Murray to P. Chamberlin, 1.12.1959: "[...] Thank you very much for sending the model of the proposed buildings." However, the model sent in 1959 cannot be the one reproduced in the photograph (fig. 14) because the latter shows the Library and Dining Hall already in their present form – a solution that was only reached after May 1960 (see section 1 above).
- 75 The photographs of the (destroyed?) model are kept in NHAR 4/4/30. This model was most likely created in 1967. See NHAR 1/1/1/6/6, Building Committee Minutes, 9.11.1967, p. 2: "With the help of a model, Mr. Honer described the design of the ceiling of the Chapel and antechapel."
- 76 Taylor 1965, 17; Webb 1966, 1004; Taylor and Booth 1970, 166; Harwood 2011, 64.
- 77 The signed and dated drawing does not bear a shelfmark; it is kept at Murray Edwards College in the drawing cabinet in front of the Librarian's office. On Glover's work for Chamberlin, Powell & Bon see Harwood 2011, VI, 24, 66, 76, 118.
- 78 Marder 1998, 102-116.
- 79 NHAR 2/8/1/9/11, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 6.1.1966.

- 80 The literature on King's College is vast, but for the purposes of the present article it may suffice to quote Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 124-146.
- 81 NHAR 2/8/1/9/11, Letter from P. Chamberlin to R. Murray, 6.1.1966.
- 82 NHAR 4/4/20, No. 31.
- 83 Murray Edwards College, drawing without shelfmark in the drawing cabinet in front of the Librarian's office.
- 84 See previous note.
- 85 Murray's "brief" of 1959 demands "Space for up to 50,000 books", but the figure is corrected in pencil to "75000" (NHAR 1/1/1/6/6, "Architects brief", 5.3.1959). See also NHGB 5/1/1/0, Building Committee Minutes, 7.1.1964 (70,000 volumes). Taylor and Booth 1970, 164, even give the figure of 80,000 volumes.
- 86 Cfr. Campbell 2013, 24-25, 218-219, 223.
- 87 This comparison was already made by Taylor 1965, 17; Taylor 1966, 18; Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 156. The historical photograph is kept in NHPH 5/0/2.
- 88 Cf. Pérouse de Montclos and Polidori 1996, 109.
- 89 Cfr. Bieri and Fuchs 2001; Jochum 2010; Nerdinger 2011; Campbell 2013.
- 90 Cfr. Karlsen 2016.
- 91 Webb 1966, 1004.
- 92 In British 17th century formal gardens it was customary to have circular fountains in front of the main façades: cfr. Jacques 2017, VIII, 88, 95, 129, 134, 135, 138, 142; Francis 2018, 208.
- 93 Taylor 1965, 17; Taylor 1966, 17, 19; Taylor and Booth 1970, 161. The four staircase towers that surround the dome can be seen in the model (fig. 14).
- 94 Webb 1966, 1007; Taylor 1966, 18-19; Webb 1969, 21. Ayrtton 2017, 12, points out that "the clerestory transports the viewer to Justinian's Byzantium, where the glorious dome of the Hagia Sophia is designed to appear as if floating, through the use of clerestory windows allowing a band of natural light to filter in around the base of the dome." This comparison was already made by Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 156. Caroline van Eck referred me to John Soane's design for the Bank Stock Office, where the dome seems to be supported by a continuous band of windows: cfr. Dean 1999, 16, fig. 1.8. - The glass partitions between Dining Hall and staircases visible in fig. 24 were only recently added as protection against draught.
- 95 Harwood 2011, 64.
- 96 Taylor 1965, 17: „A giant tower crane on a miniature railway has been used to swing into place great chunks of concrete, larger in scale and more sophisticated in appearance than any yet seen in this country."
- 97 Taylor 1965, 17; Webb 1966, 1004.
- 98 Marder 1998, 186-209.
- 99 A similar, circular and "radiating" cupola was realized by Bernini at Castel Gandolfo: Marder 1998, 210-223.
- 100 The central opening of the dome was slightly changed during recent renovations. The original, even more Berniniesque situation is documented by a photograph published by Taylor 1965, 17.
- 101 NHGB 3/1/3, New Hall Council Minutes, 5.6.1967, p. 92: "Coat of Arms. The Council agreed that the time had now come for this matter to be actively considered, and asked for any suggestions from the Fellows." NHAR 1/1/1/11/3 contains undated proposals for a College motto from "Helen" who is most likely to be identified with Helen Clover, Lecturer in History from 1964-1974 (Murray 1980, 65 and plate XVII). As she mentions a "written device" for "a scroll underneath", her proposals seem to be related to the new coat of arms.
- 102 Taylor 1965, 17, likens the role of the canopied servery to the altar in church liturgy, perhaps alluding to Bernini's Baldacchino over the high altar of St. Peter's. Taylor 1966, 18, mentions that Chamberlin himself referred to the servery as „giant cornucopia".
- 103 <https://biblehub.com/proverbs/9-1.htm>
- 104 After I presented part of this paper as a lecture at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, a member of the audience made an interesting comparison with Manchester Central Library, where the central domed rotunda bears an inscription from Proverbs 4:7: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her, she shall give of thine head an ornament of grace, a crown of glory she shall deliver to thee." (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester_Central_Library.)
- 105 Webb 1966, 1007.
- 106 Taylor 1965, 16-17; Taylor 1966, 17, 19.
- 107 Taylor 1965, 17.
- 108 Taylor 1966, 19.
- 109 Taylor and Booth 1970, 161.
- 110 Taylor 1966, 19. See also Taylor and Booth 1970, 165-166: "The library's upper floors, which seem wasteful of space for the amount of shelving provided, are reached via an incongruously grand staircase and mannered Venetian-window arcading, reminiscent of Philip Johnson in the *haute-vulgarisation* of Palladio into a precast harem world." On the "minarets" see also note 93 above.
- 111 Taylor and Booth 1970, 166. See also Taylor 1966, 19: "New Hall seems a somewhat cynically masculine view of a women's college, with its purity of virginal white walls and ist curvaceous thrills of domes and rounded minarets – though perhaps at a time of growing emancipation, girls may prefer a man's view of their milieu in place of tweed skirts and knitting needles." Cfr. Muthesius 2000, 71: "The strongly emphasized centrally-placed multi-towered dining room occasioned some puzzled comments as to the possibly male interpretation of forms combined with the female whiteness of the concrete."
- 112 Jencks 1973, 249: "These New Imagists [Chamberlin, Powell & Bon] rebelled against their previous vernacular with an outburst of symbolism on to which the girls quickly and affectionately cottoned with the nickname, 'the great tit'."
- 113 Taylor 1966, 19.
- 114 Taylor 1966, 19.
- 115 Taylor's first article appeared in *The Illustrated London News* of June 5, 1965. As soon as on June 8, 1965, *The Financial Times* reported about the opening of New Hall under the headline "Arabia in concrete" (Wilson 2014, 255, note 146). *The Guardian* commented on "Saracenic extravagances" (Murray 1980, 36). P. D. James's detective novel *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (first published in 1972) describes the College as follows: "New Hall, with its Byzantine air, its sunken court and its shining domed hall like a peeled orange, reminded Cordelia of a harem; admittedly one owned by a sultan with liberal views and an odd predilection for clever girls, but a harem nevertheless." (James 2015, 88-89.)
- 116 Wilson 2014, 147. See also Bradley and Pevsner 2015, 155: "shades of Agra in the pool".

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