CHAPTER II.

BUILDINGS OTHER THAN

HACKETT BUILDINGS.
In 1911, the Desbrow Annear plan was awarded the prize of £100 given by Dr. Hackett. This plan continued to be recognized and compiled with in all discussion and decisions until it was finally rejected in 1926.

An important feature of the Annear Plan was the allocation for Professor's houses to be built in the University of about ten acres of land at present occupied by Thatt House, St. George's College and Biology. This was perhaps the most desirable site for homes of the University. But the Professors did not like the idea of establishing their homes within the University precincts. Some of them had knowledge of friction which had developed in Melbourne on the continent of Europe and elsewhere where Professors and more important their wives were required to live in official residences at the University. Professors and their wives are in private life just ordinary folk. They did not want to be in the same condition. In any instance of making a fresh start elsewhere, it was not attractive. The first Professors' house was appointed at a salary of £800 per annum and £100 house allowance until the University could build official residences. They were not long in making it known that they preferred to receive the £100 in cash and liberty to make their own housing arrangements.

Physics and Agriculture.
In July 1922, the Senate asked the Heads of Departments to report as to how, if at all, the accepted layout (Annear plan) needs to be altered. The Senate also decided to ask the Government to provide funds for the accommodation at Crawley of the Departments of Biology, and Geology.

The Heads of the Departments reported on the Annear plan:

1. Unnecessary to provide residences for Professors' homes.
2. That the area marked for Professors' Houses be used for the Science Department.
3. to 7. were other minor alterations but no departure from the General Annear Layout.

In April 1923 the Premier wrote that the Public Works Department had been authorised to prepare plans for the Departments of Biology and Geology on the Site suggested by the report (26/7/22) of the Departmental Heads.

March 1924 Professors Nichols and Clarke were appointed a Committee to deal directly with the Contractor in reference to details of the plans of their respective Departments.

March 1925 the Vice Chancellor reported he did not think any opening ceremony was necessary and the Departments of Biology and Geology had been transferred to the new premises.

The buildings had been erected by Mr. Arnott, the Contractor at a cost of £19,000.

The buildings to house Physics and Chemistry had a much more chequered history. No less than six sets of plans were prepared. Notwithstanding all this planning Professor Ross was the only person concerned who expressed satisfaction with the completed building. Wilsmore and Tattamall both bitterly hostile and disappointed.

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There has always been dissatisfaction with the Biology and Geology buildings. In May 1947 during an inspection by members of the Senate we were informed by Professor Nicholls that when it was known in 1923 that the Public Works Department were to prepare plans. Professor Clarke and he spent some time in preparing sketch plans of which they thought the layout should be.

These they placed in the care of the then Vice Chancellor, Professor Shann to be forwarded to the Public Works Department.

When in March 1924 the two Professors were requested by the Senate to deal directly with the Contractor they were astonished to find that the plans bore no resemblance to those they had prepared in 1923. On inquiry they found that their plans had never left the Vice Chancellor's Office. The contract had been signed and it was too late to do anything. The Professor was justifiable sarcastic in his reference to a perfectly useless but very expensive stone Belfry which protrudes through the roof and requires for its support stone pillars down through the two main Laboratories.
the details of floor space required by Chemistry and Physics submitted by Wilsmore and Ross with a recommendation that the co-operation of principal Architect be obtained for the preparation of provisional plans - Estimated floor space for Chemistry 21,950 sq. feet, estimated floor space for Mathematics and Physics 17,930 sq. feet.

December 1923 - That the Government be asked to erect buildings to cost £20,000 for Physics and £2,500 for Engineering and to intimate to them that a further building for Chemistry would be necessary next year.

In May 1924 the above request was repeated and in June the Public Works Department submitted plans for a brick building for Physics to cost £17,200. These plans were approved by the Senate.

Nothing further is recorded until December 1925 when the Chancellor announced that no funds had been provided for this building but from a private conversation he had had with the Premier he thought there would be better hope next year.

This was the last to be heard of this No 1 set of plans for Physics.

In March 1926 the Senate was informed by Public Works Department that approval had been given to the Government Architect preparing plans for the Physics Department. Still no mention of Chemistry.

June 1926 Plans for Physics and Engineering buildings 1 aid on Table. This was the last to be heard of No 2 set of plans for Physics.

A great change had come over the ideas of the Senate and particularly of Whitfeld as to the type of building desired. The great Hackett Bequest had come to fruition and Whitfeld had persuaded the Senate to change its layout of Crawley to accord with Wilkinson's ideas. Whitfeld had written his letter of 25th November 1927 to Wilkinson practically appointing him Consulting Architect for the Science Buildings and consulting Architect for the Hackett Buildings.
Whitfeld to Wilkinson 25th November, 1927 -

"We are still arguing with the Government on the question of working drawings for the Physics Building. The University would prefer to have you make the working drawings (as a fact the Senate only a few days before this was written had referred Wilkinson's ideas of layout to the Building and grounds committee for report and whether the committee approved or disapproved of the layout is not recorded)

"but the Government architect is very stiff-backed over the matter ... . If we could arrive at some compro- mise position whereby you would be "associated" with him as Architect ........ In such an arrangement I presume we would give you a larger fee than 2% as Consultant ........ I suggest we make it say 1% on the cost of buildings ........... The question of consulting Architect on the Hackett Buildings is still deferred. ........ The University might manage perhaps to extract £500 for a consulting fee including say £100 as retainer for two years, £75 for the model and the balance to cover the cost of two or three trips to the West."

Wilkinson wrote December 1927 stating that the proposals were acceptable to him and Whitfeld considered the matter as finalized.

However, both proposals were afterwards repudiated by the Senate, that relating to the Hackett Building on the advice of Alsop who said that no consulting Architect on his job was necessary. The dispute over Wilkinson's fees for work done on the Physics and Chemistry buildings dragged on for over six years until in July 1933 the Senate very grudgingly agreed to pay a fee of £100. As Whitfeld's proposal was 1% on the cost of the building which grew to £60,000 Wilkinson had a very serious grievance.

These details are given for they are the foundation of the quarrel by which Wilsome who as Sir David Rivett pointed out was at the time one of the Worlds best qualified man to design a Laboratory was denied the opportunity of designing his own Laboratory.

Whitfeld had been closely associated with Wilkinson at Sydney University and in his peculiar way, Whitfeld was determined to have his Wilkinson's services for University building. If he considered his ability to be superior to others offering there could be no objection to the Vice Chancellor pushing Wilkinson's case, provided he did it in a proper way by securing Senate approval of each move he
proposed to make. But that was not Whitfeld's way, his way was in the absence of specific opposition to act as if his ideas had been endorsed and to commit the Senate to expenditure and appointments far beyond his authority.

In November 1927 a letter was received from the Under Secretary, Public Works Department saying that the Minister for Works was of the opinion that the new Physics buildings should be designed by and erected under the Government Principle Architect.

Although as I have previously stated the business of Wilkinson's plans for the Science buildings was not finalised for another six years, this November 1927 letter from Public Works Department may be said to have destroyed the third set of plans drawn for the Science buildings.

In the two years that followed to October 1929, the Government Architect had prepared his plans for in that month a letter came from the Premier saying that the calling for tenders for the erection of the Science buildings had been arrested until after Parliament had dealt with the Loan estimate. This seems to have been the end of the 4th set of plans.

June 1930 - Letter from Public Works Department asking for release of Temporary Buildings in Irwin Street for Government purposes. The reply was that the University was unable to consider relinquishing any until the Physics building was erected and further raising suspended negotiations with Collier as Premier for transfer to University of Irwin Street permanently in exchange for some of Loc. 1715 at Subiaco.

In December the University Building Act 1930, was passed. The object of this Act among other things was to enable the Science Buildings to be erected by the aid of Hackett Bequest. But as pointed out elsewhere it was to come into effect on proclamation and it was not so proclaimed until 1934.

31/7/1930 Whitfeld to Alsop offering terms
upon which he will be Architect for the Science buildings. 18/12/1930 Whitfeld to Alsop giving definite provisions as to his engagement. Senate December meeting at the instigation of Whitfeld Rodney Alsop appointed Architect for the Science Buildings.

30/12/1930 Alsop to Whitfeld accepting Whitfeld's terms of 18/12/1930.

6/1/1931 James (Chancellor) to Whitfeld warning him -

"that he (James) had received protests from members of the Senate against positive appointment of Alsop before the Buildings Committee had considered either the terms of his appointment or his sketch plans. Rumours had got abroad that Alsop was ordering window frames and other features in the East."

Alsop attended the Senate meeting in March 1931 and presented his plans.

How Alsop's appointment was to fit in with that of Wilkinson and the work of the Government Architect is not stated.

April 1931 - Vigorous protest from Professor Tattmell, acting with Wilsmore's concurrence against the plans and the Senate decided to request the Architects to hold up preparation of Drawings until further discussion with the Professors concerned. As Acting Vice Chancellor I was requested to see Professor Wilsmore and ascertain if it was possible to meet his objections. The gist of my report was that the Professor wanted an up to date Chemical Laboratory, that was essential and he would prefer a plain brick building which he could alter to suit changing requirements rather than have money spent on Architectural features. An ornamented facade could be added when more money was available.

My report to the May 1931 meeting was received but no action was taken with the result that Professor Wilsmore wrote to the Chancellor in his vigorous sarcastic
style.

Letter from Professor Wilsmore, 16th May, 1931, to the Chancellor -

"The Wilkinson Plan required the science Laboratories to be jammed into a sort of Barracks attached to the main block, thereby throwing away all the advantage of the former scheme (Annear layout). In other words the Wilkinson scheme makes the University into a sort of congested district, which, though permissible in the heart of London where Wilkinson was trained, cannot be justified on the University Site of over 160 acres. By the Wilkinson plan all freedom of design and provision for the rational extension of the individual science departments is lost and the proximity of the science buildings to the main block almost forces their Architecture to conform to that of the main building thereby leading to wholly unjustifiable expenditure.

Science Laboratories become obsolete after 30 or 40 years consequently, to spend money unnecessarily on the outside is waste. One argument which has been advanced in favour of Wilkinson's plan that students get from one building to another under cover (Whitfeld had stressed his assertion that students had to go out into heavy rain) seems to me to be rather childish. In Germany a University is usually scattered about the town to which it belongs and no one is any the worse.

........In September 1929 the Vice Chancellor came to me with a proposal to still further close packing namely to house both Chemistry and Agriculture in the same building ....... I would have nothing to do with sharing with another Department ....... Whitfeld stated, the Senate had decided that the two Departments had to be in the same block and asked if I had any objection to Tottersall undertaking the work of preparing plans ........ Tottersall had devoted much time to the project but the limitations as to space imposed had beaten him. ........I would suggest at least 2 acres be reserved for Chemistry to allow for prospective extensions including Bio-Chemistry, Metallurgy and general Technical Chemistry.

If this cannot be done in the Wilkinson congested area, I suggest we revert to the previous scheme (Annear) and place the Chemistry Laboratories on the land north of the Perth Fremantle Road."

The next month after this was written, the Premier wrote (June 1931) that -

"Owing to the financial position (the great depression was on) it was necessary to suspend any idea of proceeding with the Science Buildings."

So ended the 5th set of plans. They were of no more value to the University even if finished, than so much scrap paper, but they were unfinished. Nevertheless the University had to pay Alsop £1150 for them. Whitfeld tried hard to persuade the Senate to pay another £50 to have them finished. But the Senate did not think them worth it.
Although Alsop had been at work on the plans for nearly two years there was still no money in sight with which to erect the buildings. The University buildings act was not proclaimed until 1934. In October, 1931 negotiations were opened with the Directors of the "West Australian" to secure the necessary money against the £150,000 debentures but without success.

Then Whitfeld wrote to Shann, who was in the employ of the Bank of N.S.W. in Sydney, to see if it would be possible to secure from the Bank the £60,000 desired on the security of the debentures. The matter was referred to the Local Bank Inspector and the Bank finally seemed agreeable to the proposition. Then someone questioned the legality of the proposal and Whitfeld wrote to the Premier (20/11/31) asking for amending legislation to make it legal. But the Premier apparently adhered to his decision conveyed in his letter of June 1931—

"Owing to the financial position it is necessary to suspend any idea of proceeding with the Science buildings."

So all efforts to find money to build to Alsop's plans failed. One unfortunate result from Whitfeld's method of engaging Architects before there was money to build was that, to pay Alsop's bill of £1,150 that sum had to be taken "for the time being" from the Hackett building fund. A quite improper thing to do.

In October 1931 the Vice Chancellor directed the attention of the Senate to the fact that Professors Paterson (Agriculture) and Wilsmore (Chemistry) would shortly reach the retiring age of 65. In the case of Paterson it was decided to insist upon retirement then, but in the case of Wilsmore he was asked to continue, which he did with full vigour as a teacher, until he was 70.

These impending changes again led to other plans. The Department of Agriculture was eliminated from the proposed Science buildings and Wilsmore continued to
to struggle for the design he thought necessary.


Two months after this Alsop died, 27/10/32. [Nov-ember 1932, Chancellor announced that the Government had decided to transfer the Irwin Street Temporary Buildings, except the administration Building, to Crawley. Owing to the depression there was urgent need to find employment for skilled men. The transfer was completed without cost to University in time for use in March 1933. They were used for Botany, Education, and Psychology. In 1945 Law and the Law library were also housed in them.

November 14th, 1933. Whitfeld profounded a grand building scheme for the erection of Hostels for Men and Women students and buildings for Physics and Chemistry, the whole to cost about £80,000. It was to be financed under the University Building Act 1930. He recommended as Architects the firm of Cox and Summerhayes.

With regard to the finances, Whitfeld saw the Minister for Works, and Mr. McCallum agreed to recommend to the Premier "Collier" to make a cash contribution to the cost of the total scheme on condition that up to 70% of the labour employed was drawn from men who otherwise would be drawing sustenance allowance from state funds.

22nd May, 1934 - Deputation to Collier about the matter and he surprised and delighted the deputation by raising the Government's contribution to £15,000 provided the 70% of "sustenance men" were employed.

17th July, 1934 - Letter from Shapcott (Premier Secretary) - "Whitfeld's letter of 22nd May correctly embodied Premier understanding."

12th October, 1934 - Letter from the Premier (Collier) - "As the Contractor for the Science Buildings had not employed 70% of labour from the unemployed he would withdraw his undertaking to find £15,000."
This put an end to the possibility of erecting Hostels, for the University Building Act 1930 did not provide for them.

March 1934 - The Buildings Committee reported on a Physics and Chemistry building to consist of basement and ground floor and provision for future third story.

The estimated cost was £49,000. If the much discussed cloisters were included, £3,000 more would be required, and if Coogee stone were used in preference to brick and stucco, another £2,000.

The Chancellor received a vigorous protest against the adoption of these plans from Professors Wilsmore and Tottersall, they had not been consulted and had been excluded from the Committee. The reply by the Committee was a charge of non-co-operation except on their own terms against the Chemistry Staff. The truth is that there was something in both charges. The dispute became personal and bitter. Whitfeld and Ross on one hand with Wilsmore and Tottersall on the other. The Architects were in an unhappy position and the effect on the building very bad.

April 1934 - Plans for the Science buildings (Physics and Chemistry) prepared by Cox and Summerhayes were accepted by the Senate.

June 1934 - The tender from Mr. Deacon for the erection for £52,273 was accepted and work commenced on June 11th.

October 1935 - the building was officially opened on the 25th October.

Professors Wilsmore and Tottersall emphasized their dissatisfaction by being absent, and Professor Ross wrote expressing his complete satisfaction.

June 1936 - Total cost announced as £59,591.

ENGINEERING BUILDING.

When the Department of Engineering was moved from Irwin Street to the Shenton Homestead in 1914, only
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April 1934 - Plans for the Science buildings (Physics and Chemistry) prepared by Cox and Summerhayes were accepted by the Senate.

June 1934 - The tender from Mr. Dancer for the

On an inspection in 1947, Professor Ross told us that after 15 years use of the Physics building he was so satisfied with the design that he would not, if he could, alter a single feature.

The layout was his own.

from Irwin Street to the Shenton Homestead in 1914, only
slight adaptations were made to the old building. Approval of the shift was given in March 1914, with the modest expenditure of £250. They were apparently quite adequate for Professor Whitfeld's needs until 1923 when in conjunction for a request for £20,000 for Physics a modest £2,500 was asked for the Engineering Department.

June 1926 - Plans of Engineering building laid on Senate Table. They provided for a two storied building, a lecture room on the ground floor with a drawing office upstairs.

It was erected in 1927 by day labour by the Public Works Department at a cost of £8,825. The brick work shown by the outer walls is an example of high grade craftsmanship.