

Recollections of People, Places and Projects: Bretton Hall Campus Developments 1981-1993

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1 Introduction

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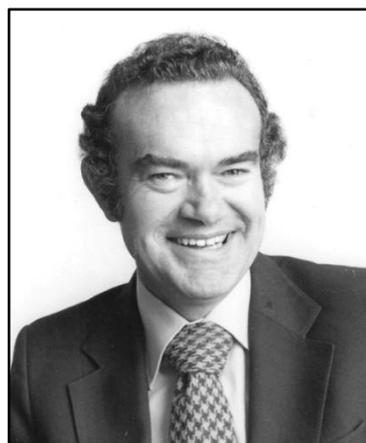
These notes represent a first attempt at draft memoirs to provide a limited background to the inaugural lecture in the National Arts Education Archive Annual Lecture Series. The instigation of this annual event was generously proposed by staff of the National Arts Education Archive to mark the Principal's role in helping to launch the Archive at Bretton Hall and in further fostering its development at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Happily, Professor David Hill, a former staff member and the Emeritus Harewood Professor of Art History at Leeds University, kindly agreed to present the foundation lecture on 'The Bretton Marbles'. This event is planned to coincide with the Annual Meeting of the Bretton Alumni on 13 May 2017 and scheduled to take place at the YSP.

In setting down these notes, the words of Dr Samuel Johnson seem relevant: 'The aim of writing is to enable readers a little better to enjoy life or a little better to endure it!' In this context, Alumni of Bretton Hall and the general public have a great deal to celebrate in the 80s era under discussion. It is hoped that some of the coverage of 'People, Places and Projects' may be enjoyed by the widest possible readership and provide a tribute to the successful and dynamic teamwork seemingly always the hallmark of Bretton Hall.

2 The Projects: 1981-1993

As a new College Principal in 1981, I inherited the fruits of nearly two decades of building inactivity as a consequence of post-war under-funding. Sadly, the post of Principal had been left vacant for six months prior to my arrival and Daphne Hale, the Vice-Principal, had kindly agreed to cover the interregnum prior to her own impending retirement. As a consequence, the challenge for any new incumbent was to identify what could immediately be done on a financial shoestring in collaboration with a variety of external agencies. Listed below are some of the people and projects which allowed Bretton Hall to move towards transforming its buildings and campus into a more stimulating and widely acclaimed learning environment, e.g.



Professor John Taylor - 1981

1) **Mansion Wine cellars** were stripped of their endless stone racking to provide much needed and greatly loved art studios. The labour force for the conversion came from a Manpower Services Training Scheme (MSTC) run in collaboration with the Wakefield Chamber of Commerce, thanks very largely to their entrepreneurial Director, Keith Welton. Happily all the stone racking slabs provided the terracing for a new external performance area outside the Sir Hubert Bennett College Hall in the Basevi courtyard. The opening ceremony brought together Elizabeth Frink, Henry Moore and Jean Casselman Wadds as our first newly appointed Honorary Fellows. Happily the College's Academic Board and Governors agreed to invite eminent individuals with prestigious international reputations and extensive arts education links to help foster our growing profile.

2) **The Mansion's extensive attics** were opened up to accommodate archival storage and workshop space for the National Arts Education Archive as a unique and valued teaching and learning resource. All this was achieved because of the goodwill and professionalism of the College porters/handyman under the direction of Paul Armitage, our Head Porter. In short, multi-tasking at its best with yesterday's rule book thrown out of the window and all comprehensively guided by Professor Ron George.

3) **The historic Conference Room, formerly the Beaumont Breakfast Room**, was renovated and upgraded, thanks to co-operation with the University of London's internationally acclaimed Courtauld Institute. Two extremely talented postgraduates were seconded to Bretton Hall for three months. Their task was to restore the decorative setting and, in particular, clean, renovate and secure the Palladian grisaille roundels – long neglected and seemingly not fully respected by World War II military occupants! The cost to the College was room and board for the Courtauld Training Scheme.



Beaumont Breakfast Room with Grisaille paintings

In a similar way the room's aged furnishings were restored under an MSTC apprenticeship training scheme. Alongside this work, thanks to our Governing Board Member, Dr Stephen Battye, the founder and Chief Executive of SKOPOS, and his father-in-law, Wesley Patterson, key Mansion rooms were uplifted by Skopos fabrics and their talented interior design team ideas

4) **Wyatt's Mansion roof lantern and Pillar Hall fabric** were restored under an Historic Building Grant where the Principal qualified as the on-site architect. Many will be aware that the Pillar Hall murals had been attributed to Agostino Aglio and when, in 1947, Hans Feibusch cleaned and restored them, he and his V. & A. team praised their outstanding architectural fantasies. Our job was to replace the lantern ring beam and stop water penetrating from the ageing and long neglected roof. All, once again, with the co-operation of freely available external experts, co-ordinated by London's national galleries, directed by Professor Sir Roy Strong. To celebrate the restoration we hosted Professor Tom Wood's first Bretton Hall public exhibition in Pillar Hall. A seminal event, much enjoyed by many.



Octagonal Lantern Over Pillar Hall

5) The Lawrence Batley Centre for the National Arts Education Archive provided an architect-designed new home for the unique collection. This very valuable teaching resource came into being, very largely, thanks to a former student who introduced us to Lawrence Batley, a leading local business man and philanthropist working with Professor Ron George, our former Academic Director who became Vice Principal. We were lucky that Lawrence Batley agreed to commission Building Design Partnership (BDP) to design and build the new building as a library extension, yet as a self-contained iconic unit with full archival air-conditioning. Fortunately Dr Tasker was BDP's senior partner in charge and, coincidentally, a long-standing friend. The result was that, with other charitable trusts' and benefactors' assistance, a multi-million pound project produced an outstanding and award-winning building – all on time and on budget, and attracting international acclaim following RIBA and Civic Trust Awards.

This multi-million pound project was significant not just in terms of the size of external support but also in relation to the level of private investment. Lawrence Batley's major commitment was further enhanced by Jo Bramley and the Bramley Trust and the family and friends of Denise Hemmings, one of our former students.

Alongside BDP's architectural stewardship we were exceptionally fortunate to have the services of MILNERBUILD, a valued local contractor, guided by John Fox, their much respected General Manager. The Lawrence Batley Centre, in effect, doubled the size of the Ninette de Valois Library. It doubled the reader spaces, the database capacity as well as the book stock space. A similar doubling was achieved at the end of my tenure, when Government accepted our bid to re-shape our learning resources and work stations appropriate to the cutting edge needs of the 21st century. This re-modelling of learning resources benefited greatly from the wise counsel of Bretton's new Higher Education Corporation Board of Governors. The academic panel of Dr Bob Adams and Professor Brian Carlson, both from Sheffield's two Universities and also Dr Malcolm Fraser, the former Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council all considerably enhanced the form and extent of our unique learning resource provision.



Official opening in 1991 of the Lawrence Batley Centre to house the National Arts Education Archive. Kenneth Clark (Secretary of State for Education) and Lawrence Batley unveil the nameplate.

6) The Victor Pasmore painting studio was built to cope with the need for more purpose-designed space for the growing number of Creative Arts students. Again, BDP, under Dr Tasker's direction, provided a very flexible low-cost solution, linking the Media Centre to the Music School. Arts integration became the order of the day and, happily, government agencies provided the funding to underpin our growth aspirations.

Again MSTC, with our own estate team, directed by Eddie Frost, Bretton Hall's Head Gardener, carried out the groundwork and extensive landscaping. The whole project linked isolated buildings and reinforced the College philosophy of valuing comprehensive arts integration, all fully appreciated by Victor Pasmore, who opened the building, became a Visiting Professor and from his own portfolios made a major artwork donation to the National Archive. Again the skilled contractors were MILNERBUILD who also in fewer than three months transformed and extended one of the tutors' houses into a children's nursery. This allowed the College to gain additional national funding to grow student numbers to the specific advantage of one parent and mature students. (See item 13)

7) The Beaumont Drive Avenue was given new life when the Beaumont family, the previous owners of Bretton Hall, came to our rescue when Dutch Elm disease decimated the avenue of trees lining the College Entrance Drive. A visit to the Hon. Richard Beaumont, who owned Purdy's gun shop in Mayfair and the Ascot Shooting School, resulted in his being talked into coordinating the family finances which, in time, culminated in many of the family joining in an official re-planting. It's a joy to see the trees have matured as a tribute to good heritage husbandry and enlightened custodianship.

8) **The Estate House and Barns courtyard re-development** resulted from NCB restitution funding arising out of their mining work. The MSTC scheme allowed us



Estate House

to fund most of the work with additional aid from the Wakefield Chamber of Commerce's Training Scheme. Within a year a scene of dereliction became a refurbished arts complex, mostly thanks to generous external funding and monumental goodwill. At last Jim Robison and Chris Jenkins had a studio complex in line with their international reputation.

9) **The Camellia House** was re-roofed and restored thanks to Historic Buildings Grants. Sadly all the flat hostel roofs were not so lucky as a rolling programme of pitched roofs was implemented over a three-year period. All this work was welcomed by Dr Derek Linstrum, the College's foundation architect, who formerly worked under Sir Hubert Bennett, the West Riding County architect at the time. The latter, incidentally, was the Principal's external examiner on his first-class honours graduation dissertation and, thanks to Sir Hubert and Lord William Holford's recommendation, gained the Royal Institute's Distinction award.



Camellia House

Happily, another award winner — Professor Lionel Marsh, Rector of the Royal College of Art—performed the official opening of the YSP George Richey Exhibition in the newly completed Camellia House renovation. As he and I were joint winners of the RIBA Darwin Prize in 1960, this was a long overdue reunion!

10) The Lakes and Reservoirs Act, and Dam Head spillway restoration resulted from new safety legislation and after extensive lobbying of government agencies they agreed to pay the multi-million pound bill. Thanks to the initial guidance from Professor



Eastwood and the brilliance of Mott MacDonald, the engineers, and Wimpey, the contractors, the project was a landscaping gem delivered on time and on budget – yes, becoming a College basic tenet. This award-winning scheme was a great credit to the outstanding engineers and contractors. They, jointly, attended to every detail right down to the selection of top of the range rambling roses to deter potential vandals on the slip way!

View of Dam Head Bridge across the Lower Lake

11) High Hoyland church was wonderfully renovated as a children's learning activity centre, thanks to co-operation between the Bramley Trust, the local Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, porters and student volunteers. As a consequence, many local children benefited from a learning experience that normally they could not afford, and our students got unique experience working with numerous disadvantaged children. Great credit is due to Mrs Jo Bramley, the Chair of the Trust for financing and motivating all concerned. As with numerous College projects this work was aided on many fronts by the enthusiasm of Peter Marshall from the Sir George Martin Trust. Peter was High Sheriff for West Yorkshire and could always be relied upon to garner support for the College and talented students.

12) The College chapel and formal garden terraces were restored and brought back into use, thanks to further NCB restitution funding. It was a minor miracle that, after years of neglect and unexpected mining activity a transformation was achieved. Sadly, our neighbouring estate, Wentworth Woodhouse was not as lucky with its battles with the NCB and their fight in the courts still continues as indicated later.



Upper Terrace Garden

13) A children's nursery was installed, with the help of government funds to expand and develop initiatives to underpin wider student access. As a consequence, a vacant tutor's house was considerably converted and extended. Similar funding allowed us to re-order the College medical centre in line with modern healthcare needs, ably guided by Dr Dennis Bradshaw, the senior partner of the Middlestown GP practice and long-time College supporter.

14) The Ezra Taylor building was totally re-configured as a revitalized teaching centre. Farewell to old style lockers and laundry rooms; the latter were re-located more centrally and securely in an up-dated format within the Mansion.

15) A new massive College estate header water tank brought us into the age of 21st century health and safety expectations! Each hostel block had the same treatment to doubly safeguard the health of the campus. It was all financed after extensive lobbying by the Exchequer.

16) Four landscaped car parks were introduced in place of long neglected and under-used netball and tennis courts. The in-house team, alongside the Chamber of Commerce MSTC, completed the refurbishment and landscaping at minimum cost and delay. Significantly, neighbours and local farmers now charge for this facility, formerly free to staff, students and visitors. Added to this, access and traffic management schemes brought academic diversions as distracting and effectively provocative as speed retarders!

17) Assorted petty cash projects went ahead, often with no more than a nod and a wink. The spirit of entrepreneurship seemed all pervasive. A flexible theatre with Elizabethan and Georgian options emerged as a consequence of talented technicians, aided and abetted by a new BA (Hons) in Theatre Technical Studies. This work in the historic Basevi courtyard was very ably guided by Professor Walter Hodges, on his all-too-short Visiting Professorship. Similar work was carried out on the top floor of the Mansion. Here all student bedrooms were replaced by teaching and staff rooms for the Education faculty. Apparently, out of nowhere, we delivered a 50-seater lecture room without disrupting the historic structure. In effect there were several significant gains including restoring and cleaning the Grecian grisaille.

Outdoor pursuits were in no way overlooked when the boathouse was renovated and a new windbreak landing stage was crafted from College waste. These efforts were, again, all supported by two gifted Training Directors and apprentices on the MSTC work programme. With this type of assistance our gardeners, at long last, acquired a permanent home. Henceforward they were more fully integrated into our campus management team, via propagation units, technical stores and much valued multi-purpose ancillary facilities.

With a similar magic wand, public toilets appeared in Kennel Block to accommodate the growing needs of campus visitors. In short, everyone was encouraged to embrace change and, above all, accept that doing nothing and complacency was never appropriate. Sundry officials did not always endorse this free thinking. We were pilloried for not using the appropriate so-called stark white colour of paint on the Mansion exterior woodwork. This challenging saga was only terminated when we threatened to go to a

planning appeal, arguing that all Georgian paint turned to a darker shade because of the iron oxide. Happily the local bureaucrats were convinced by our honorary expert witness panel of Dr Derek Linstrum, the Ratcliffe Reader in Conservation Studies at York University; Professor Sir George Grenfell Baines, the Head of the Architecture Faculty at the University of Sheffield, and Professor Sir Andrew Derbyshire, the Head of RMJM. Yes, friends who all agreed to kindly play an honorary role in the equivalent of 'Yes Minister', or should it be Porterhouse Blue?

It has to be noted that all this work took place as the College moved into an era of heightened health and safety plus increased risk awareness. Termly fire risk assessments were introduced in co-operation with Wakefield fire station. Last, but not least, annual Lakes and Reservoirs Act specification procedures became mandatory to regularize flow and minimise the risk of the lakes over-topping. In totality, an expanding list of best practice and good husbandry came into play and all drawing on a finite and very limited budget.

The preceding projects were all undertaken in an era of severe financial stringency for all higher education. It was a time when government was seeking to achieve senior academic staff cut-backs, in theory to save money via a very favourable early-retirement scheme. This mechanism became known as the 'Crombie' package whereby experienced teacher trainers were encouraged to retire on enhanced pensions. A large number of Bretton Hall staff took advantage of this scheme and the College was severely disadvantaged. Alongside this depletion of senior staff it was agreed to fund sabbatical leave to Dr Peter Murray to further the setting-up and the development of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. This secondment and generosity was underpinned by Bretton Hall's commitment to financing the enhanced provision of landscaping and facilities management essential to wider and free public access to the campus as a whole.

3 Concluding Remarks

Putting all the above in context, and set against the achievements of the West Riding County Council (WRCC), in the austerity years of the late forties, all the foregoing is very small beer. The then Chief Education Officer, Sir Alec Clegg, was seemingly undaunted when faced with post-war restrictions on spending, building licensing and virtually no building contractor availability. He was lucky in convincing the local authority to support dynamic lateral thinking. This strategy relied on an acceptance of a no-build philosophy! Instead, the WRCC acquired a remarkable range of 'listed' buildings at 'knock down' prices. This situation was brought about when historic estates were recovering from punitive death duties and the blight of onerous wartime requisitions.



Sir Alec Clegg

As a consequence, Bretton Hall, Wentworth Woodhouse and Wells House, amongst others, were acquired for new teacher-training establishments. Similarly, Grantley Hall and Woolley Hall became residential centres for the in-service training of teachers. Ingleborough Hall and Netherside Hall, likewise, became special schools overnight! The majority of the costs of these projects were centrally 'poolable' via government funds and very largely at the expense of the national exchequer!

Underscoring these itemized thoughts, as might be expected from a College Principal with an architect-planning background, there is a dominant tenet anchored to safeguarding, respecting and enhancing an iconic campus. The natural and historic environment had to be cherished with regard to cultivating a 'sense of place'. In short, Bretton Hall was constantly proclaimed as being a very special setting and, above all, worthy of enduring genius loci tender loving care.



Genius Loci

Not all of Bretton's 80s prospects were immediate outright winners. When student accommodation was in short supply we tried out a one year's trial at Wentworth Woodhouse. In the superb Palladian Mansion setting, over 100 students took over the purpose-designed former Lady Mabel College residential facilities. Thanks to the caretaker management of Marconi we signed a 12 months' fixed-term partnership agreement to give both sides vital breathing space. Logistics were on nobody's side and the arrangement was not extended — with no financial loss to either party. Sadly the Wentworth Woodhouse estate still awaits benefactors worthy of an inclusion in an update of Catherine Bailey's 'Black Diamonds'.

It remains to make clear that the burden of this brief account can only pick out isolated headings. The writer is painfully aware of Mark Twain's warning that the older he got, the better he remembered things – whether they happened or not! The National Archive staff have sought my recollections to help build up a comprehensive picture of post-war development projects. As a consequence, these small-scale snapshots have to be assessed alongside considerable academic change. On the academic innovation front there is another story awaiting documentation. In short, the College, in this period, moved from over 400 students on two Bachelor Degrees to an era of nearly 2,000 students on a dozen honours BA and MA programmes, alongside PhD. research and considerable educational outreach and in-service activity.

As perhaps this account has started to indicate, a deliberate attempt was made throughout the 80s and early 90s to raise the profile of Bretton Hall both nationally and internationally. Part of this charm offensive involved getting the 'great and the good' onto the Campus. Sir John Vereker from the Department of Education spent the day with us prior to taking up his Governorship of Bermuda. Demonstrating his advanced research, he arrived sporting a Wimbledon FC scarf! He was quick to remind me they were scheduled to play Forest in the FA Cup on the next Saturday. Similarly Dr Tony Higgins, Chief Executive of UCAS, who joined me as an HEI trustee was quick to challenge the soccer bragging rights between Leicester and Nottingham. Sir Raymond Rickett became an Honorary Fellow and generously did much to advance our interests in his roles on the British Council, EC and HEI. Both Dr Malcolm Fraser and Sir William Stubbs, as chairs of the Funding Council for Higher Education became repeat visitors. The former, in due course, becoming a governor on the newly constituted Governing Board. This wider involvement and intensive lobbying is very much illustrative of our wider promotional activity. Daphne Bird, the founding head of the Bretton Music School saw this as rapidly moving beyond what she called velvet rut isolationism!

Such friends 'at court' and similarly our unofficial 'honorary ambassadors at the London Embassies collectively helped to reinforce the Bretton Hall brand and promoted the overall awareness of our rapidly expanding distinctive portfolio. It was an era when we realised we had to be better organised, more effective and politically astute. Hence my very enjoyable 12 years on The Board of the Standing Conference of Principals and three years as its Chairman. In short isolationism and the status quo was not an option.

Finally, on this topic, it is noteworthy that many former members of staff and alumni still take a keen interest in the Bretton Hall Campus and in particular the work of the National Archive. Many are quite rightly quick to point out the exceptional sterling work of Colin Goulding as Director of Communications. Similarly deserving of equal mention was the top of the range admissions 'greet and meet' service operated by Tim Rowland Jones and Alan Brown. All three went well beyond the call of duty on top of their much valued teaching roles.

Flying the flag for the College often proved exhilarating as well as rewarding especially if generously funded by high profile external agencies. For example, as a former Nuffield Fellow at the University of Michigan, the Nuffield Foundation generously funded my visits as an International Scholar to the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) in Paris. As the only head of an English Institution present at the symposium deliberations, the Bretton Case Study took centre stage. Somewhat embarrassingly, being flown over by executive jet seemed to reinforce our unique position as a role model for educational innovation! Similarly, when Professor Duke, the Graduate Dean of the University of Michigan fell ill the day before his scheduled closing address to the OECD World Congress on Educational Innovation, he nominated me as the potential replacement. So, collecting my tickets on Friday night at Heathrow got me to Bilbao and a midnight taxi to Santander. Happily the Saturday night closing address in the Casino appeared to hit the jackpot. In short, the cry for help was undeniable and for a short while Bretton shot to world performance!

Even the above endeavours pale into insignificance alongside the publicity exploits of Professor Patrick Stanford, our one time Head of the Music School. Again, at short notice he flew out to New Zealand on a Friday, rehearsed the National Symphony Orchestra for a performance of his 3rd Symphony on Saturday evening. He flew back on Sunday and was back teaching in the department on Monday. On many fronts this

clearly put us on the map and ‘out-aced’ the globe-trotting Principal. More seriously, these and many related endeavours demonstrated that in a highly competitive educational market place this was no time to hide our light under a bushel. In short, Bretton could claim to be different. It had something unique to say and needed to establish that many more people heard it out loud. We had to be seen to be different and willing to celebrate in what ways we might be unique and valuable. Hence our music professors holding joint appointments with the Royal College rivalled the head of department travels throughout the academic year. Distinguished instrumental tutors such as Professor Anna Shuttleworth and Professor Keith Swallow were greatly valued and widely appreciated and generously funded by external agencies. Similarly OECD funded the Principal’s Consultant appointment in Paris with the additional assistance of the Nuffield Foundation. Flying the flag roles as Chairman of the Council of Europe’s Environmental Education Panel in Strasbourg facilitated wider College marketing throughout Europe.

As a consequence of much of the widespread activity, special thanks are also owed to the many heads of institutions who greatly helped foster twinning agreements with Bretton Hall. In particular, however invidious it is to single out individuals, specific mention must be made to Dame Janet Ritterman, formerly of Dartington Hall and the Royal College of Music; Dr Geoffrey Gibbs of the Western Australia Academy and the Executive team at Canada’s Banff International Arts Centre. At the European level generous EC funding allowed pioneering twinning agreements with Zwolle in Holland and Braganca in Portugal. All this collective collaboration and multi-disciplinary stimulation guaranteed that Sir Alec Clegg’s founding principles were made even more explicit throughout an ever widening range of exciting endeavours.



"A Very Special Place"

Finally, I should add that from the Standing Conference of College Principals (SCOP) a great debt is owed to Dr Alison Shrubsole from Homerton, Dame Janet Trotter from Cheltenham and Dr Mike Preston from Rolle, who all proved to be much valued allies. This involvement ensured that the College was very much engaged in national

developments and often at the cutting edge of ground-breaking educational change. Most significant in this regard was my three years as Chair of SCOP, serving on the consultation team for the Higher Education Reform Bill. Ultimately the new Act changed the whole College modus operandi and granted Bretton Hall almost complete autonomy aside from the academic statutes of the University of Leeds.

4) Acknowledgements

Thanks are owed to the many individuals and agencies who helped to change the culture and appearance of a College in transition. There is no way that so much could have been achieved without tremendous goodwill and ingenuity. Much was done to challenge the conventional wisdom. Clearly it is hoped that others may be provoked to sharpen this outline, be it fact, fiction or fantasy? Readers' recollections and photographic records would be greatly welcomed, especially if they can add to this account before and after the eighties. Similarly, endless research within the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds might be particularly rewarding. This prompts additional special thanks to their Vice Chancellors, Sir Edward Boyle, Sir Edward Parkes and Professor Sir Alan Wilson. Collectively their indulgence included the University financing campus trees to mark my retirement! Nelson's blind eye was often very helpful in isolating 'the wood from the trees' when events might have been even more challenging. At the local level similar indulgence and moral support was always forthcoming from the College governors and, in particular, Sir Alec Clegg, who was very largely instrumental in getting me to Bretton Hall. Bill Wright, Chief Education Officer and Dr David Biltcliffe, the Senior Education Advisor, greatly helped me maintain my sense of humour.

Last, but by no means least, great credit is due to Professor Rex Walford, a life-long friend and mentor on my Cambridge University Press book and my co-author on Penguin and Open University Press books. Rex and his Cambridge University Department of Education provided the external stimulus and a sounding board for endless external assessments of developmental options. Their good fellowship guaranteed that no project was ever seen as inconceivable or impossible! It is thanks to their help that the honing of many ideas took flight and frequently projects became rewarding developmental realities — often to many people's considerable surprise!

All the above were never reluctant to remind me that we did not have deep pockets or room for grandiose expansion schemes! Instead, creative collaborative endeavour had to be anchored to on-time/on-budget realities. Finally, the greatest thanks are owed to numerous students who endured constant transitional disruptions but played a very full part in shaping and enriching an ever more stimulating environment.

Professor John L Taylor. 2017

College Principal and Foundation Bramley Chair of Education 1981 – 93

Feedback would be welcome to j.taylor462@btinternet.com