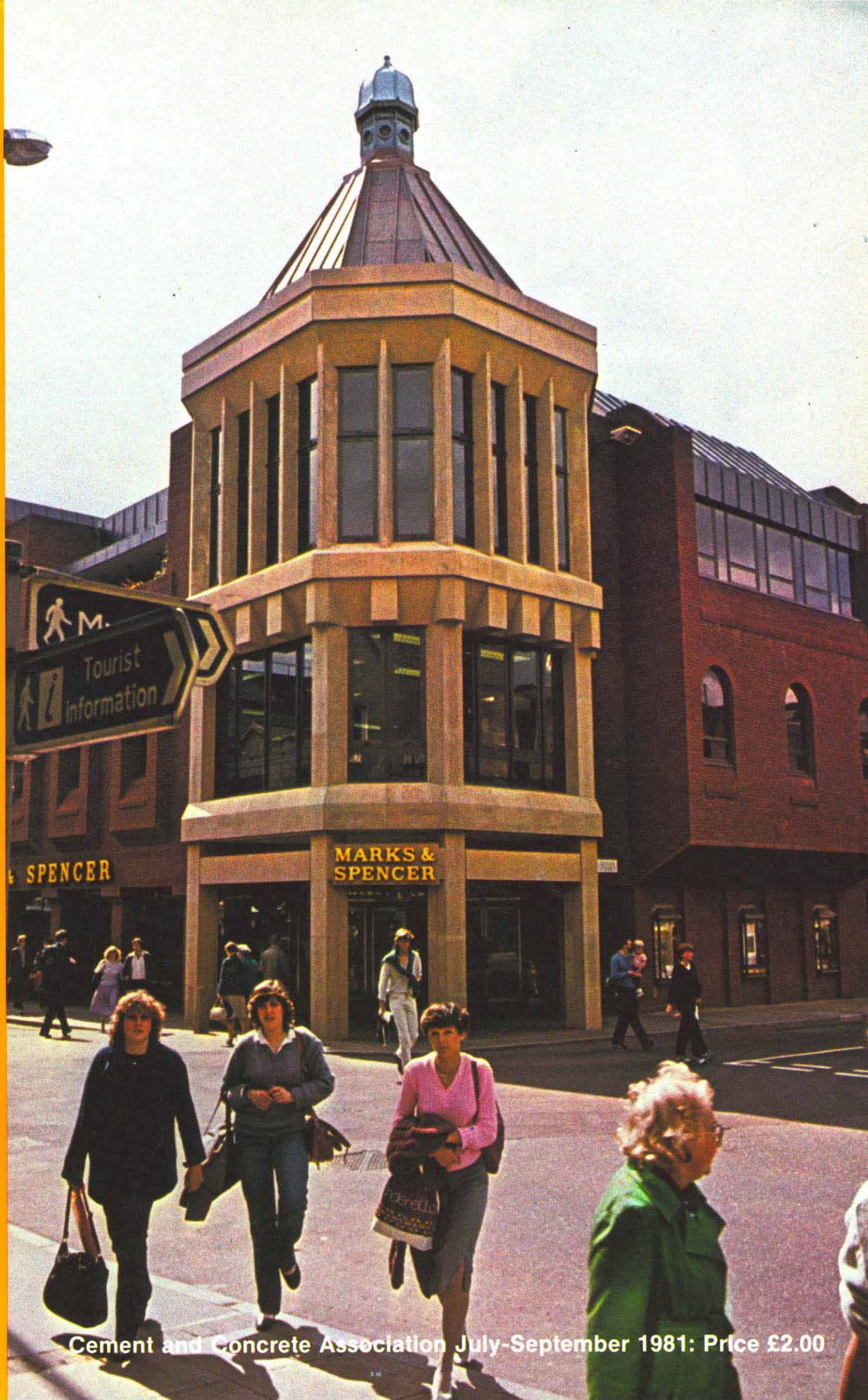
CONCRETE QUARTERLY 130



Cement and Concrete Association July-September 1981: Price £2.00

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1981

CONCRETE QUARTERLY 130

Editor: GEORGE PERKIN DiplArch, RIBA
Designer: ALAN ROBBINS

Published by
CEMENT AND CONCRETE ASSOCIATION
Wexham Springs
Slough SL3 6PL

Editorial Office:
CEMENT AND CONCRETE ASSOCIATION
52 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0AQ

FRONTISPIECE:
Pinelodge Old People's Home, Belmont Road, Belfast (page 2). Photograph: Anderson & McMeekin Photography by courtesy of The Architectural Press.

FRONT COVER:
The new corner pavilion of Marks & Spencer's store, Exeter (page 20).

U and non-U

It almost goes without saying nowadays that one of the key issues of building today - if not *the* key issue - is energy conservation. Strange to recall that some 20 years ago, this Association was having an uphill struggle to get people interested in a leaflet entitled *Warmth without waste* which set out how dramatically you could cut your fuel bills by building in proper insulation to outer walls. But in those days of relative affluence and lower fuel costs, the issue was nothing like as pressing as it is today.

So the new provisions to improve energy conservation in buildings, just announced by Geoffrey Finsberg, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department of the Environment, are to be welcomed. They are to be incorporated in the Building Regulations and set out higher standards - or lower U values - for thermal insulation in the roofs and walls of domestic buildings, as well as requiring space and water-heating systems in non-domestic premises to be fitted with controls designed to save fuel, and the insulation in all premises of pipes, ducts and storage vessels.

Briefly, the roofs of domestic buildings are to be insulated to a U value of 0.35, and walls of domestic buildings to a U value of 0.6 - a great improvement on the standards at present required by the Building Regulations i.e. 0.6 for roofs and 1.0 for walls (often no special provision for walls is required). It is calculated that, depending on how people heat their homes, the extra cost of insulating dwellings should be recouped in reduced fuel bills within a few years.

Without wishing to labour the point, it seems appropriate in the causes of this journal to point out that standard 'masonry' construction - that is to say walls of either concrete blocks and bricks, or walls entirely of concrete blocks - used in conjunction with proven insulating materials, not only meets the new insulation requirements comfortably, but considerably exceeds them. For instance, it is possible to obtain a U value of 0.45 by using rendered walls of insulating concrete blocks together with a cavity insulation lining. Moreover, the heat storing capacity of 'masonry' construction provides an unrivalled degree of thermal comfort.

From the appearance point of view, we might also remember that the rendered external wall - which comes into the above category - offers splendid opportunities for whiteness, brightness and colour, as the photograph on the opposite page and the first article in this issue very well demonstrate.

Apart from which, solid 'masonry' construction such as this is all in the tradition of good sound building practice with lasting prospects for the future. And that, you might say, is no light matter.

THE ELDERLY AT HOME

Five old people's homes in Northern Ireland

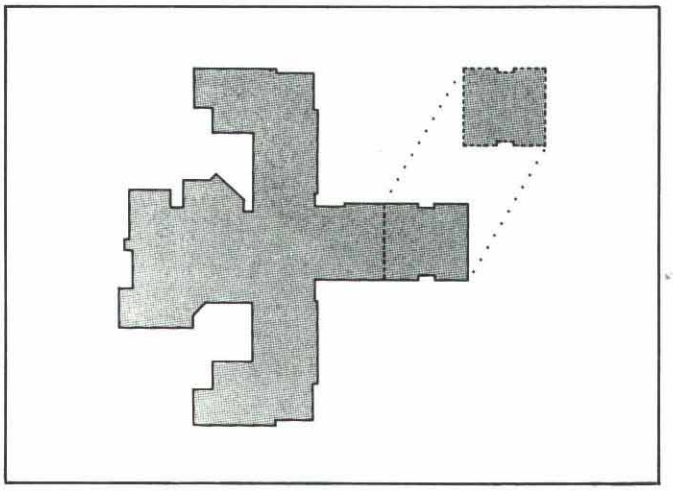
Pinelodge Old People's Home, Belfast.

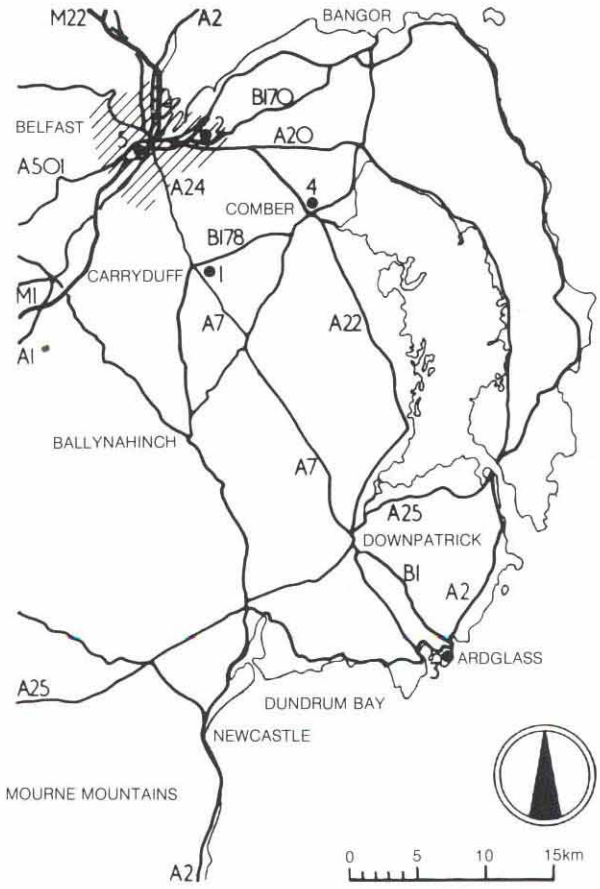
Client:	Department of Health and Social Services
Architects:	Robinson & McIlwaine (working with Chief Architect's Branch, DHSS) Partner-in-charge: Victor Robinson Project architect: Alan Cook Assistant architect: Peter McGuckian
Structural engineers:	Taylor & Boyd
Quantity surveyors:	DHSS Chief Quantity Surveyor's Branch
Main contractors:	C. A. Thompson & Co. Ltd (Pinelodge) Savage Brothers (Carryduff) H. J. O'Boyle Ltd (Ardglass) Calvert Brothers (Comber) P. J. Walls Ltd (Cullingtree Road)
Landscaping:	City Garden Specialists (Pinelodge, Carryduff and Ardglass) G. Swift (Comber)
Photographs:	*Anderson & McMeekin Photography by courtesy of The Architectural Press*

Right: Diagrammatic plan. The residential block may be detached, as shown.

Below right: Typical ground and first floor plans and section.

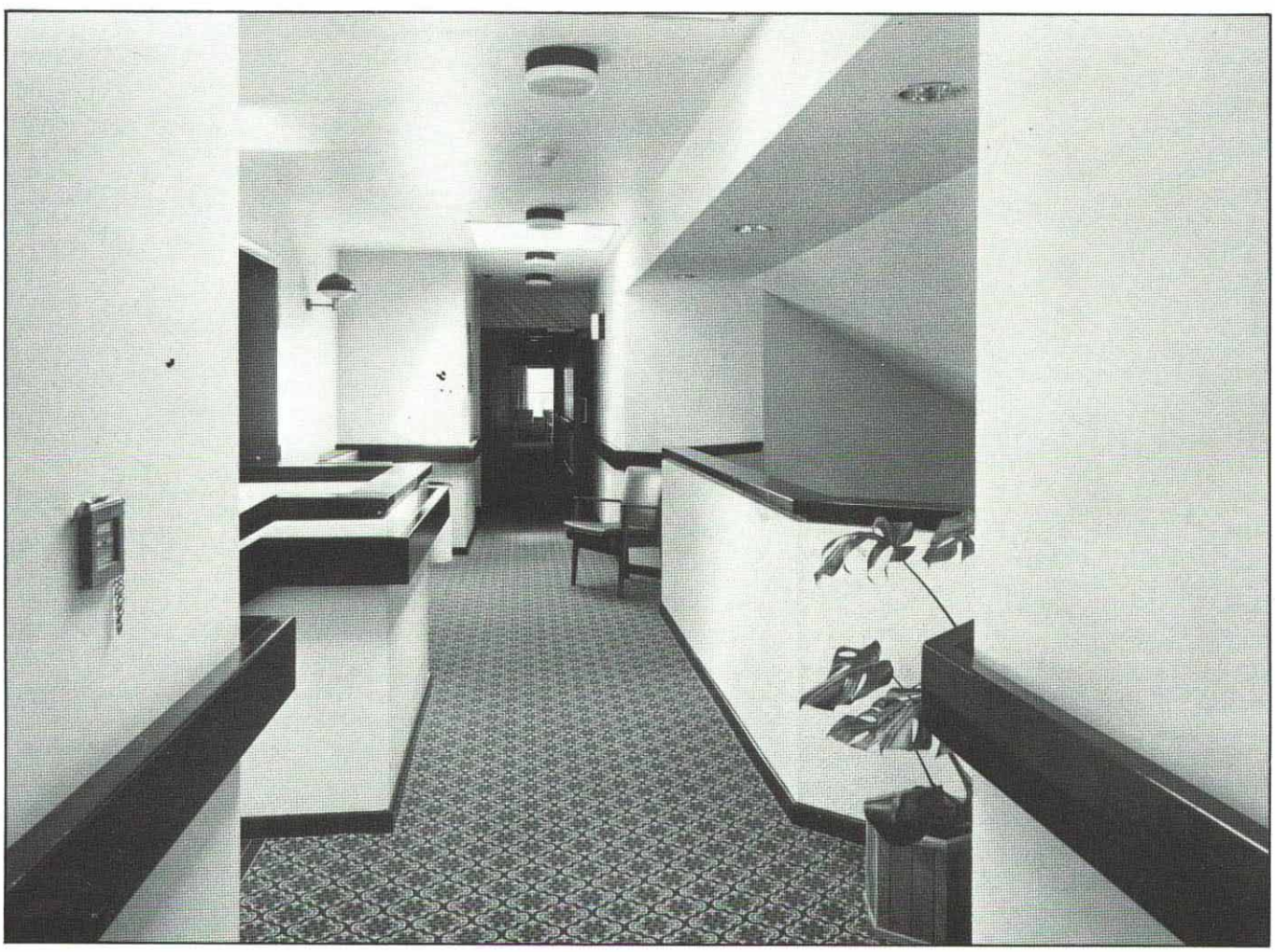
Below: Location map.





With the large increase in the number of very elderly people in our society, provision for their care is an acute problem. Nowadays it is commonplace for people to live into their nineties. State 'homes' that are really well run are scarce and have long waiting lists. The only alternative for many is an expensive privately run place ranging from the suburban villa indifferently organized by unqualified staff in a manner that ought to be exposed as a national scandal, to the well-run house with efficient qualified staff where there will also be a waiting list for a bed at around £200 a week or more. As the unprincipled have been quick to notice in the former case, there is money in the dependencies and infirmities of extreme old age.

So it is all the more heartening to be able to include in this journal a series of five recently-built homes for the very elderly in Northern Ireland which provide a practical framework not just for efficient care but also for that absolute essential of all such places: a cheerful atmosphere of 'home from home' where very old people can preserve their dignity and as much independence as the frailty of



THE ELDERLY AT HOME *continued*

their bodies will allow. The aim throughout has been to recreate the familiar and eliminate as much as possible the institutional – even at the expense of obviously 'architectural' interiors. The average age of resident is generally in the mid eighties.

From the architectural point of view, the most interesting point about these homes is that they all derive from a standard design. The brief was to design a standard 45-bed old people's home suitable for construction on a variety of sites, both urban and rural, for the Eastern Health and Social Services Board for Northern Ireland. This has worked out surprisingly well in practice and although the homes are all based on a standard plan, each has already developed an individual character of its own depending on the differing types of residents and staff, and the widely varying character of the sites ranging from inner city and suburban to rural, riverside and coastal. Finishes and colours have been varied to suit the contexts.

One of the main design criteria has been to reduce the overall mass of the buildings by breaking them down into a series of small domestic elements where all the elevations are important as each is potentially the main elevation on any given site. The most important element of design is the individual bedroom. From the structural point of view, materials have been chosen to suit both urban and rural environments with simple loadbearing walls and pitched roofs, and suspended floors of prestressed concrete planks. Rendered concrete blockwork was finally chosen for the walls on grounds of cost and this choice also presented the architects with an opportunity to use colour in a range of autumnal tints of orange and buff for rendered wall surfaces and brown for concrete tiles on roofs. Smooth rendered bands of contrasting colour form plinths and surround certain windows. The finishes can of course be varied with smooth or rough textured renderings on walls of any colour and concrete tiles or asbestos-cement slates on roofs.

Opposite top left: Pinelodge. Rendered walls are painted off-white and beige with dark brown plinths and window bands (see frontispiece).

Opposite bottom left: Pinelodge interior, showing robust, simple and practical detailing.

Below: Carryduff Old People's Home and library.

Carryduff. The library is on the left. Roughcast walls are painted white and roof tiles are dark brown.

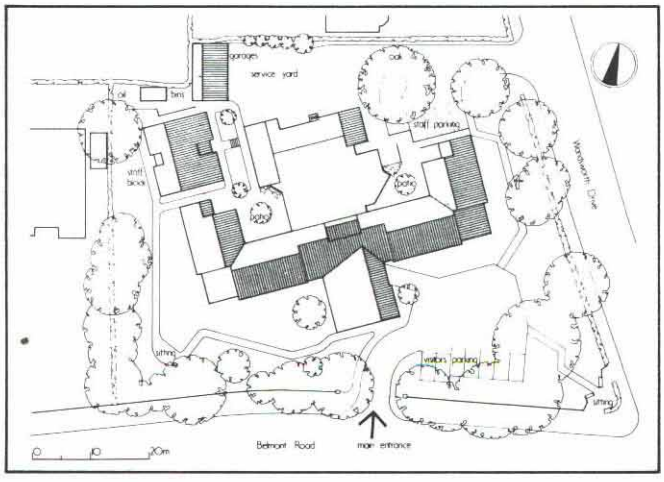
Ardglass Old People's Home. Rendered walls are white and roof tiles are heather-brown.

THE ELDERLY AT HOME *continued*

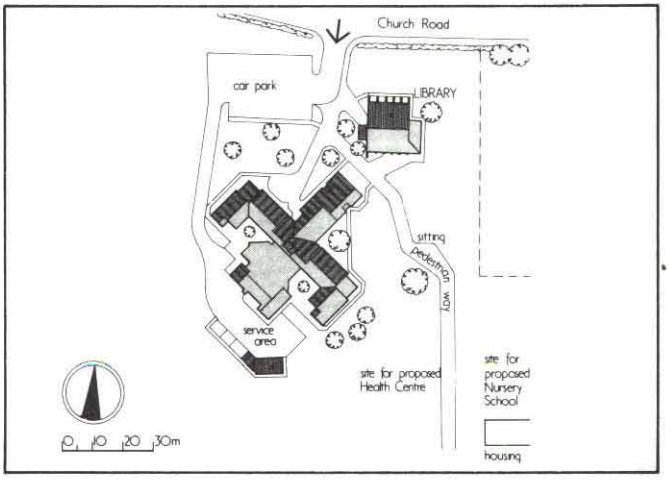
Pinelodge Old People's Home, Belmont Road, Belfast
Pinelodge is in a mature residential suburb of Belfast facing a busy main road. The site is small and a number of mature trees, including a tall redwood and a large oak, have been retained with the buildings carefully sited between. To suit the site, the staff block is separate in this instance. The home provides long-term and day care. The boarders and day boys of a nearby school tend the gardens and play games with the residents – an ideal arrangement from all points of view.

The buildings are well integrated in scale with the adjoining domestic properties. Concrete block walls are finished with a roughcast cement rendering painted off-white in parts and beige in others, with dark brown plinths and window bands. Concrete roof tiles are also dark brown.

Carryduff Old People's Home, Church Road, Carryduff
This home forms an integral part of what will eventually be a community centre for a satellite suburb. Together with a school and nursery school, a health centre and library, it is linked with housing areas and a local shopping centre by a pedestrian network. It will thus contribute to the developing village character of an area which was in danger of becoming merely a dormitory housing estate used by commuters to Belfast. White-painted roughcast walls and dark brown concrete roof tiles, although 'traditional' types of finish, distinguish the home and the library from the



Pinelodge site plan.



Carryduff site plan.

Ardglass – cheerful and domestic entrance hall.

THE ELDERLY AT HOME *continued*

housing and give emphasis to the community centre.

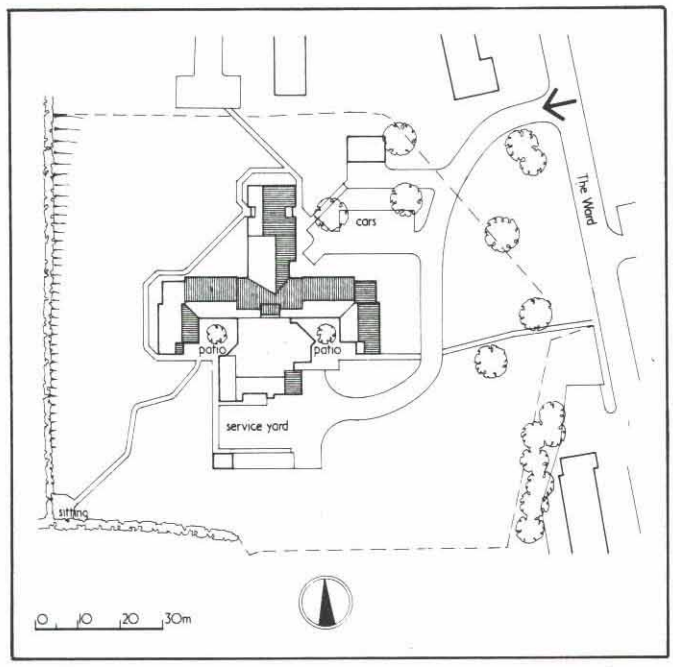
The home provides for long-term and day care. Great interest is taken by the old people in surrounding activities, particularly in the school and the excellent library nearby which was designed by the same architects and is well used by residents. Perhaps the most important social point about this home is that it is now recognized as part of the village with close community links. Local people run a shop in the home.

Ardglass Old People's Home, The Ward, Ardglass

This home is sited overlooking the fishing village of Ardglass in County Down, below the coastguard tower. There are open views across Dundrum Bay to the mountains of Mourne. The gently sloping site shares boundaries with two new housing developments and is visible from several miles away on the Ardglass/ Downpatrick road. The building is finished with a dry-dash rendering of white sand and limestone chippings and heather-brown concrete roof tiles.

The home is shared by both long- and short-term residents as an important policy decision: the authorities are conscious of the demands made on relatives caring for the elderly in their own homes, so that in some respects this could be looked upon as a 'holiday home'. Relationships with the local community, including children from the housing estates, are well established and local residents help to run a shop in the home.

The scale, finishes and pitched roofs of the building relate well to surrounding houses and the character of the older properties in Ardglass.



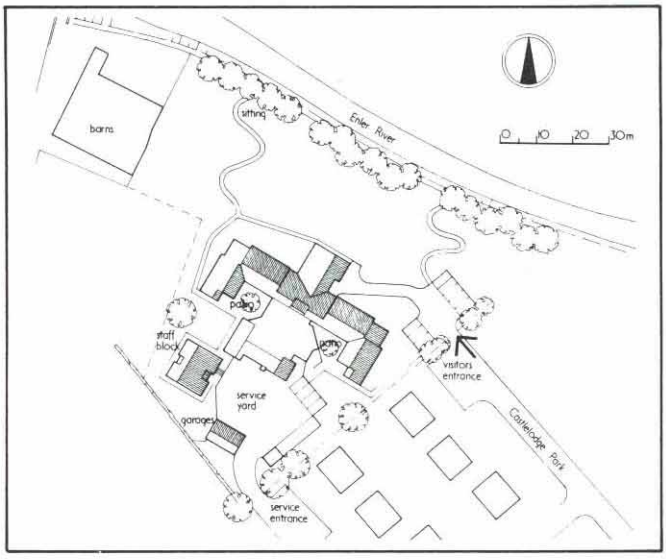
Ardglass site plan.

Comber Old People's Home, Castlelodge Park, Comber

The home is at the top of a sloping site on the edge of a busy market town. There are views over the rolling County Down countryside to Scrabo Tower and Stormont. The

Comber Old People's Home on a sloping site with fine views over rolling countryside. Finishes are white and brown.

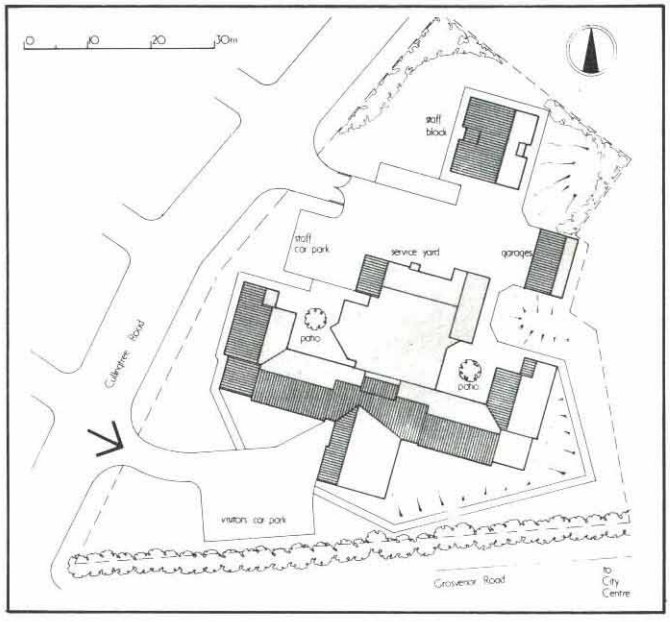
Enler River, with its 19th century Kennel Bridge, forms the eastern boundary of the site which also adjoins a housing estate, integrated with it both visually and by circulation routes. A short riverside walk is an attractive part of the landscaping. Finishes include a white sand and dry-dash rendering to walls with brown bands and brown concrete roof tiles.



Comber site plan.

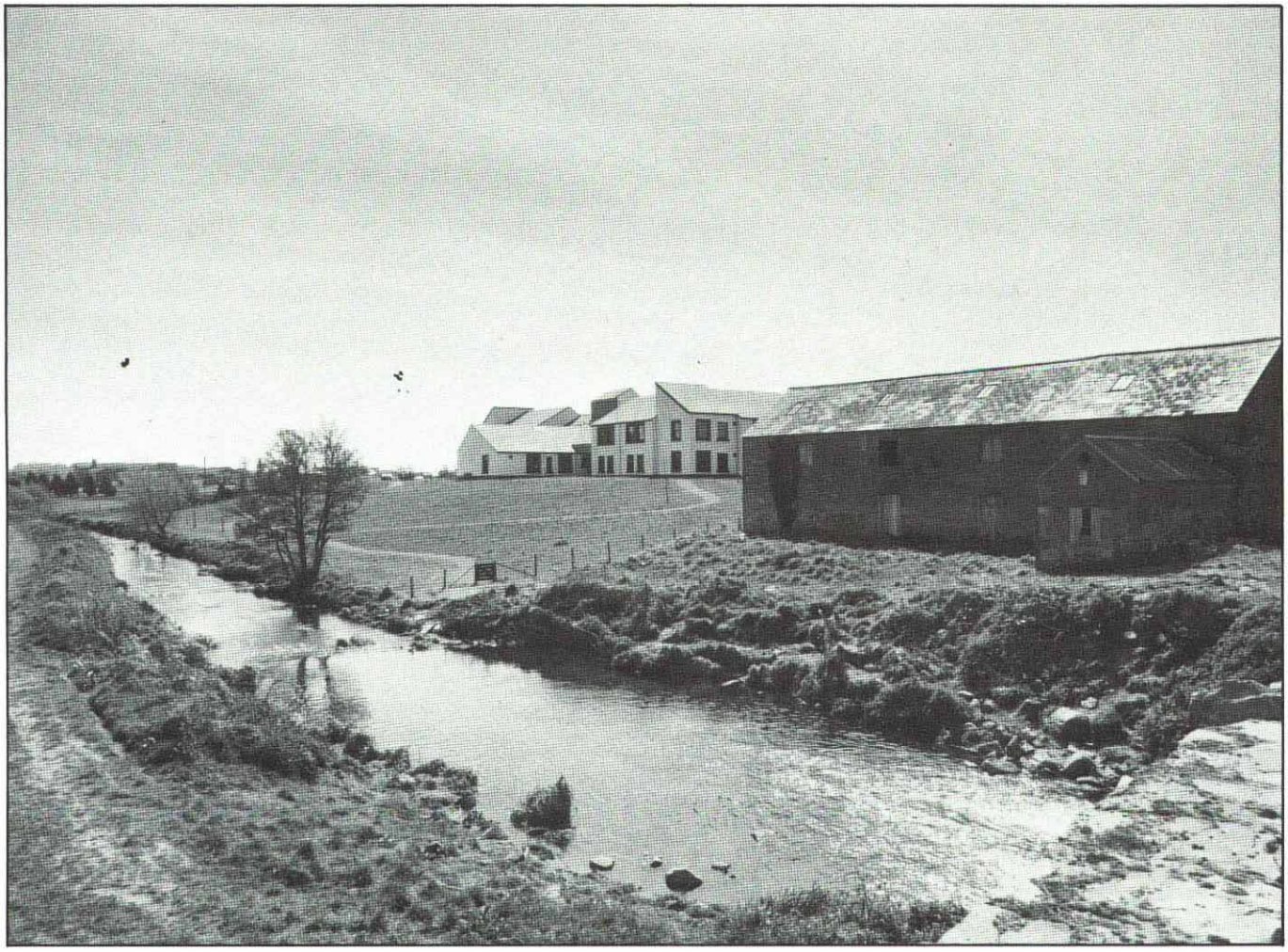
Cullingtree Road Old People's Home, Grosvenor Road, Belfast

When this home is completed, within half a mile of Belfast city centre, it will make an important contribution to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's programme for redevelopment and renewal. It will complement the growing inner-city range of housing for the elderly which is being provided. The home is on a level site off a main road where the 19th century terraces are gradually being replaced by new houses. Finishes include a finely textured rendering to walls with sections painted alternately off-white and brown (brickwork proved too expensive) and blue-black asbestos-cement slates on pitched roofs.



Cullingtree site plan.

Comber. In the foreground, the Enler River.



JERUSALEM DOME

Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

Clients:	Greek Orthodox Patriarchate The Custodian of the Holy Land (Catholic) The Armenian Patriarchate
Architects:	Jaques, Muir and Johnson Partner-in-charge: John Jaques
Structural engineers:	Campbell, Reith & Partners Partner-in-charge: Ian Reith
Contractors:	T. R. Freeman Ltd, Cambridge

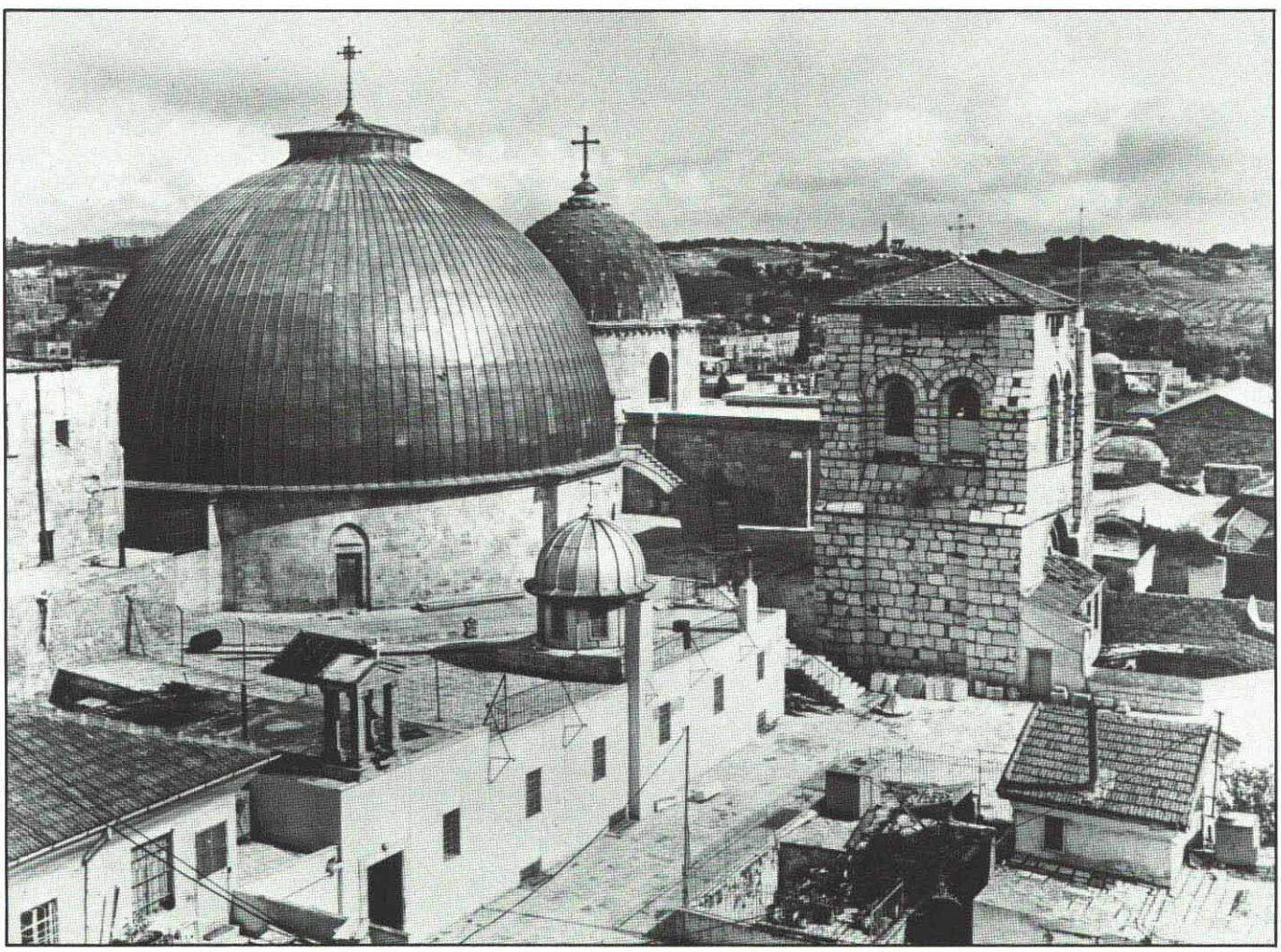
This recently restored dome crowns the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem which marks the site of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Christ. The church has changed through the centuries: the main existing structure was built by the Crusaders during the 12th century, to replace the Basilica of Constantine completed in 335 AD. The Dome of the Anastasis which covers the Tomb of Christ was built in its present form in 1870 using Russian design and materials. This dome was well built with wrought-iron arches which have been repaired and re-used in the restoration work; it stood up well to periodic earthquakes but was severely damaged by fire in 1947. After atempts to patch it up, it was decided in 1977 that total renovation was necessary. In 1978, the design and reconstruction were put out to tender to companies from the United States, France, Italy, Greece and the United Kingdom. The end product is a very creditable joint effort by a British team of designers and contractors. Because it proved very difficult to find craftsmen of sufficient experience and skill in Jerusalem, nearly all the labour on the contract – including steelworkers, concrete sprayers, plasterers, welders and lead workers – came from the United Kingdom.

The structure

The prime design objectives included a structural solution which would be long-lasting and attractive in appearance, strongly resistant to earthquake shocks and fire, at the same time making use of the very best materials within the permissible budget.

The ability of the structure to withstand earthquakes is determined by its lightness and stiffness. The design of the

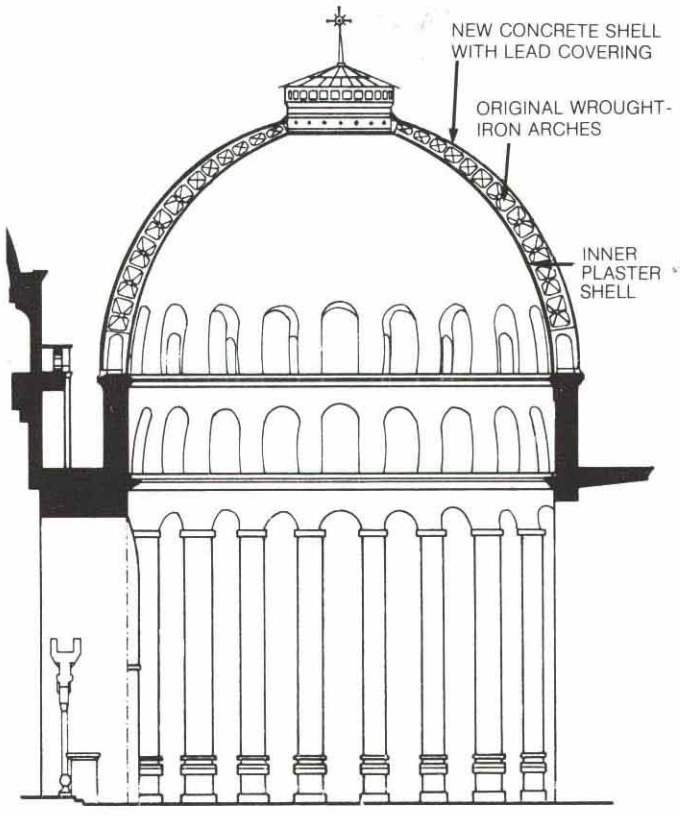
The restored dome in the foreground with its new lead-covered concrete shell.



dome incorporates a very thin (115 mm) reinforced concrete shell of considerable stiffness linked with steel connections to the existing wrought-iron arches. The arches and the shell are each capable of supporting the total loading independently of each other. Combined together, they produce a structure of immense rigidity and structural redundancy, ensuring that even if corrosion of the arches were to take place in the future and the members become weakened, the overall structure would not be seriously affected.

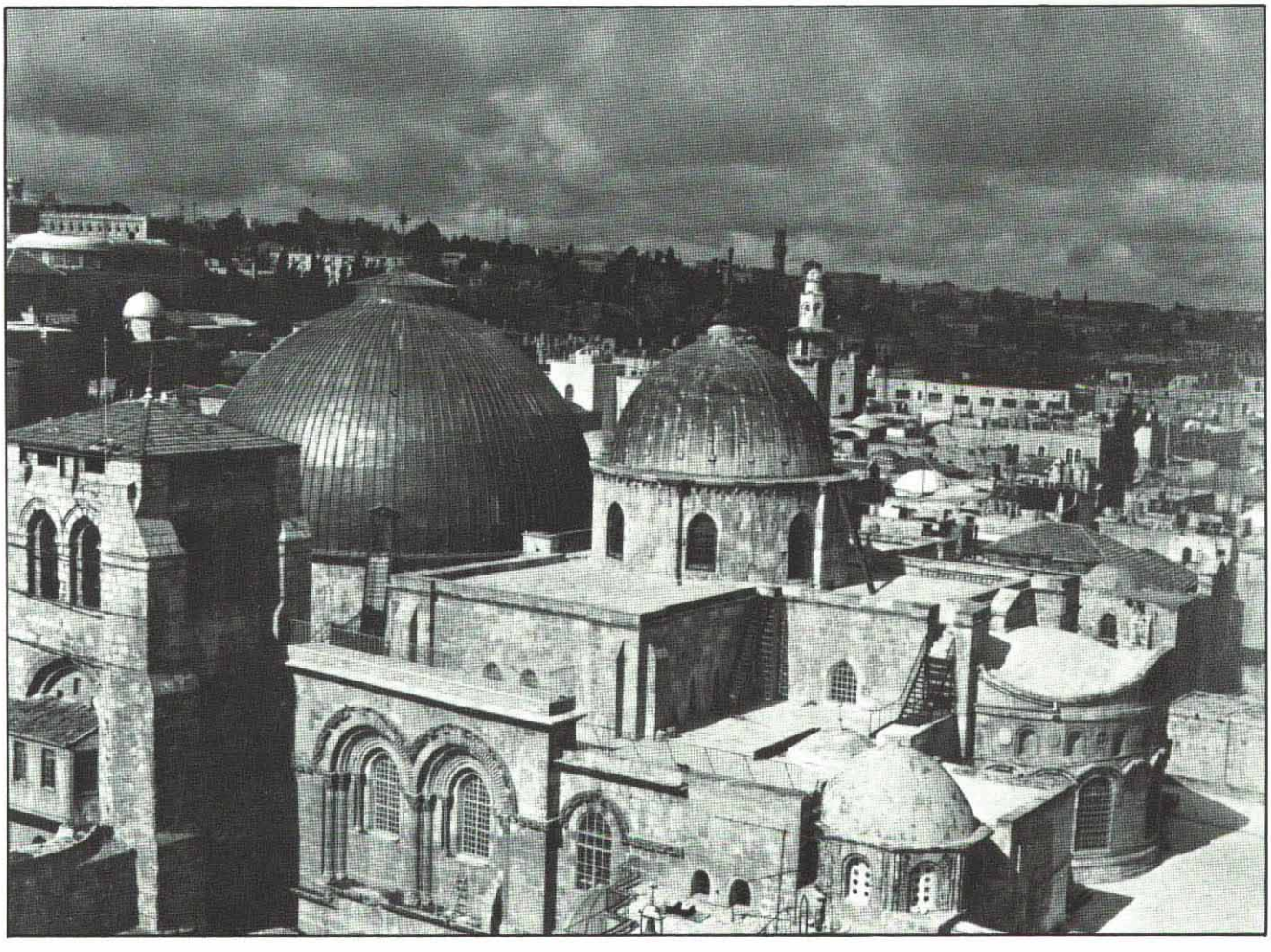
Beside stiffening the structure, the team was able to reduce the total weight of the dome by something like 100 tons, thus also reducing the loading due to earthquake shock on the masonry rotunda which supports the dome. From the fire resistance point of view, no wood or other inflammable material were used anywhere in the structure.

Externally, the dome is covered with lead – a requirement by the client – as the most durable and attractive external finish in this particular context, after discussion with the Lead Development Association in London. Lead is, in fact, a traditional finish for the dome of the Holy Sepulchre. The lead was installed using the hollow roll method of jointing and is hand finished: the clients requested that the structure should not look too precise and machine-made inside and out and should be sympathetic to the natural stone surroundings of Jerusalem. Inside, the dome has a plaster shell of about 25 mm thickness on an expanded metal mesh mechanically fixed to the interior of the wrought-iron arches, so that the plaster can be decorated in the original style with either frescos or mosaics.



Above: Diagrammatic cross section.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem with the restored dome on the left.



UNITED REFORM

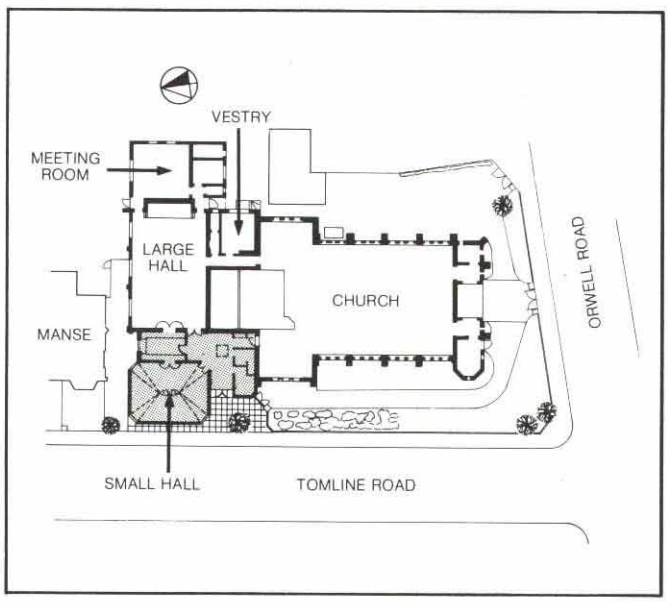
Extension to the United Reformed Church, Orwell Road, Felixstowe

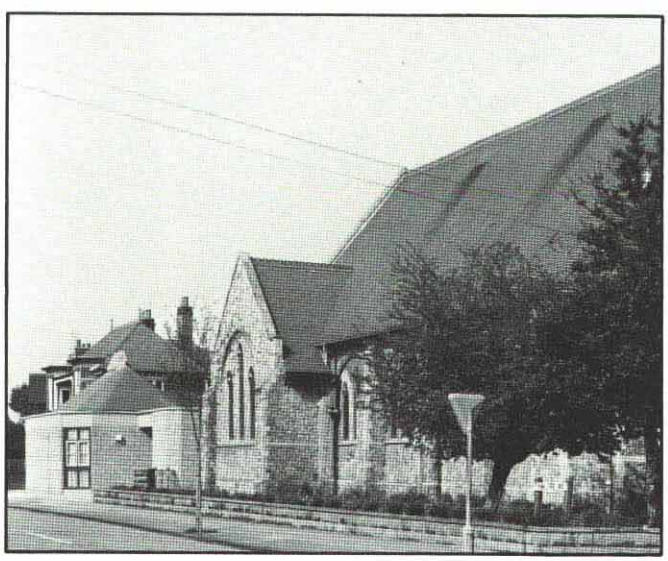
Clients:	The Elders, Felixstowe United Reformed Church
Architects and services consultants:	Johns Slater & Haward
Structural engineers:	Portland Associates
Quantity surveyors:	Caston, Palmer & Partners
General contractors:	Rogers Bros. Ltd
Concrete blocks:	Forticrete Ltd

This modest but highly practical and economical extension to an Edwardian church and hall in Felixstowe consists of a small pavilion of concrete blocks with a pitched roof of red tiles – the materials linking visually with the random stone, ashlar quoins and tiled roof of the church on the one hand and the tiled roofs of neighbouring two-storey villas on the other. The extension contains a small hall (as companion to the existing larger hall), kitchen, foyer and toilets.

The extension was built in preference to piecemeal improvements which had been considered, and succeeds in uniting all the main elements of the church as a whole as well as providing for more varied uses. It was designed essentially to harmonize with the church building. However, stone facings to match with the existing church facades would have been prohibitively expensive. Concrete blocks with a textured shot-blasted surface have therefore been used for the outer walls. The small hall has a pitched roof covered with plain red tiles, supported by a reinforced concrete ring beam with a bush-hammered external finish. Because the hall is close to the pavement, it has been designed with splayed corner windows supplemented by a lantern light at the apex of the pitched roof. The entrance is set back to allow a small forecourt paved with concrete slabs and a mountain ash tree. Internal finishes consist mainly of fairface sand-lime bricks, sealed timber, insulation board and 'Artex' ceilings, and carpet and vinyl tiles on floors.

The new building was completed in September 1980 for approximately £34,700.





Above top: Plan of the existing church and new extension.

Above: The church with its new extension, seen from Orwell Road.

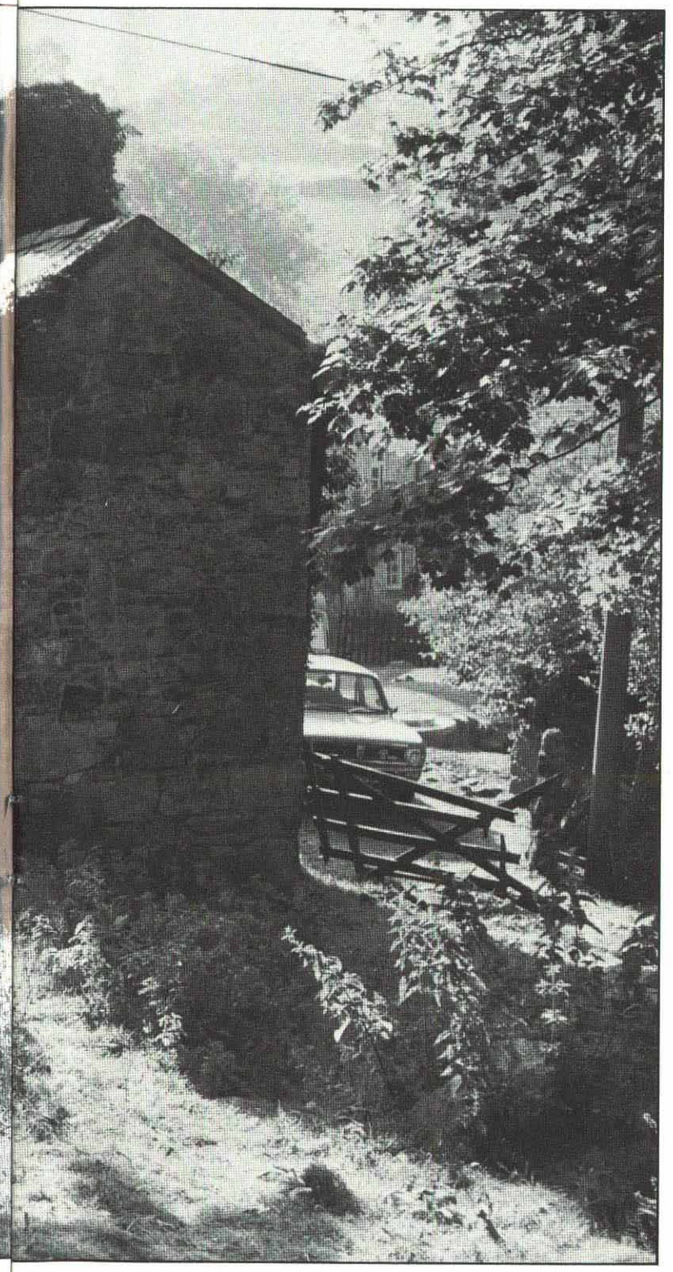
Opposite right: The extension seen from Tomline Road. Materials and the pitched roof form were chosen to link with the existing church and neighbouring houses.

DARTMOOR IDYLL

Restored bakehouse and wheelwright's shop, Ponsworthy, Devonshire

Clients:	Mr. and Mrs. Colin Westwood
Architect:	Anthony C. Adcock
Contractors:	Gay & Stevens
Concrete blocks:	Stonycombe Quarries, Kingskerswell
Photographs:	*Colin Westwood*

Margaret Westwood standing bravely among the ruins of the original wheelwright's shop (left) and bakehouse, in the background.

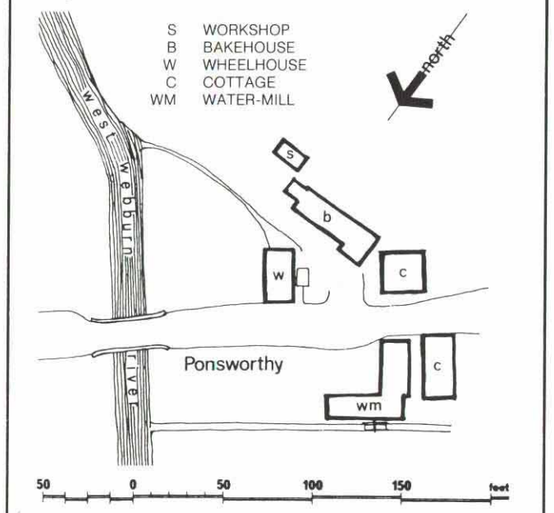


This painstaking restoration of a group of moorland buildings was a brave venture that earned a Good Design in Housing Award in 1979 and a Civic Trust Commendation in 1980. The buildings are at Ponsworthy on Dartmoor – a tiny settlement that has remained outwardly much the same since the early 18th century apart from a general store/post-office and a telephone box – about the only reminders of the 20th century.

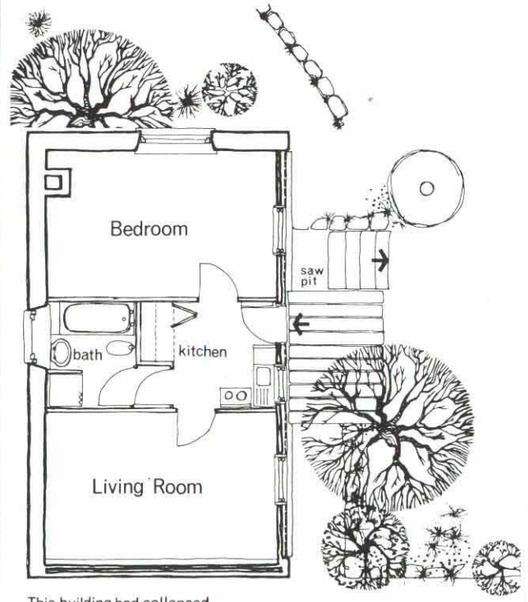
Originally, each of these simple stone buildings made its vital contribution to the life of the settlement – workshops for the wheelwright and carpenter, a bakehouse and a water-mill. Of these, the bakehouse and wheelwright's shop – now called the Wheelhouse – have been restored as dwellings by the architect Anthony Adcock for the architectural photographer Colin Westwood and his wife. The design brief specifically required that the restored buildings should look the same from the outside as they did in their original state. In fact, work went ahead against the advice of the architect who said that the buildings were too far gone and would be uneconomic to restore – advice which Colin and Margaret Westwood stoically decided to ignore, no doubt encouraged by the exceptionally idyllic rural context.

To a large extent, original local stones and roof slates – some scavenged from the undergrowth – have been re-used in the buildings. Other stones came from a local quarry firm which had won the contract for demolishing London Bridge: not quite all the bridge stones found their way to

Layout and Location Plan



Plan of the wheelhouse.

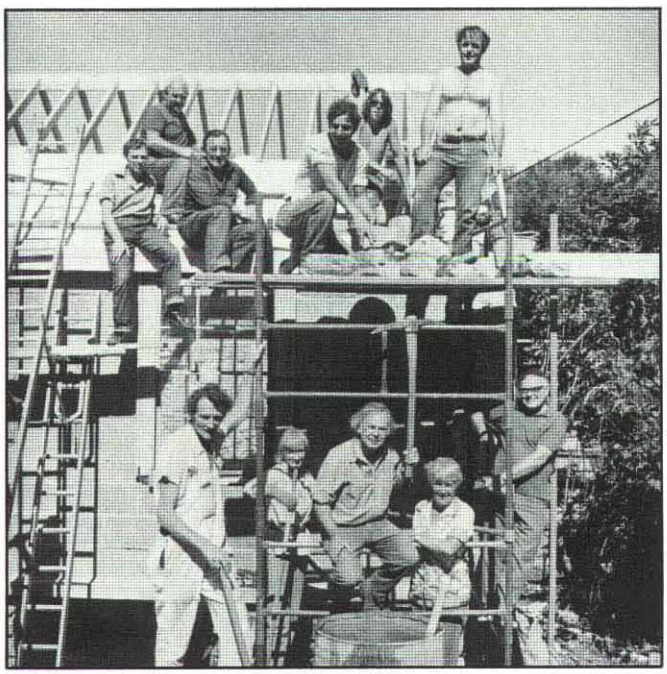


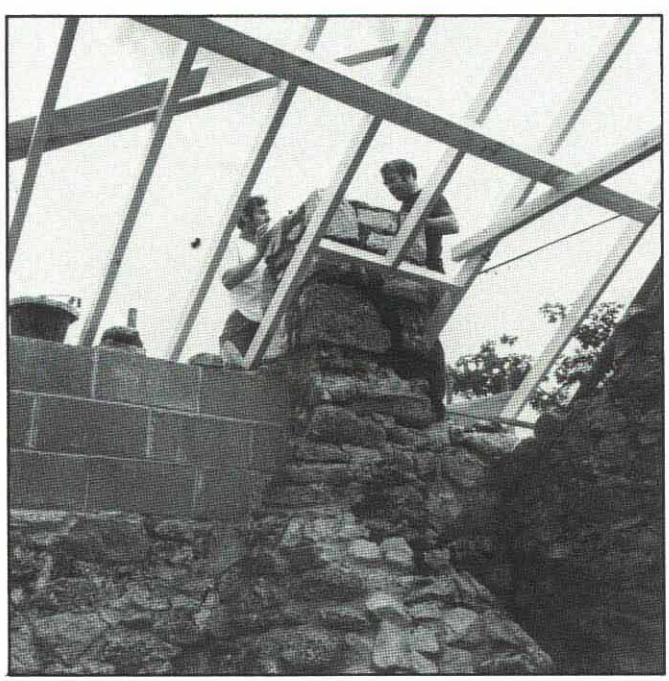
This building had collapsed as can be seen in the photograph

DARTMOOR IDYLL *continued*

America and some have been used in the restoration of these buildings! Where wooden doors and windows had rotted, others of similar age were found in order to maintain continuity. Paint and decoration have been used as little as possible in the restoration work because these were unknown in their present form when the original buildings were put up.

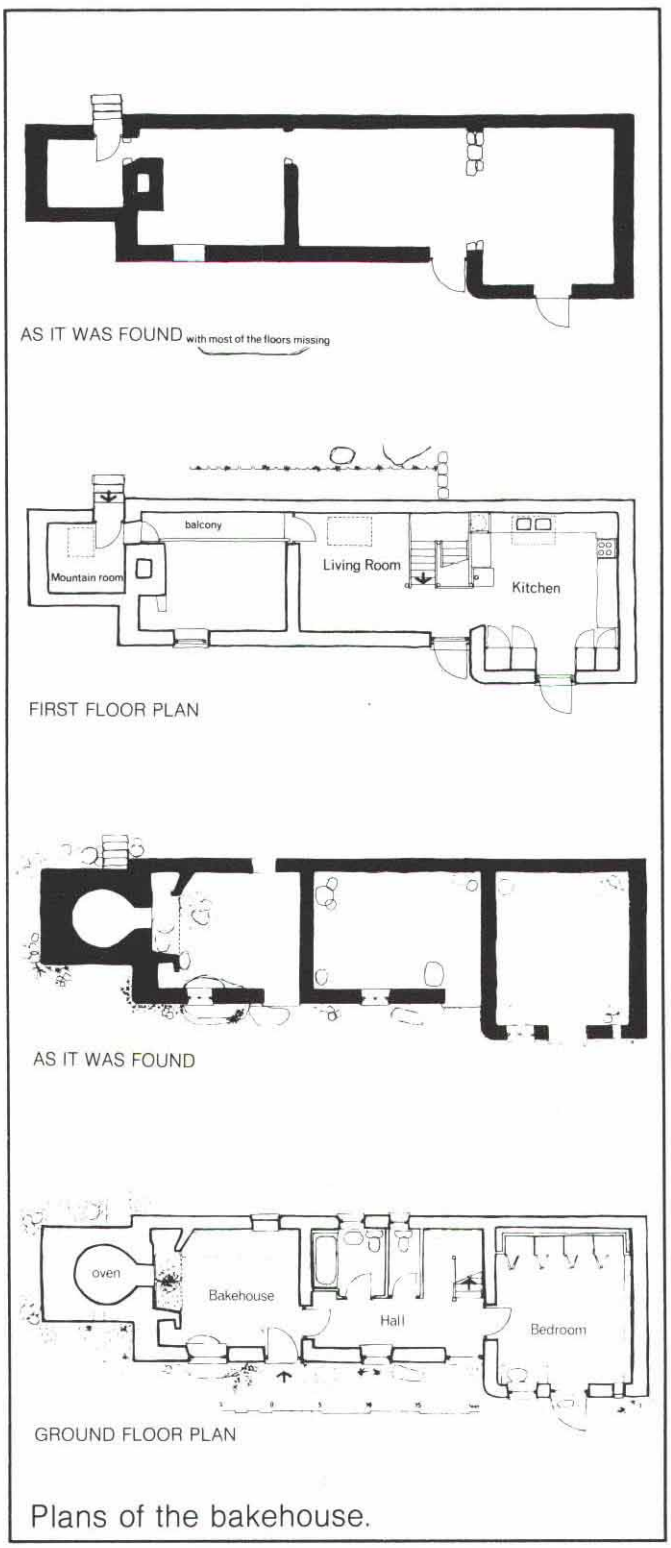
However, some concession has been made to the 20th century in the use of concrete blocks internally for much of the rebuilding of the wheelhouse and for parts of the bakehouse including partition walls. Because no paint or decoration were to be used, it was important that the blocks should have the right texture and colour. The moorstone used in the original buildings had touches of pink. Consequently a concrete block with a salmon pink aggre-





Above top: The building team on the job with Colin Westwood, lower centre, Margaret Westwood on his right, and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Westwood on his left. The concrete block walls and new pitched roof of the Wheelhouse can be seen in the background.

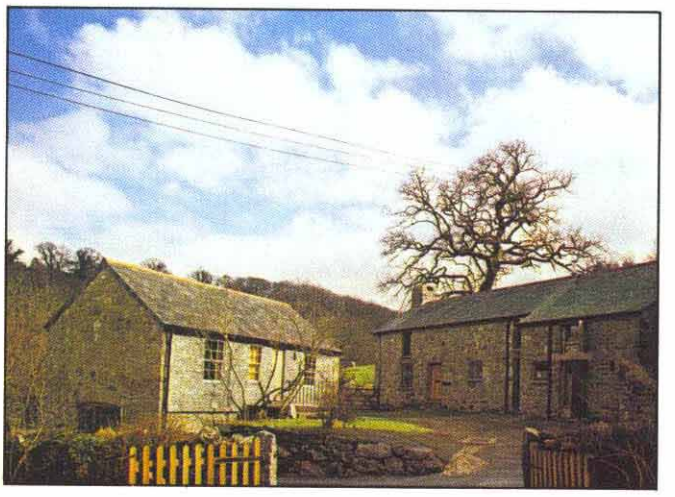
Above: The chimney of the new Wheelhouse contains one of the original stones from London Bridge. New block walls and rafters are being assembled.



Plans of the bakehouse.

gate which came from near Exeter was used – carefully handled on site to avoid damaged corners.

The co-operation of a local building contractor was encouraged from the start in order to take full advantage of the special skills of his men who included three stonemasons. A building team of twelve men together with four specialist subcontractors took only seven months to complete the main work. External works were completed in December 1978. Full working drawings and a specification were prepared and a negotiated price of £22,000 agreed before signing an RIBA form of contract.

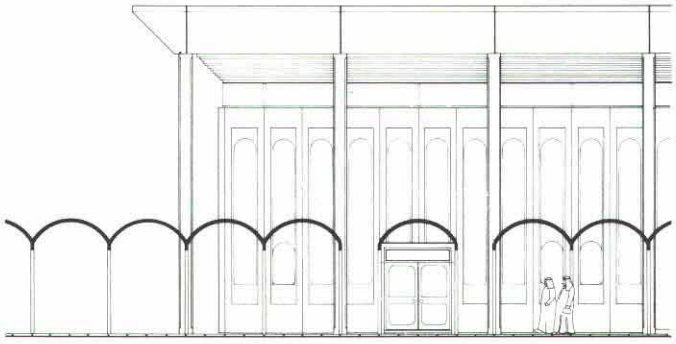


Right: The restored wheelwright's shop, now called the Wheelhouse, on the left and the bakehouse on the right.

Below: Ground floor interior of the bakehouse showing the new concrete blockwork and original stone walls.

ARABIAN ARCADES

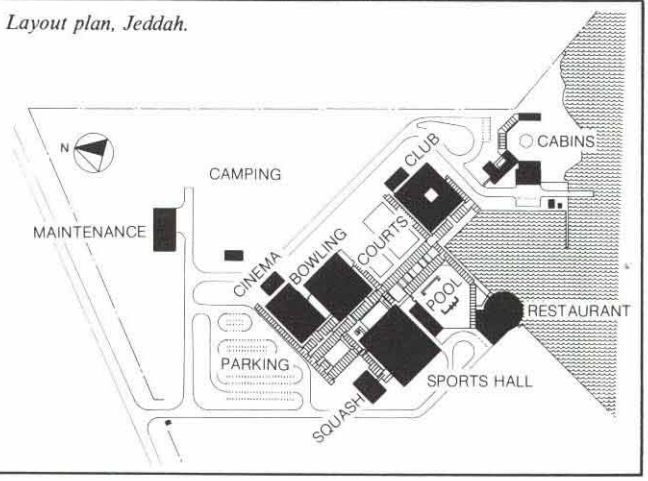
Sports and Recreation Centres, Jeddah and Dammam, Saudi Arabia



The theatre court and sports hall, Dammam. Arcade canopies are of GRC.

Client:	The Presidency of Youth Welfare, Saudi Arabia
Architects:	Slater Hodnett and Partners Design team: Dennis Ball, Geoffrey Frankham, Metin Demiray, Richard Parker, Malcolm Aikman, John Whiting, Philip Ballard
Principal consultants and civil & structural engineers:	Cooper Macdonald & Partners
Service engineers:	R. W. Gregory & Partners
Contractors:	Weyss & Freytag, Frankfurt
Precast GRC elements:	Portcrete Ltd
Photographs:	*Leighton Gibbons*

Layout plan, Jeddah.



General view showing the pool, restaurant and boat basin, Dammam.

Boat basin and restaurant, Jeddah.

One of the main design considerations in these two almost identical sports and recreation centres at Jeddah and Dammam was built-in flexibility. The possibility of extensions, changes of plan and additional facilities came high up on the list of priorities – together with the rather stringent requirement that design and full tender documents had to be prepared within 100 days. The contract completion date was May 1980.

In order to accommodate this high degree of flexibility, the various pavilions have been informally linked by a series of garden courts and covered pedestrian arcades roofed with vaulted units of glass reinforced cement which give the schemes as a whole a certain festive architectural character well suited to the serious business of fun and games beside the sea – in this case the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

Planning

The arcades serve the five main buildings in each scheme and provide a continuous shaded route from the car park to the sea as well as covered promenades along the sea front, terminating in the restaurant and beach cafeteria. The greater part of the water front is occupied by the boat basin and its related facilities. However, beyond the jetty an informal open beach has been set aside.

The boat basin and swimming pool form the main focus of activities. The circular restaurant is cantilevered out over the water and positioned to give diners and users of the adjacent coffee lounge good views of these main activities. Similarly the club building is sited so that members can look out over the boat basin and the sea beyond. The sports hall, bowling hall and cinema/theatre are placed inland because they contain enclosed activities.

Design and construction

A certain regional architectural character has been introduced into both schemes with the design of the main elements. Vaulted arcade canopies of GRC and tall slender precast concrete columns support inward sloping fascias, also of GRC. Behind these columns and fascias, modelled precast cladding panels with arched recesses enclose the buildings where outlook is not required. As the photographs show, the modelling of column and panel is an important architectural refinement, and both schemes depend very much on the play of light and shade to give variety and interest, coupled with small areas of dense planting between the pavilions.

Each pavilion is roofed with steel lattice beams supported on precast concrete columns and has an enclosing envelope of precast concrete panels. All precast concrete work was carried out on the site. The sloping GRC fascias to the main buildings together with the GRC arcade canopies were manufactured in Britain. The canopy units are supported on painted steel frames.

Colour is provided by painting the columns in white gloss 'Ceemarnova' and the precast panels in pale grey 'Mural-Plast'.

A particularly pleasing architectural feature is the control tower with its tall central column, conical roof and spiral stair – all formed of precast concrete sections. The stair has a gleaming stainless steel handrail to set off the elegant geometry of this striking piece of precast concrete design.

STREET MANNERS

Marks & Spencer's store, Exeter

Client:	Marks & Spencer p.l.c.
Architects:	Norman Jones Sons & Rigby in association with R. I. Chidlaw, company architect, Marks & Spencer.
Structural engineers:	Meliss & Partners
Quantity surveyors:	Gleeds (Bristol)
Contractor:	Bovis Fee Construction Ltd
Precast concrete design and manufacture:	Empire Stone Co. Ltd
Siporex roof planks:	Aerated Concrete Ltd
Photographs:	*George Perkin*

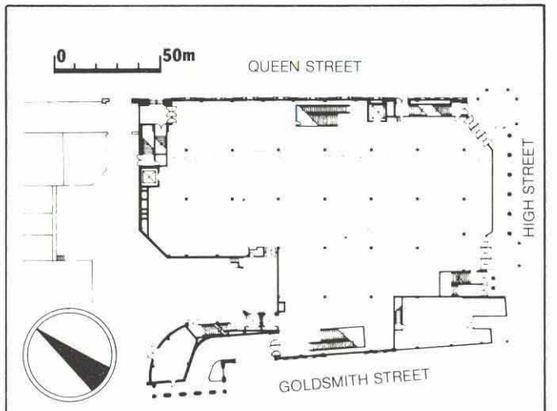
The new Marks and Spencer's seen in the context of Exeter High Street.

"No architect who cares about the reputation of the profession or the future of architecture can be complacent while such schemes as that at Exeter not only get built but are also acclaimed as the best possible solution". *Leader in the 'Architects' Journal.'*

"I like the building very much. It fits in splendidly with Exeter and is much more interesting than the boring sort of glass and concrete thing that we normally get". *Man in the street, Exeter.*

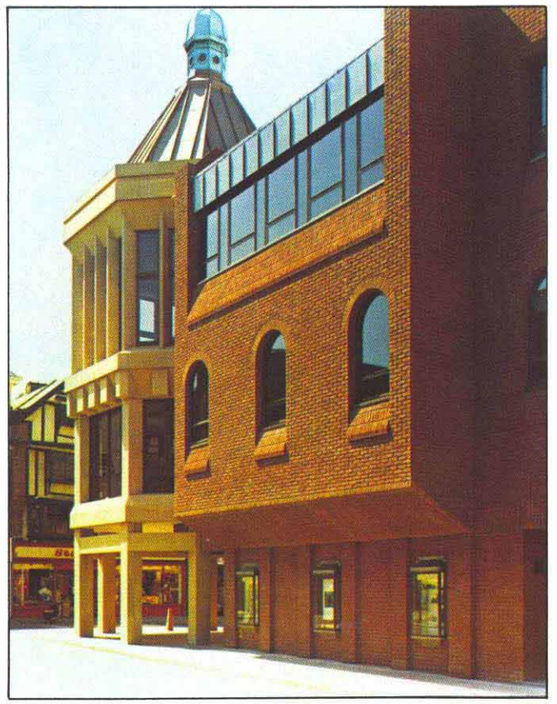
"I think it's beautiful – so much better than concrete". *Woman in the street, Exeter.*

Right: The corner pavilion seen in relation to elaborate half-timbered shop fronts in the High Street.

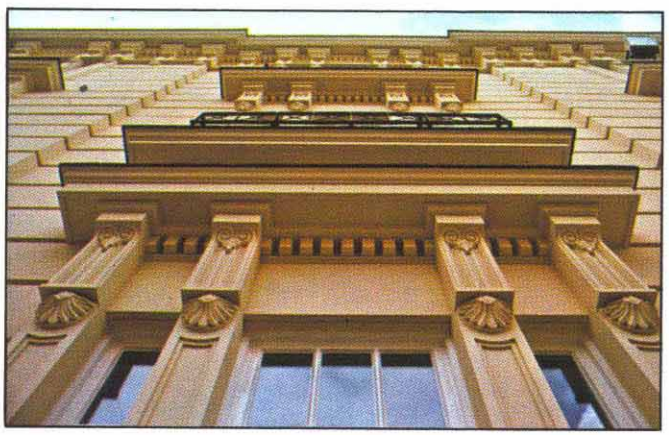


Above: Site plan.

Below: Reconstructed stone-faced corner pavilion (see also front cover) and projecting brick-faced precast concrete panels in Queen Street. (Photo: Ormonde Photographics).



The restored Queen Street facade. Sills, mullions, window heads, cornices and mouldings are of precast concrete. Infill areas between are of rendered brickwork. All surfaces have been painted a matching cream. (Photo: Ormonde Photographics).



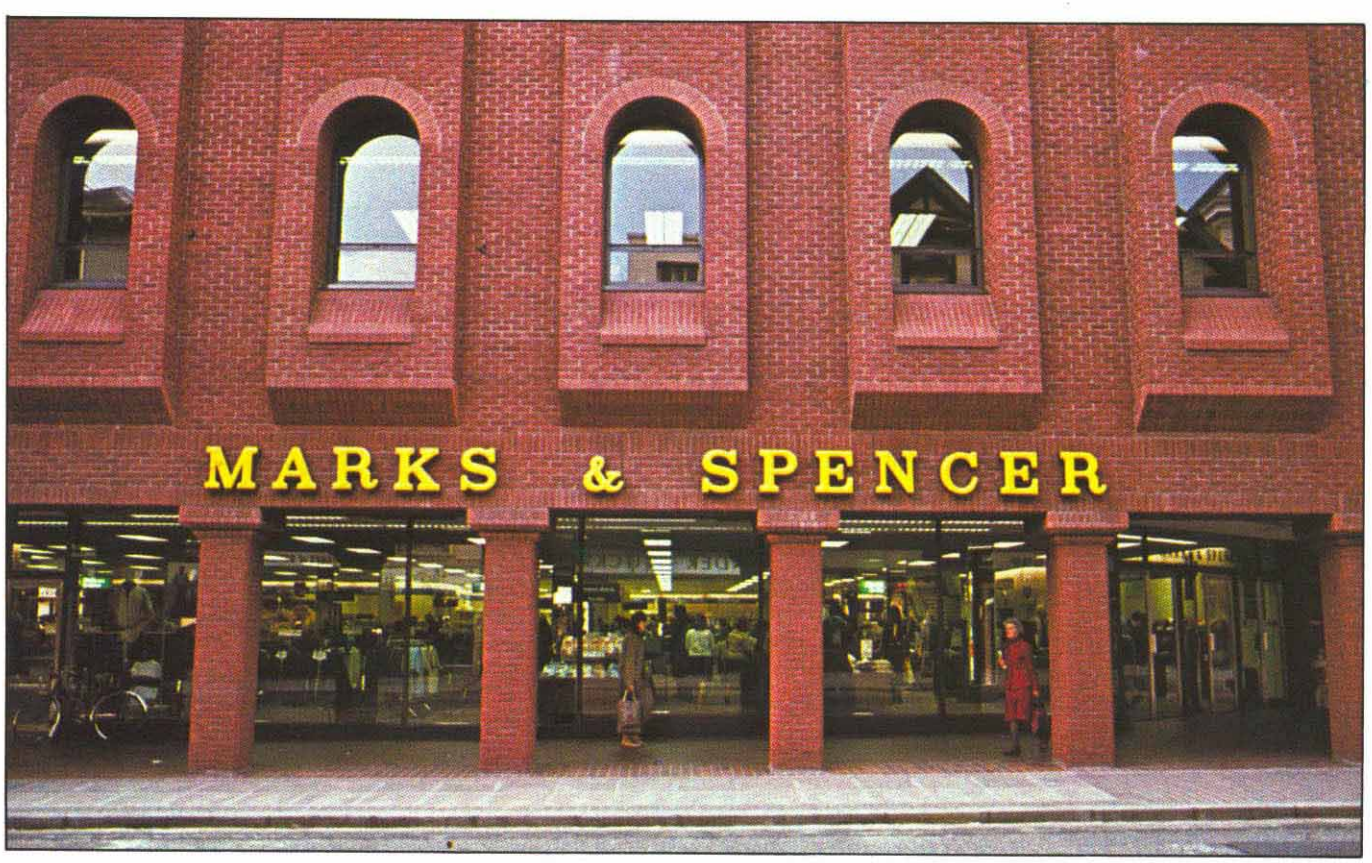
STREET MANNERS *continued*

The first point to establish about the new Marks & Spencer store in Exeter is that local people like it. It has won almost wholehearted acclaim from the building owners, users and the local public at large. The spontaneous reaction from a random selection of passers-by who were asked what they thought of the building was one of unqualified praise and even enthusiasm – something rare indeed in the modern building world. Nearly everyone remarked that they thought it fitted in well with the main shopping street and that they liked the details and materials. One person, as reported above, thought that it was "a nice change" after the boring sort of glass and concrete thing that they normally got. Nobody of course thought that there was any concrete in it at all.

From all this, we might do well to consider to what extent we should take notice if a new building turns out to be popular with the general public. As we all know, it is not such a common occurrence that it can be ignored. One might indeed wonder if architectural indifference over the last decades to what the public actually says it likes and wants is not to some extent responsible for the vast gulf that exists between orthodox architectural thinking on the one hand and public taste and opinion on the other. For instance, the *Architects' Journal* – which presumably mirrors the official ideas and opinions of the architectural profession as a whole – called this building "a dog's dinner" in one of its recent leaders. The leader went on to say that "rather alarmingly" the planning officer claimed that this scheme was more popular than all the other proposals that had been made, including an "uncompromisingly modern scheme" which the Royal Fine Art Commission liked but Marks & Spencer's didn't. If this really was the case, the

Left: Queen Street facade precast concrete details.

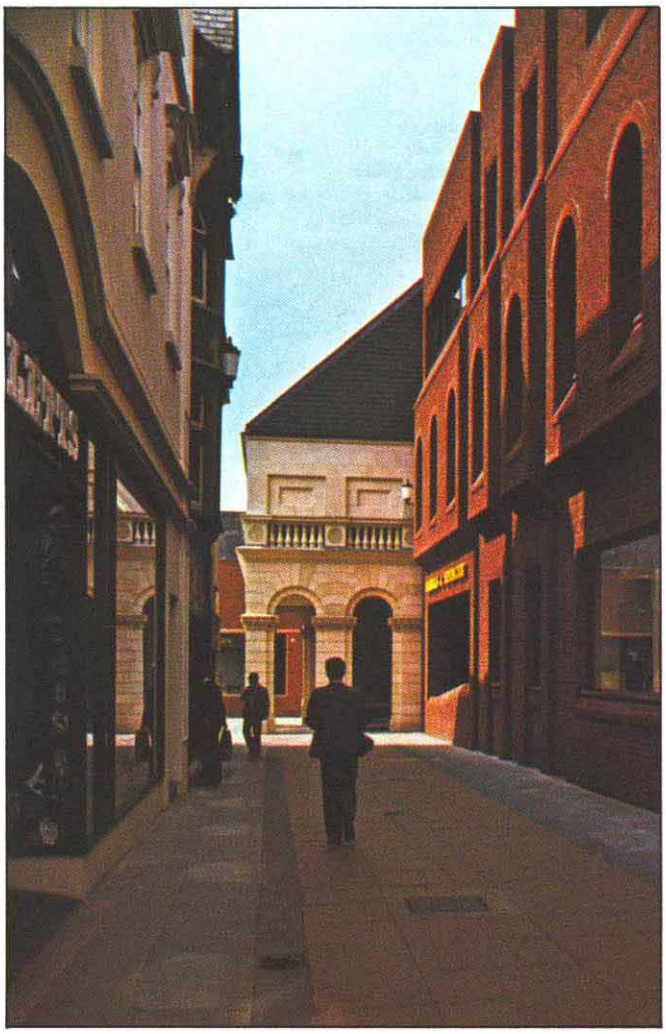
Below: The brick-faced High Street entrance.



leader went on, "the architectural profession is very sick indeed".

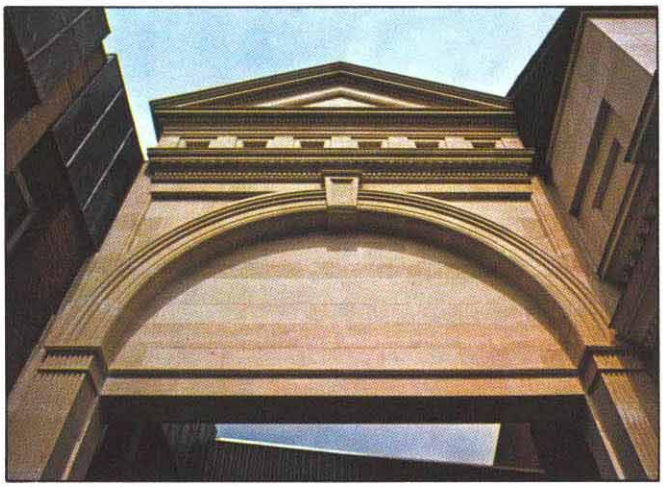
Now what is immediately striking about this kind of tirade is that it attempts to establish professional criteria of taste within very narrow limits. It is a kind of arrogance that has been all too common in the past and that may very well have brought the architectural profession into such bad odour with the public. After all, if architects are going to be so high-handed with the public, they can hardly complain if the public turns round and says it doesn't like architects. Generally speaking, though, architects aren't like that at all. As we know, the majority are very tolerant and sympathetic people who have an exceedingly difficult job to do, often struggling against overwhelming and conflicting odds. And one sometimes wonders if there isn't as much gulf between architects and what are supposed to be their official opinions as reported in the press, as there is between architects and the public.

All that being said, what we have here is a carefully considered and carefully made building that has aroused a good deal of spontaneous affection and enthusiasm from the public. And whatever else some architects or journalists may think about it, this fact alone is enough to put Marks and Spencer's in Exeter into a rather special class of its own. Apart from which, we might note that the otherwise excellent and well-respected firm of M&S has not in the past been particularly noted for its architectural contributions to the High Street, although in recent years it has become a good deal more sensitive to local environments – as the Exeter store so clearly demonstrates. *George Perkin*



Right: Goldsmith Street with the classical loggia building at the end.

Below: The loggia building faced with reconstructed stone classical details.



Architectural background

The new store occupies a central position in Exeter in the High Street conservation area.

The site is bounded on three sides by Queen Street, the High Street and Goldsmith Street with a listed lath-and-plaster facade which had been declared a dangerous structure. At the corner of Queen Street and High Street, this building was topped by an octagonal copper-covered cupola which, as part of 'Walton's Corner', was a well-known local landmark. In Goldsmith Street the Woolmarket building and Archway were both stone-built structures of considerable merit.

Opposite left: The classical details of the loggia building meticulously reproduced in reconstructed stone.

Below: View from the store interior through an arched window.

To introduce a retail store of this size into the centre of such a conservation area presented an enormous challenge. Finally, after close consultation with the achitect to Marks and Spencer, the City Planning Officer and various local groups including the Civic, Victorian and Georgian Societies, the architects evolved a building form which they considered was not only in sympathy with the diverse building styles in the area, but also made a positive contribution to the environment as a whole.

In architectural terms, this has been achieved by breaking down the external envelope into a series of smaller units. The original Queen Street facade was carefully measured and, by making rubber moulds of the various elements, has been rebuilt in precast concrete. In fact, the architects have been able to restore the building to its original design, as well as making good the ravages of succeeding pavement level alterations. The original cupola from the old corner building has been preserved and is now mounted on a new octagonal pavilion faced with reconstructed stone in the same position, retaining the old landmark associations.

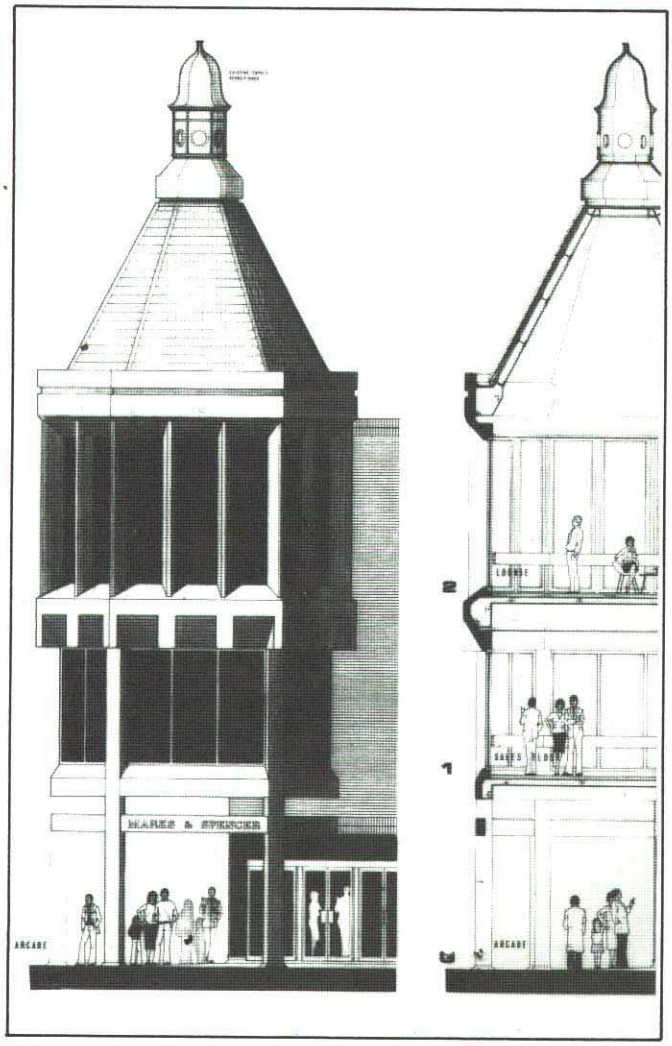
The main High Street elevation is principally of modelled brick-faced precast concrete, further articulated by a projecting bay of reconstructed stone echoing the corner pavilion. A colonnade has been introduced along this High Street frontage and a contribution has been made by Marks and Spencer towards the cost of repaving this part of the street, thus allowing the Local Authority to extend their existing pedestrianization scheme.

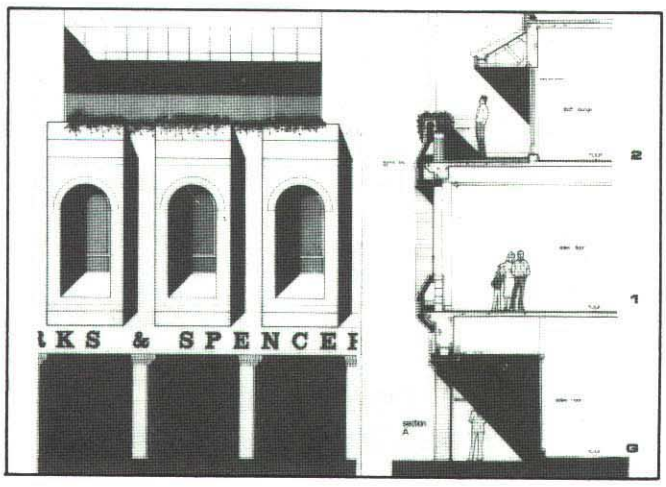
On the corner of High Street and Goldsmith Street, the new premises for H. Samuel are restrained with plain simple rendered elevations.

In Goldsmith Street, there is a further section of brick-faced precast concrete and finally the Woolmarket building and Archway which have been meticulously rebuilt in reconstructed stone to the original classical details. It is perhaps worth noting that the original stone from the Woolmarket building, in very short supply, was given to the Cathedral for use in the restoration of its west end.

A feature of the whole building is the very high standard of finish achieved. In addition to the precast concrete and reconstructed stone techniques mentioned, the modelled brick and precast concrete elements have hand-made brick facings. Some of the intricate classical features are cast from GRC moulds. All these pieces have been assembled as in a jigsaw together with brickwork conventionally built on the site which is indistinguishable from the brick-faced precast elements.

It was inevitable that so large a development on so





prominent a site should have attracted so much attention at the design stage. This continued during the construction period and increased as the scaffolding was removed and the new building became visible to the public. The architects found it most reassuring that the vast majority of the citizens of Exeter appreciated their efforts to preserve and enhance part of the city.

Precast concrete

The precast concrete for the facades takes various forms to suit the varied elevations required and has been thought out and manufactured with considerable care and attention to detail by the Empire Stone Company Limited – precast concrete manufacturers who are in the 'Rolls Royce' category when it comes to precast concrete finishes, and who have over the years consistently produced work of outstandingly high quality.

Generally speaking, the external walls to the building are of brick and precast concrete panels with a 200 mm inner leaf of lightweight concrete blocks. 'Drytherm' cavity insulation to all 50 mm cavities provides excellent thermal insulation – also provided in the roof with 150 mm aerated concrete 'Siporex' planks.

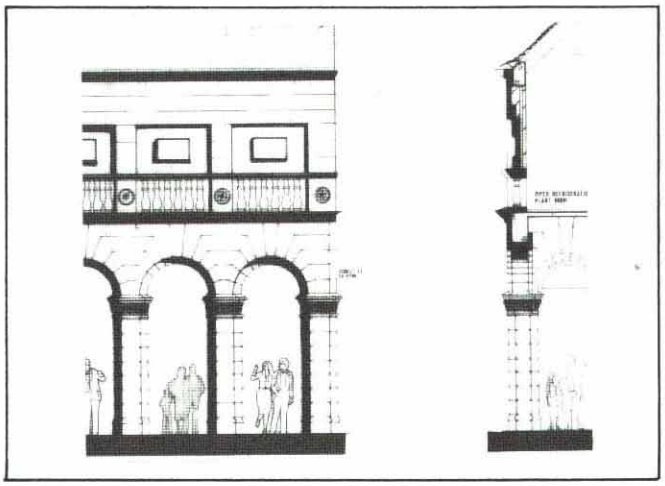
As regards the reproduced classical details, pieces of the original stone classical details were collected from the site by Empire Stone Company and served as models for the new work. In most cases these models needed dubbing out to restore profiles eroded by a century of weathering. A completely new baluster model was spun to a full size template based on the original. The problem of obtaining suitable replicas also revealed some of the discrepancies and inaccuracies of the revered craftsmen of Victorian times!

Queen Street listed facade

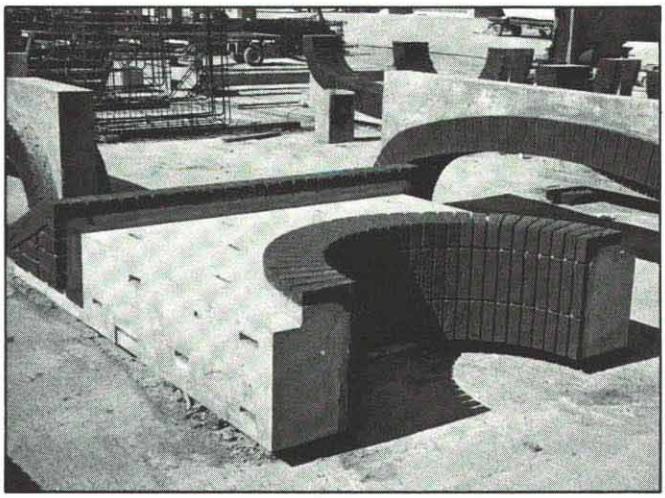
The sills, mullions and window heads, together with the cornices and mouldings are of precast concrete. The infill areas between are of rendered brickwork. All surfaces have been painted a matching cream with 'Muroplast'. The statue of Queen Victoria and the lion and unicorn, originally of timber, have been remade in glass reinforced plastic, as also were the six acroteria. Hardwood windows pivot in two halves to resemble the original sliding sash windows.

Top left: Elevation and section of the corner pavilion and cupola.

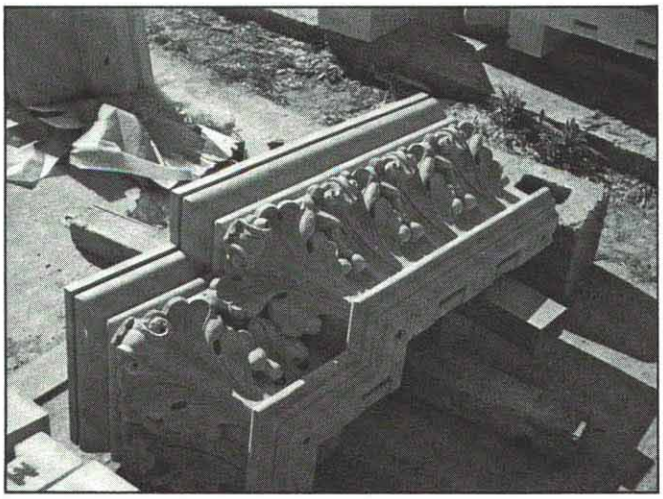
Left: Part elevation and section of the High Street facade.



Right: Part elevation and section of the loggia building in Goldsmith Street.



Precast concrete units with brick-faced arches in the casting yard of Empire Stone Company.



Precast concrete acanthus leaf moulding for the loggia building in the casting yard of Empire Stone Company.

Corner and central projecting pavilions
These pavilions are entirely clad with smooth reconstructed stone panels on a steel frame and have bronze anodised aluminium framed windows. The corner octagon has a tower clad in copper-faced panels surmounted by the copper-covered cupola which was removed from the original building. The roof of the central projecting pavilion is clad in lead-covered panels.

Brick elevations, Queen Street, High Street and Goldsmith Street
The facades are formed of a combination of brick-faced precast concrete panels and brickwork conventionally built on the site, all the brickwork being post-pointed to achieve a uniform mortar colour. Hand-made Atherston multi-red rustic facing bricks manufactured by the Ibstock Brick Company have been used. Window frames are of polyester powder-coated steel.

In general, the precast brick-face elements are those which would have been difficult to construct on site including projecting corbels to piers, lintels with brick soffits and arches. This of course is another 'rag' for architectural purists to chew on. Nevertheless, the finished job looks superb.

Samuels Building
The facade is generally of rendered blockwork painted with 'Muroplast'. The cornice and dentil course above the shop front is of reconstructed stone with the canopy cladding in matching GRC. The roof is covered with blue-grey slates and makes use of 'Siporex' aerated concrete planks on a steel frame.

Loggia building (Woolmarket and Archway)
This has been entirely rebuilt in reconstructed stone to the original details. Classical mouldings have been meticulously reproduced. The stone from the original building was given to the cathedral for use in restoration work. The roof construction and covering is similar to that of the Samuels Building.

The acanthus leaf moulding had to be set out afresh to suit the dimensions of the new piers. Otherwise it is a faithful reproduction of the original. Each set of units with this enrichment was 'dry fixed' at Empire Stone's works to a master template and then carefully key lettered and numbered to ensure that it was fixed on site in the same sequence. All good masonry practice!

CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Grosvenor Hotel, Grosvenor Terrace, Glasgow

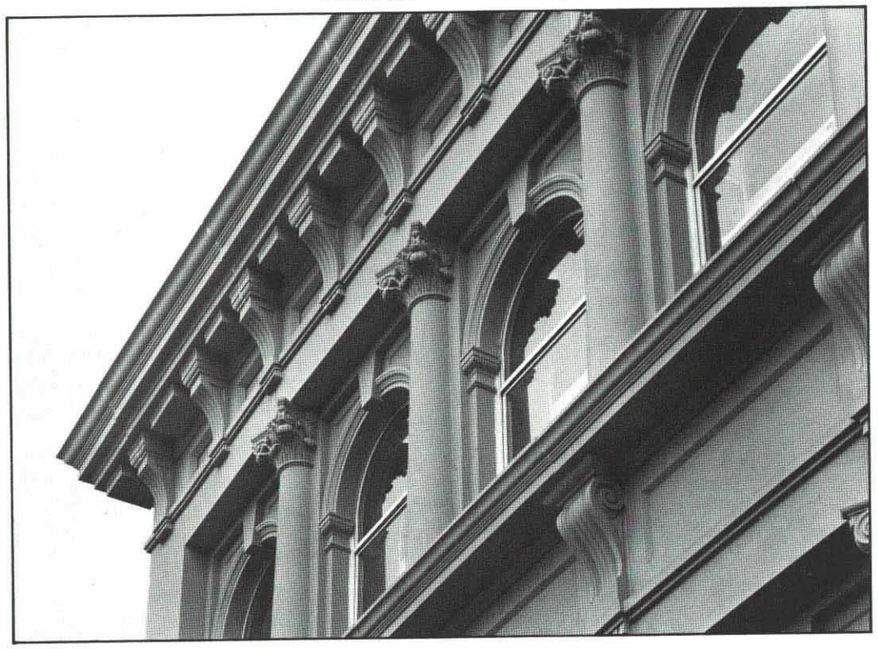
Clients:	Norwich Union Insurance Group
Architects:	T. M. Miller and Partners
Consulting engineers:	Oliver Bennett Partnership
Contractors:	John Laing Construction Ltd
GRC panels:	Glass Reinforced Concrete (GRC) Ltd
Panel fixing:	Roydon Building Services Ltd

The site foreman, who was very enthusiastic about this job, said "Can you seen where the old leaves off and the new begins? In fact, the new is better and more precise in detail than the old. For instance, the old balusters are irregular in size if you look carefully; the new are all identical". He also said that this facade restoration had provided a great deal of 'job satisfaction': "The lads were really interested in this job. If I'd had to take £5 off their wages, they still would have stayed with me". These remarks, coming from a man who used to be a cabinet-maker, are perhaps not so surprising (and reminiscent of remarks recently made by the architect Sir Philip Dowson which we quoted in the last issue of this journal: "If you rob people of a craft they can be proud of, you rob them of their self-respect"). The foreman, who had once worked on a couple of tower blocks and had felt obliged to come off them because he couldn't stand the job, concluded: "It's about time architecture got back to this sort of thing".

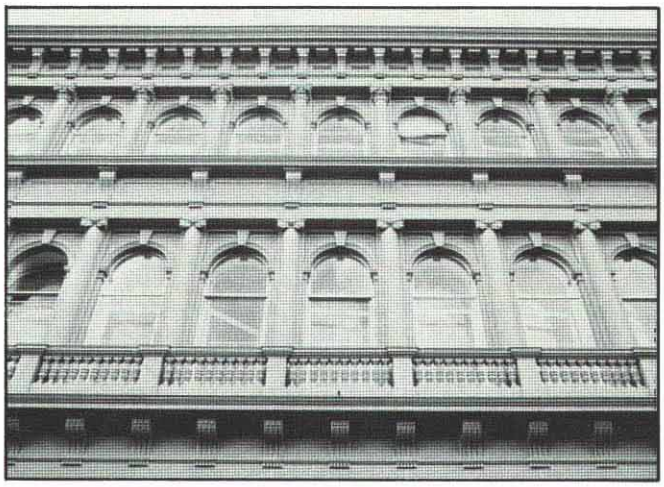
Part of the original undamaged facade seen from the gardens at the front.

Below: Corner detail showing the sharpness of GRC detail in the restored facade.

Bottom right: The restored GRC facade of the new Grosvenor Hotel.



CLASSICAL REVIVAL *continued*



Right: View from below of the restored GRC facade.

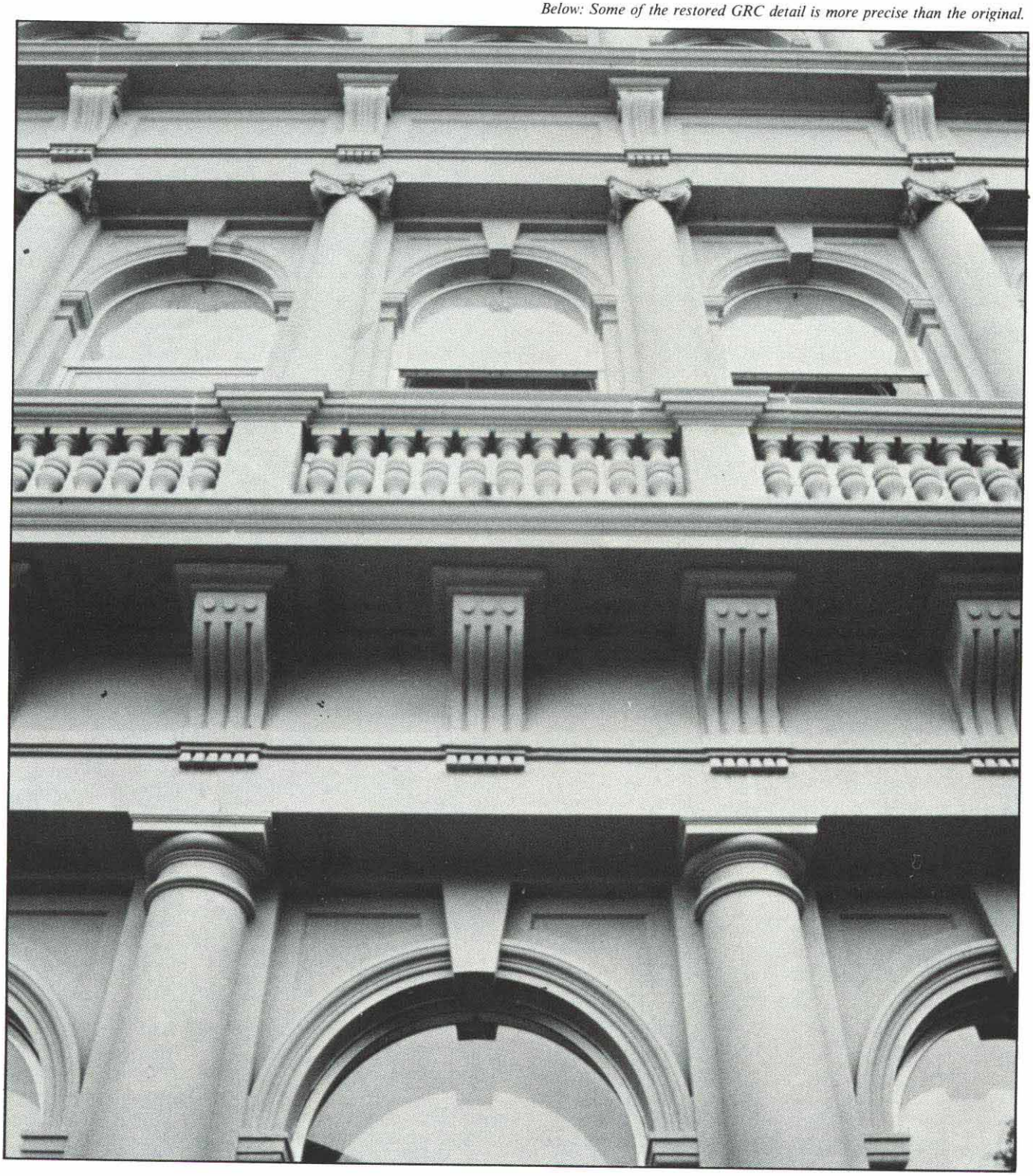
Below: Street level view of the original undamaged facade in the foreground continuing into the restored facade in the background.

The new version of the Grosvenor Hotel, destroyed after a severe fire in January 1978, forms half of one of Glasgow's finest terraces with its 1855 Venetian-Renaissance facade. The remaining half of the terrace, which has an A category listing, was undamaged by the fire. The Planning Authority insisted that the facade of the rebuilt hotel should match up with the remainder of the terrace. Apart from cost and time factors which ruled out the possibility of rebuilding the facade in stone, it was decided to use GRC because of its comparative light weight, excellent mouldability, durability and resistance to fire and impact.

Details were lifted direct from the existing facade to make 1795 lightweight panels of sharp and precisely modelled GRC in varying sizes. Most panels are of sandwich construction with a polystyrene bead concrete infill between two 10 mm layers of GRC. The panel configuration was designed to minimize the number of exposed panel joints. A single skin of GRC has been used as permanent formwork for the soffit of the first-floor balcony. The exterior surfaces have been treated with Sandtex (a mixture of 80 per cent 'Mid Stone' and 20 per cent 'Mushroom'), matching up exactly with the existing facade.

This meticulous facade restoration received a special mention in the Concrete Society 1981 Award (Building Structures Category). The judges commented: "This project demonstrated the suitability of GRC as a replacement for the highly modelled stonework which is a feature of so many buildings in Britain that are going to require renovation in the future".

Below: Some of the restored GRC detail is more precise than the original.



NAILSEA TOWN CENTRE

County of Avon

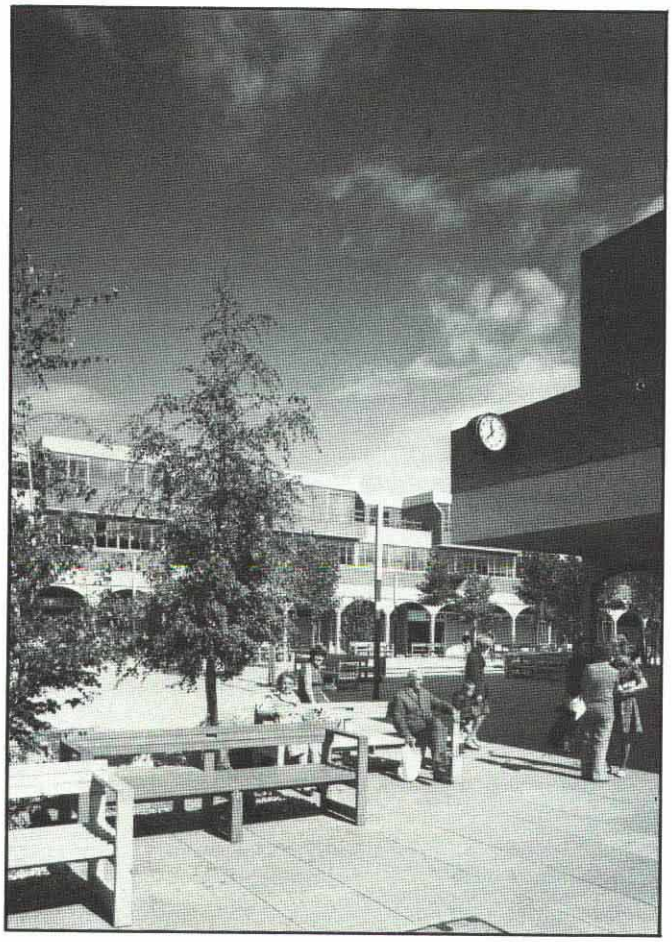
Client:	Copthall Holdings (Somerset) Ltd
Architects:	BGP Group architects
Consulting engineers:	Parsons Brown
Quantity surveyors:	Dickson Powell Partnership
Main contractor:	John Laing Construction Ltd
Precast concrete paving:	Grecon Ltd, Hampshire (slabs) British Dredging (Concrete Products) Ltd (Uni-Blocks)
Photographs:	*Leighton Gibbins*

Designed as a town centre rather than a shopping centre, this new development at Nailsea, County of Avon, has become the centre of community and commercial life in the area, with more character and sense of place than is commonly found in many a commercial development of recent years. It is planned around a number of squares and shopping malls which form an extension of the natural pedestrian flow from surrounding parts of the town. It also has some elegant well-finished shopping arcades and imaginative landscaping with varied planting, plenty of trees, water and sculpture.

The centre is being built in four phases. The first was started in 1970 and the third, including a superstore, shops and car parking, has just been completed in the spring of 1981. The centre incorporates the existing 19th century High Street and comprises an area of 30 acres defined by a ring road which services the centre.

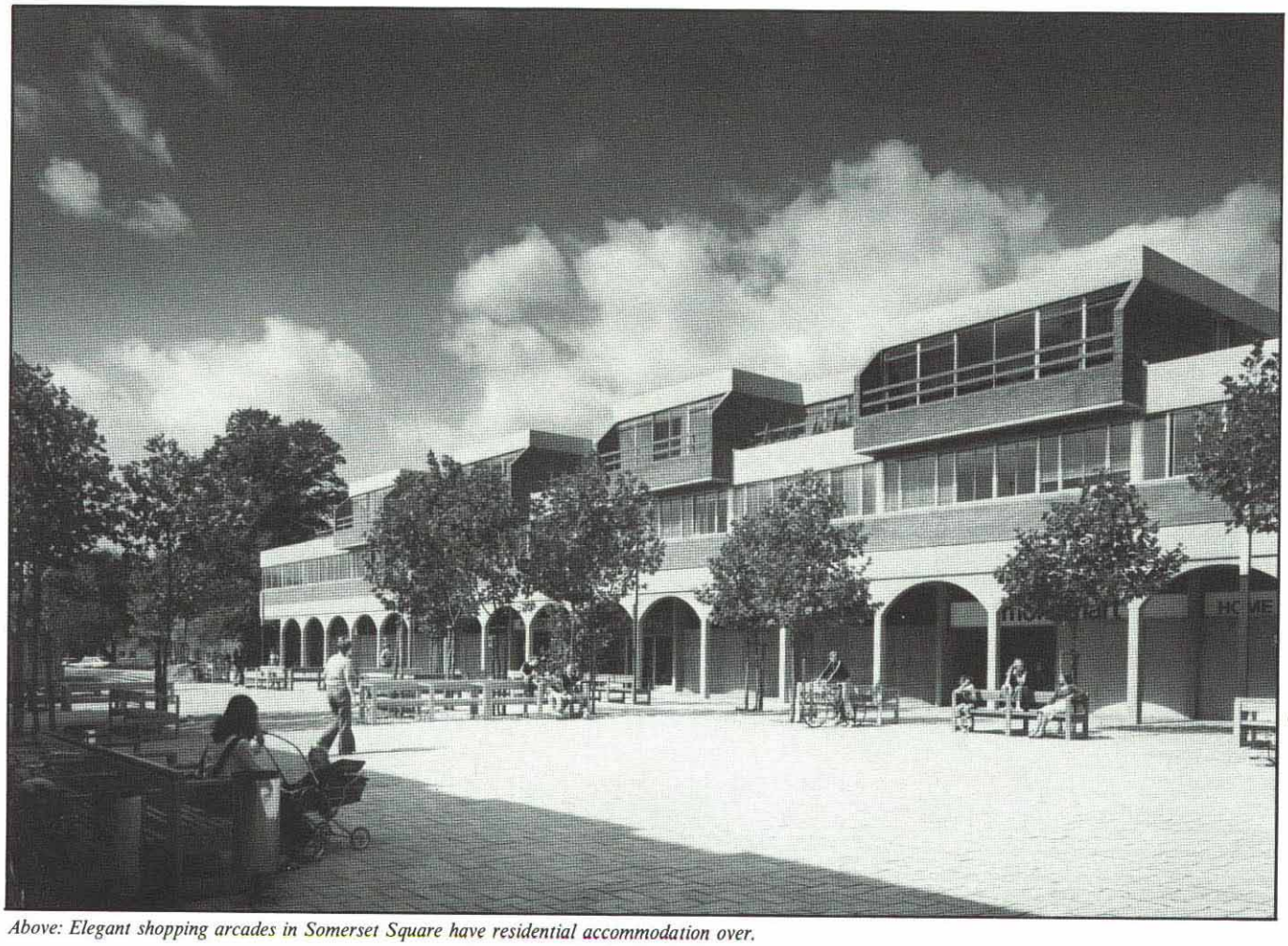
Each square has a main attraction such as a national multiple store, post-office or a local authority service, which keep the place lively. The arcades and canopies link the largest element of the centre – a superstore for Key Markets Ltd – to the shops and offices around the main square and along the High Street. The skyline is broken by different storey heights and projecting bays.

The buildings are of in situ reinforced concrete construction. Finishes have been given careful attention and are of high quality. The arcades are of bush-hammered in situ concrete. Small 2 in. reddish-brown bricks have been used for most of the facings elsewhere. Precast concrete paving slabs with an exposed aggregate finish and concrete blocks lend scale and character to the excellent landscaping.



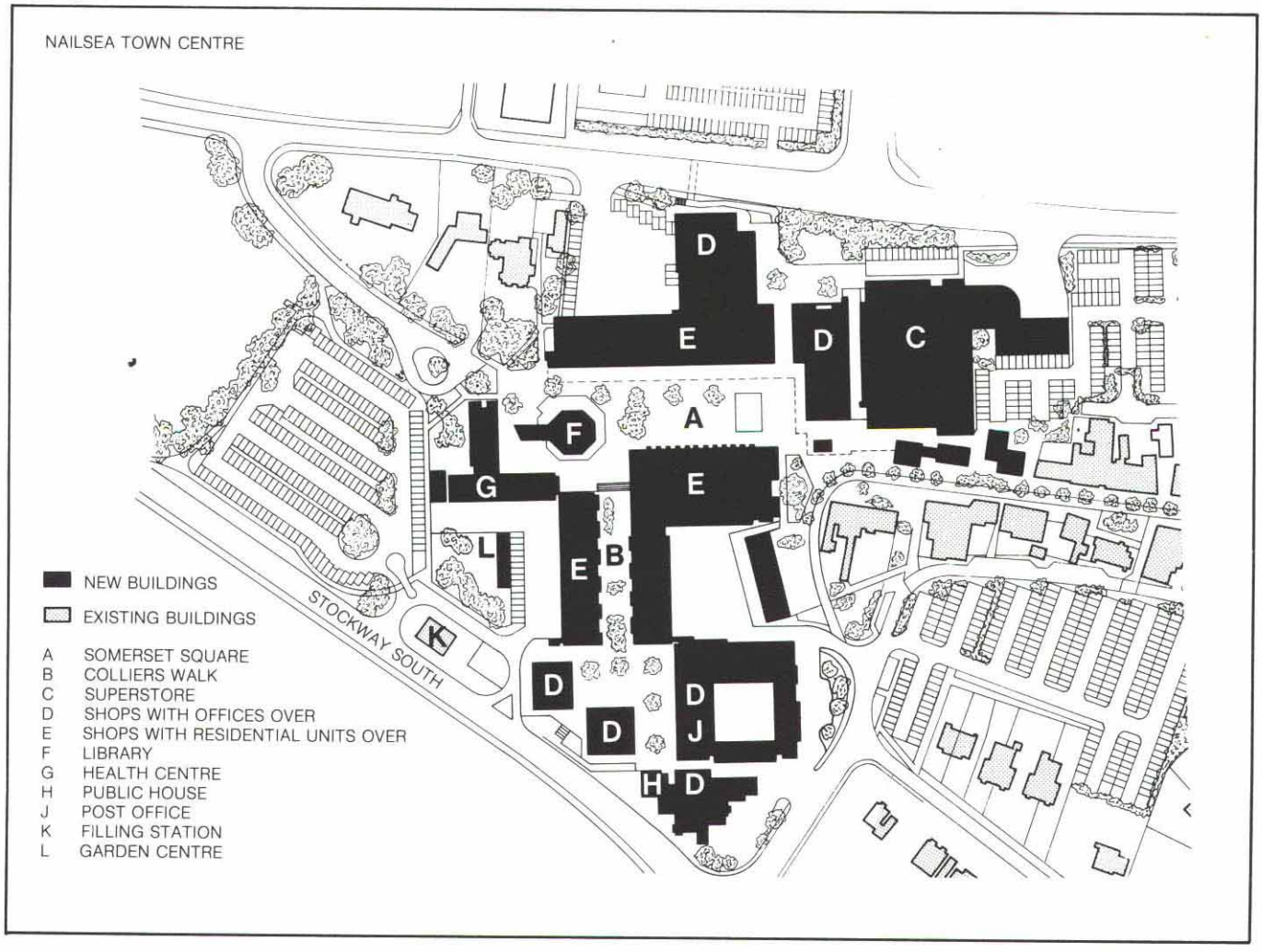
Top right: A corner of Somerset Square showing new tree planting and exposed aggregate paving slabs.

Right: The library and arcaded block in Somerset Square with residential accommodation over.



Above: Elegant shopping arcades in Somerset Square have residential accommodation over.

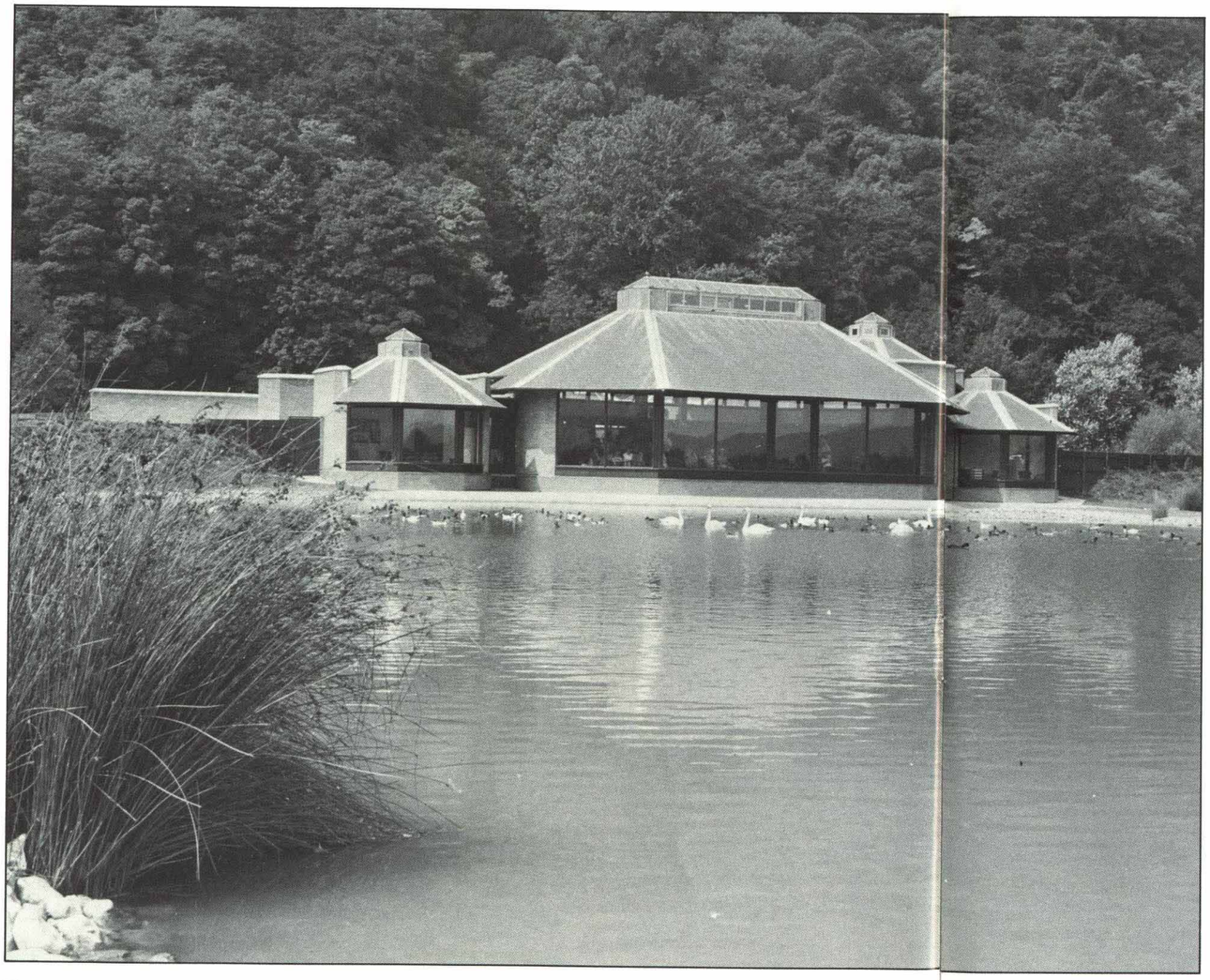
Layout plan.



FLOATING PAVILIONS

Wildfowl Trust Visitor Reception Building, South Stoke, Arundel, Sussex

The Reception Building, supported on a concrete raft, overlooks a lake.

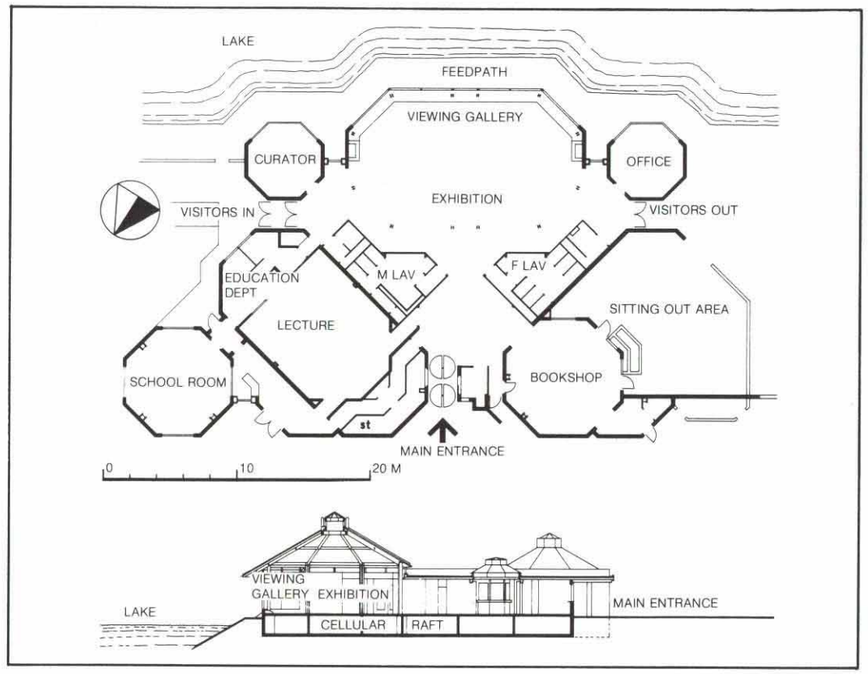


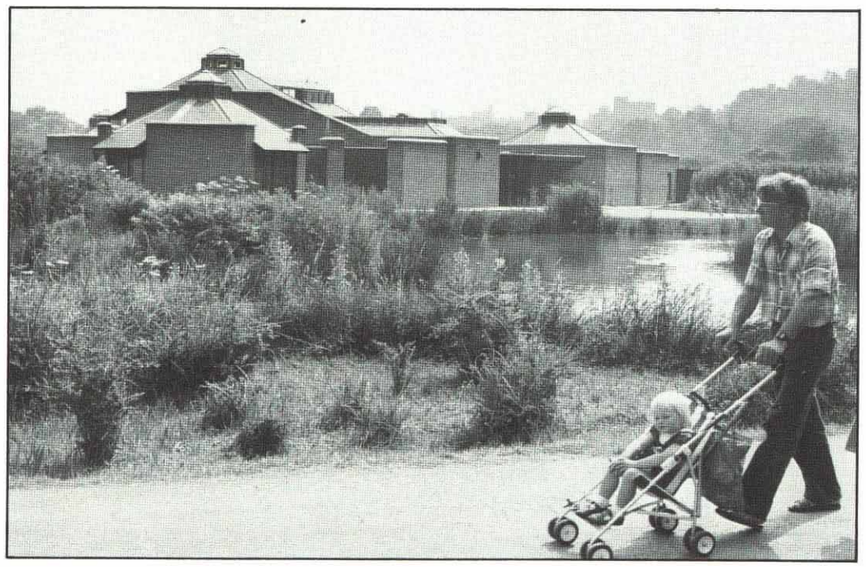
Client:	The Wildfowl Trust
Architect:	Neil Holland
Structural engineers:	Campbell Reith & Partners
Quantity surveyors:	John Chapman
Main contractor:	John. G. Snelling Ltd
Raft contractor:	Cheal & Sons
Precast raft units:	Francis Concrete Ltd

Winner of a 1980 Civic Trust Award, the Wildfowl Trust Visitor Reception Building in Arundel consists of a series of interconnecting octagonal pavilions supported on a floating concrete raft. Both building and the watery landscape in which it floats have been most sympathetically designed to suit this area of marshland below Arundel Castle. The site includes 68 acres of protected water meadows where a large variety of water fowl can thrive undisturbed, discreetly viewed by visitors from the central gallery in the building and a network of informal paths between the man-made ponds.

Because the site is very flat with an extremely poor bearing capacity and up to 60 metres of alluvial mud, and because it is highly susceptible to flooding, it was decided to support the building on a multi-cellular reinforced concrete raft. This is 1.4 m deep with approximately 3 m square hollow cells. The 200 mm thick base slab and walls of the

Below: Plan and section.
Bottom: The Reception Building seen from the approach road with Arundel Castle in the background.





FLOATING PAVILIONS *continued*

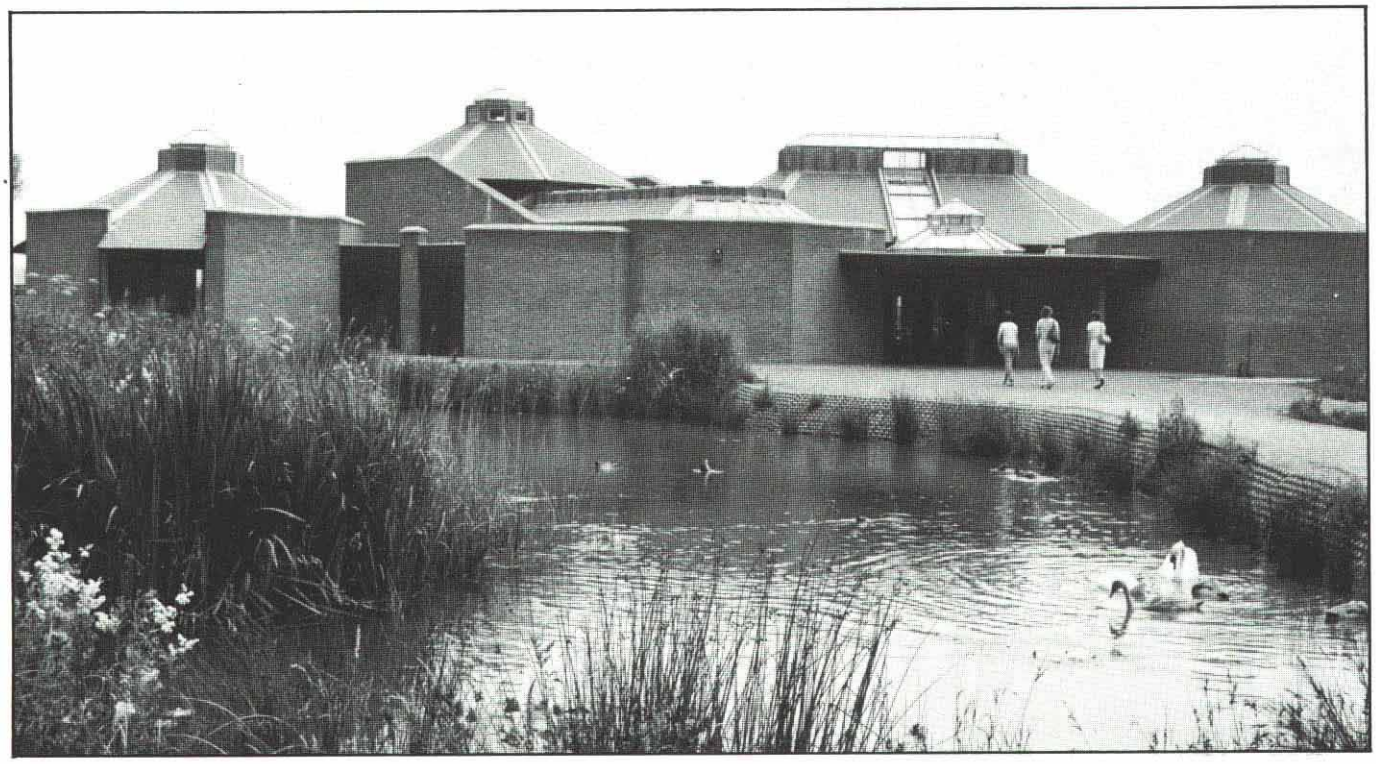
raft were cast in situ. The top of the raft is formed of a 65 mm precast slab with a 60 mm reinforced concrete topping tied into the walls. To reduce the spans of the top slab, intermediate concrete block walls were built into the raft. The precast manufacturers cast the 490 precast pieces for the top slab like a jig-saw puzzle in the casting yard, and placed them in position with the site tower crane. To save weight and money, the raft has not been made watertight but rises 762 mm above ground level – enough to cope with the area's worst recorded flood.

The superstructure is raised 900 mm above ground level, its load spread evenly over the ground by the cellular concrete raft. Accommodation includes a spacious central viewing gallery overlooking the lake (also very good for exhibitions and private parties), a lecture hall, schoolroom, office and bookshop.

This series of brick-walled pavilions combine to make a well detailed and harmonious building. The scale is reduced by breaking the accommodation down into octagonal units individually expressed. Overall shape and mass are enhanced by pitched roofs capped with lantern lights. The surrounding lake and ponds, with grass banking at 30°, have been exceptionally well laid out in a way that visually integrates building and site.

Below: Main entrance.

Bottom: The viewing gallery looks out over an exceptionally well landscaped lake and ponds.



NEW RUNNYMEDE BRIDGE

A30/M25 crossing of the River Thames near Egham, Surrey

Client:	Department of Transport, South Eastern Road Construction Unit
Engineers:	Ove Arup and Partners
Consultant architects:	Arup Associates
Contractors:	Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd (Southern Division)
Precast concrete manufacturer:	Conallcrete Products Ltd
Concrete supplier:	Ready Mixed Concrete (Thames Valley) Ltd

The New Runnymede Bridge – a graceful white concrete arch (Photo: Trevor Jones).

This elegant new bridge over the River Thames at Runnymede was highly commended in the Civil Engineering Category of the Concrete Society 1981 Awards. It carries southbound traffic on the M25 London orbital motorway and the A30 Staines bypass. An existing bridge, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens before the war, carries the northbound traffic.

The bridge has been very successfully designed to match the curve and finish of the original bridge using modern technology. Thus, whilst the Lutyens bridge consists of a reinforced concrete arch clad in brick with Portland stone facings and balustrades, the new bridge consists of four prestressed post-tensioned truss frames in white concrete supporting an in situ deck. All visible surfaces have a bush-hammered finish.

A basic requirement that mainly vertical loads should be applied to the foundations has been met by constructing the frames as balanced cantilevers. To avoid placing falsework in the river, eight half-frames were cast in bays on the banks, slid into position and finished with a 'stitch' of in situ concrete joining the two halves.

The Concrete Society Award judges commented: "This is an elegant and structurally appropriate design and the quality is consistent from conception to the final details".

SELLING POINTS

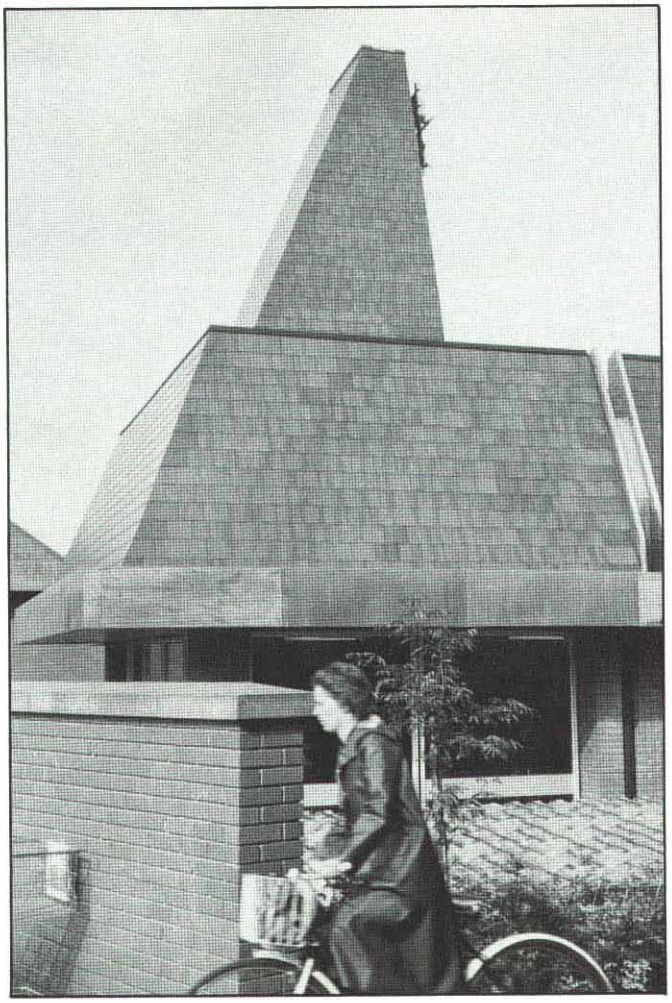
Superstore and shops, Lower Earley,near Reading

Client:	Associated Dairies Ltd
Architects:	The Mason Richards Partnership
Structural consultants:	Clarke Nicholls and Marcel
Quantity surveyors:	Spiers & Co.
General contractor:	Bovis Civil Engineering Ltd
Roofing contractor:	Stephensons & Co. Contracts Ltd
Asbestos-cement slates:	Eternit Building Products Ltd

Now that the pitched roof has been restored to its rightful position as an important element of architectural design, one begins to wonder how we did without it for so many years. Many buildings nowadays take advantage of the architectural opportunities for creating interesting silhouette, mass and 'shape' offered by the pitched roof. This group of single-storey buildings forming an Asda Superstore and 8 lettable shops makes a feature of its variously designed pitched roofs which dominate the buildings and create a special architectural character of their own.

The shopping development forms phase one of Lower Earley District Centre and comprises the Asda Superstore, 8 lettable shops, car parks and service areas. The Superstore consists of an entrance foyer, retail area of about 4145 square metres with 31 checkouts, a bakery, warehouse, offices and a canteen. The shops have a total retail area of about 1340 square metres.

Low predominantly brick and glass buildings are capped by strongly profiled pitched roofs covered with asbestos-cement slates, and it is the roof silhouettes against the sky that create the main architectural interest from the approach roads.

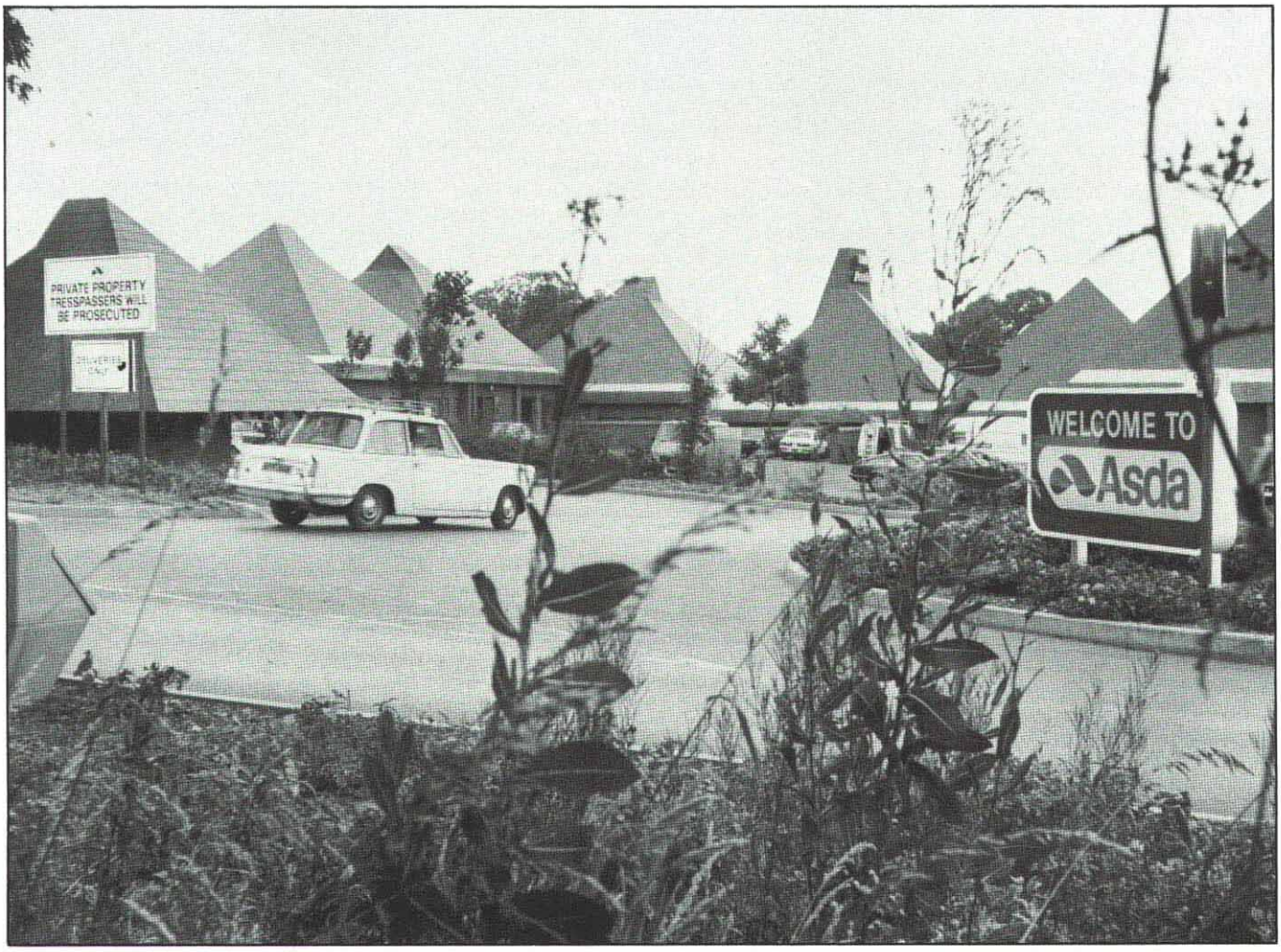


Top right: The steeply pitched roofs are covered with asbestos-cement slates.

Right: Entrance to the superstore.

Opposite top right: The pitched roofs seen against the skyline.

Opposite bottom right: Delivery countyard. The pitched roofs make the main architectural points.


PRIVATE PROPERTY
TRESPASSERS WILL
BE PROSECUTED
WELCOME TO
Asda

NEWS IN BRIEF

MEETINGS

The following informal evening talks, and seminars, on design and construction will be given around the country during the coming months. The venues and dates of the talks will be announced shortly.

Traditional housebuilding

'Traditional housebuilding – design and construction for efficiency and economy' is the subject of a meeting at which Ernie Anderson, of the National Building Agency, Scotland, and Dr John Roberts of the C&CA Research and Development Division will show how positive design and planning can significantly improve speed and economy of traditional house building in brick and block – on large sites or small. Full scale trials on a number of housing contracts have shown that man-hours per house can be reduced by up to 40%. The speakers will also review ways in which new construction techniques and components can yield further improvements in efficiency and quality.

Paving ahead

An illustrated talk by Brian Walker, Head of the Paving and Transportation Department of the Association's Advisory Division, which will show how concrete and cement-bound materials are now providing designers and contractors with a cost-effective choice for large- and small-scale paving work. The talk will review the current range of designs, methods and materials available, and likely future developments.

Concrete block paving

Two half-day seminars on concrete block paving are being arranged by the Association in conjunction with the Interlocking Paving Association. The seminars will deal with current design, construction practice and detailing techniques for block paving for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. There is no charge, but admission will be by ticket only. They will be held in Cambridge on 8 October and in Plymouth on 27 October.

Further details of all of these events can be obtained from Miss Jackie Morris, Planning and Liaison Department, Cement and Concrete Association, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AQ. Telephone: 01-235 6661.

COURSES

The Association's programme of courses and up-dating events covers many aspects of design and construction. Full details of many of these are given in the publication 'Courses at Fulmer Grange 1981-82'. The following may be of special interest.

Energy efficient housing

This one-day event, at Fulmer Grange on 15 December, will provide information on cost, the practical implications of recent research results, design criteria, methods and materials for achieving energy efficiency and thermal comfort in new housing and up-grading existing housing stock.

Survival shelters

A one-day meeting in Edinburgh on 19 November will cover design, materials and equipment.

For further details of these and the full range of C&CA training courses, please contact the Registrar, Cement and Concrete Association, Conference and Training Centre, Fulmer Grange, Fulmer, Slough SL2 4QS. Telephone: Fulmer (028 16) 2727.

AWARDS

Entries are invited for the following awards:

Concrete Society Award

This award recognizes excellence in the use of concrete in two categories – Building, and Civil Engineering. Any scheme substantially completed during 1981 may be entered. Closing date for entries – 18 January 1982.

Cembureau European Award for concrete in low-rise housing

Over ten European countries will be taking part in this award scheme to recognize excellence in the use of concrete in low-rise housing, organized by the European Cement Association. The UK judges will select six entries to be considered by the international jury. Closing date for entries – 9 November 1981.

The Philip Gooding travel scholarship

With a value of up to £2500 this scholarship enables the winner to travel to study concrete construction overseas. Applicants, who should already have some experience in a profession or occupation related to construction, are required to submit details of the subject which they would wish to study and of the countries to be visited. Closing date for entries – 31 October 1981.

The Snow Award for innovation

This award is for innovation in concrete and concrete construction which has been proved in practice. The innovation may, for example, be a new design or construction concept, a new material or item of plant. Closing date for entries – 31 October 1981.

Further details and entry forms for all these Awards can be obtained from Anthea Wright, The Concrete Society, Terminal House, Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AJ. Telephone : 01-730 8252.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

1981 C&CA Catalogue

The newly published *1981 C&CA Catalogue* brings together details of all available material published by the Association. Part 1 lists advisory and information publications, together with slide sets and films. Part 2, published separately, lists the reported results of the R&D work carried out by the Association since 1954. Copies of both parts of the new catalogue can be obtained free of charge.

Appearance Matters

Control of blemishes in concrete (Ref. 47.103) is the third publication in the *Appearance Matters* series. It is concerned with the causes, identification and prevention of blemishes in the surface of concrete structures. It is particularly intended for use on site or in precast works to identify blemishes that may arise and prevent their recurrence. It is not intended to be used on its own as a guide to the production of high-quality concrete surfaces, but should be used in conjunction with *Visual Concrete: Design and production* (ref. 47.101).

Construction Guides

Two further leaflets in this series have been published:

Spacers for reinforcement (Ref. 47.007) briefly describes the different types of spacer available, and sets out factors affecting choice.

Impurities in concreting aggregates (Ref: 45.016) lists, in alphabetical order, the minor constituents most likely to be found in aggregates for concrete. It describes their effect on the concrete, refers to methods of measuring their quantitities, and suggests how, if necessary, their adverse effects can be countered.

All these booklets can be obtained from Publications Distribution, Cement and Concrete Association, Wexham Springs, Slough SL3 6PL.

NEW FILM

'Concrete is...' a new film which illustrates the vital role which concrete plays in shaping the modern world. Intended primarily for non-technical audiences it will, however, be useful to members of the construction industry wishing to promote the image of construction to the lay public. The film is available on free loan in the UK from The Film Library, Cement and Concrete Association, Wexham Springs, Slough SL3 6PL.

Housing in concrete is the theme of the series of evening talks and of the Cembureau European Award described above. Harriston Village, seen here, also features in the new C&CA film "Concrete is...".

Casting around

a quarterly column of notes and comments

Thoughts from Victoria Station

"Hello Sir, please Sir, which way to the Queen's House?" The Japanese gentleman bows low and you tell him that it's straight on and first on the left – he can't miss it. For here in the purlieus of Victoria Station, the London tourist season – in the wake of The Wedding – is still in breathless swing. A bewildered American lady in the tourist office, newly arrived in London, insists on a hotel room "overlooking the Eiffel Tower" and then, consulting her itinerary, asks doubtfully "Today is Tuesday isn't it?". *"Où"* the French girl inevitably asks *"est Peeccadeellee?"*. "Pliss vere ist der Vestminster Rat Haus, der Rundfahrt, I search for a cellar..." A Russian lady architect writes to say that she is coming to see me in my office, but that if I am not there she will expect "Massage in the Reception". However, it's all very well for us to laugh: we British are worse at languages than anyone and most of us don't even try. An English woman I know, recently flounced down the steps of a Monte Carlo hotel in a towering rage, calling the manager "A very large shutter" (the difference between *voleur* a thief and *volet* a shutter) – perhaps a handy term of abuse for those in the concrete world. And my favourite aunt of 92 tells me that as a young girl in Venice (she was strikingly beautiful) she once walked through the town asking the way to a famous equestrian statue and was puzzled that people drew back in alarm. Checking later with her dictionary, she found that what she had actually said to everyone was "Gentlemen's private parts" So now the laugh's on me and I find myself arriving in a German pension late on a Friday evening. There is no soap in the bathroom. Of course not. I might have remembered – German pensions do not provide soap. I have not brought any soap with me. Exploring the town, I find that all the shops are shut. The pension is on the first floor: there is no reception desk and the manager who lives in some obscure nether regions, can only be contacted by entry-phone from the front door. What is the German for soap? No, I didn't bring my dictionary. Groping into the recesses of my memory, I seem to think it is something like *Senf*. Well near enough anyway. Pressing the entry-phone button, I shout into the grille that I require *Senf*: I have not packed any *Senf*, the shops are shut, and would he please supply *Senf* instantly. There is a pause and then *"Bitte?"* *"Senf"* I shout *"Senf"* – I cannot proceed without *Senf*..." There is a buzz and the front door clicks open. Inside, the manager – mountainous, sweating, his braces straining like hawsers – majestically descends the stairs carrying a little yellow jar. Well perhaps I should have known that *Seife* is soap and *Senf* is mustard. But what's a letter or two, here or there?

Out in the town of Kassel, its restaurants bursting with *Schweinfleisch* and *Bratwurst* (for which the yellow jar came in handy), I made my way to the *Bundesgartenschau* – the great national biennial horticultural and landscaping show in Germany which regularly takes place from April to October in a different town. It makes you realize that in Britain all we have of the kind is the Chelsea Flower Show – an event which may be marvellous for its flowers but doesn't do much for the art of landscaping, except now and then in small isolated pockets with occasionally one or two good gardens. The *Bundesgartenschau* on the other hand, as the official description says, "is first and foremost an exhibition and competition for gardeners and landscape architects". It also says, rather enigmatically, that the show will "motivate those for whom 14000 blooming roses are not worth the trip". Well you see what they mean. What is done and seen in this exhibition is liable to be taken up and applied in other parts of the country. Products and designs are carefully studied. Ideas for small gardens as well as for public spaces, designed by the cream of the landscaping profession, are attractively presented in the setting of an existing park. People flock there in thousands. It is the sort of thing that we could definitely use in this country. And the effects are manifest throughout all Germany: it is no accident that the Germans are arguably the best landscapers in Europe. But this *Bundesgartenschau* is no mere formal academic exercise. Besides the attractions of landscaping, jolly diversions in the form of entertainers are laid on: "minstrels, clowns, comics, jugglers, pantomimes..." For as the elaborately produced glossy brochure in English succinctly explains "We do not piddle around". Evidently not. Whereas in Britain perhaps we do. But more of all this in the next issue of *Concrete Quarterly*.

On my way home from the *Bahnhof*, or railway station, I am struck by the fact that Coca-Cola is sold by the "dose", and by the extraordinary cleanliness of the place. Also it is bright and cheerful, by no means depressing – as I find nearly every British railway station somehow is. What is the secret of its success? Coming back to Victoria Station, I sometimes think it is the most deathly place on earth. Over the years, alterations have been made, improvements carried out: a new kiosk here, a range of shops there. It still obstinately remains a ghastly sort of place – a battleground in the rush-hour and, in the non-rush hours, its desolate, litter-strewn wastes seem somehow eerie, cavernous and sinister. The very air seems laden with doom as well as dust. Not the best place, surely, to lift up the hearts of those receiving their first impressions of Britain. But I have long thought that the answer lies in the floor. And I'm sorry if this sounds like the commercials, but I notice that Waterloo Station has just paved half its concourse floor with cream-coloured polished terrazzo tiles. The effect has been instantaneously uplifting. The bit that's paved reflects the light and looks cheerful, bright and even clean (litter looks worse on a dark floor). On this point, I managed to intercept the station cleaner who happened to be touring the concourse with his electric cart of mops and brushes. Was it difficult to keep clean? He spat vehemently onto the tiles. People, he said, were like animals. Like *animals*. They chucked filth all over the place. But no, it was easy enough actually to clean. "Look at that bloke over there" he cried "Look at him". A young man in jeans was at that moment discarding an old newspaper full of something onto the floor. Running after him, I said "Excuse me, I think you've dropped something". *"Bitte?"* *"Sie haben"* I replied with some heat *"gedroppt ihre Feelthy Steenking Rubbisch"*. With a bit of luck, I might have said something really rude.

George Perkins

The cheerful effect of the new cream-coloured terrazzo tiles in Waterloo Station, compared with the unpaved section. Litter shows up more on a dark floor.

Printed in England by A. & R. Colour Printers (Canterbury) Limited. Reproduction by Ginberry Proofers Limited.