

## BATH: UNIVERSITY CITY

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Let us suppose, for a moment, that Adelard of Bath – that pioneering English schoolman, scientist and academic of the twelfth century – had remained in the town with which he has been identified instead of wandering about Europe in search of Greek and Arabic documents. Had he done so it is possible that he could have attracted one of those seminal groups of scholars who in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were gathering around outstanding teachers in some European cities and thereby establishing the foundations of the first universities. Or let us suppose that the disgruntled group of scholars who pulled out of Oxford in 1209 had chosen to travel south-west to the busy market town and flourishing abbey of Bath rather than taking off to the north-east into the fenlands around the bridge over the River Cam. In either of these counter-factual situations it is possible that Bath could have become one of the great original university cities of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, this did not happen, and Bath developed instead as the foremost spa of England, becoming a centre of the incipient leisure and tourist industries. Nevertheless, the point of these speculative 'might-have-beens' is that Bath possessed some distinct advantages as a seat of learning, such as congenial accommodation and convenient access to London, and over half a millennium after the first flowering of European universities in the Middle Ages, it was well placed for consideration in the next phase of university expansion in England. This was in the nineteenth century, when the foundation of University College London in 1826 initiated a prolonged growth in higher education promoted by the increased prosperity of the period and the emergence of wealthy commercial and professional classes. At its foundation the critics of the UCL regarded it as the 'Godless college', because its promoters were utilitarians and rationalists led by Jeremy Bentham, whose mummified body still presides over the institution. So it was quickly followed by the creation of King's College London as a Church of England foundation in 1829, and by the establishment of a traditional Christian university on the collegiate model of Oxford and Cambridge at Durham in 1832.

The same determination to ensure that new universities would be God-fearing institutions animated plans to establish a university in Bath in the 1830s. A prospectus was issued, couched in distinctly pietistic terms, of an evangelical and anti-Catholic flavour, and some design sketches survive for a neo-gothic pile on the lower slopes of Claverton Down (fig.1).



**Fig.1** The Project for Queen's College, Bath. This scheme for a substantial 'Saxon' style building on Claverton Down was launched in 1839. It was soon abandoned for lack of funds. (reproduced by courtesy of the *University of Bath*)

But the scheme ran out of funds at an early stage and was abandoned.<sup>2</sup> Another century passed before Bath tried again, and this time more successfully, to become a University City.

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring city of Bristol, other crucial academic developments had occurred in the mid-nineteenth century ferment of new ideas about political liberalism, social reform, and scientific progress. Bristol had long been a thriving port, and had gradually acquired large commercial and industrial activities dominating an extensive hinterland. The rapid expansion of novel industrial processes had generated a national demand for new training establishments, which had been further stimulated by the success of the Great International Exhibition of 1851, and by the enthusiasm of Prince Albert for introducing German standards of technical competence into his adopted home. Technical education thus made an encouraging start at national level in the 1850s, with the Bristol Trade School, set up in 1856, being the local response to this initiative. It was a small step, but it deserves to be recognized as the first formal development in higher education in the West Country, and as the beginning of the institution that became, in the fulness of time, the University of Bath.

The Bristol Trade School itself sprang from a Diocesan Day School, which had been established in 1821 to cope with the missionary problem of the inner-city area. It had not been very successful in recruiting students and had lapsed in 1852, when the trustees had asked Canon Moseley to advise them on the best use of their premises and resources. Henry Moseley (1801-1872), a distinguished Cambridge mathematician, had been Professor of Natural Philosophy at King's College London and an early Inspector of Schools before being appointed a Canon of Bristol Cathedral in 1853. He had already made a reputation for himself as an advocate of technical education, so his advice to the Bristol trustees must have come with no surprise. As the Bristol historian John Latimer observed:

The Great Exhibition of 1851 having made it clear that, in their knowledge of the scientific principles upon which trades and manufactures are based, English workmen were, for the most part, behind their brethren on the Continent, Canon Moseley conceived the idea of remedying this defect, so far as Bristol was concerned; and after carefully considering the requirements of the city, he submitted to the trustees the scheme of a School of Applied Science, similar to the institutions of the same kind then highly successful in Germany and other countries, but then unknown in England, where youths of limited means could be provided with suitable training for an industrial career.<sup>3</sup>

The trustees accepted this proposal and won the support of Lyon Playfair, another outstanding national campaigner for technical education, so that the opening of the School on 26 March 1856 was accompanied by considerable local and national interest.

The Bristol Trade School took over the premises of the old Diocesan School in Nelson Street, where it grew steadily under the headmastership of Thomas Coomber, and soon became overcrowded. Fortunately for the future of the institution, the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) – a wealthy body of businessmen with a long tradition of charitable and philanthropic benefactions in Bristol – came to take an interest in it. As early as 1863 they had begun to make an annual grant towards the salary for a teacher in navigation, and in 1885 they took over full responsibility for the management of the School, building new premises for it in Unity Street, where it was appropriately re-named the ‘Merchant Venturers’ School’. When this transformation occurred the School had a teaching staff of twelve, including the Headmaster, and was organized in five departments: Primary, Secondary, Mining and Technical, Chemical and Metallurgical, and an Evening Class. The Evening Class was specifically ‘intended principally to carry on the studies of those who have passed through the Day School, but open to all persons whatsoever, without distinction of sex’. This ban on sex discrimination was gradually extended to other departments, and became one of the notable pioneering features of the School. The Prospectus summed up the general objective neatly: ‘The School is intended to provide a complete, continuous, and thoroughly sound preparation for an industrial career’.<sup>4</sup>

When Thomas Coomber, the first Headmaster and ‘father of technical instruction in Bristol’, resigned in 1890 after thirty-three years of service, he was replaced by Julius Wertheimer, BSc, who had previously held a post at the Leeds School of Science. Under Wertheimer, the School was able to take advantage of a new commitment by the state to technical education. From 1870 onwards, successive governments had recognized that the provision of elementary education could no longer be left entirely to private and voluntary organizations, and had undertaken the systematic provision of state schools for all children. This had stimulated the demand for similar provision for secondary education, and especially for technical education, which had resulted in the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, giving local authorities powers to develop technical education. The imposition of a tax on spirits – ‘whisky money’ – the following year made funds available for such developments. In the case of Bristol, they amounted to the useful sum of £5,700 per annum. Rather than devoting this sum to

the establishment of a single great Technical Institute, the Corporation divided it between existing institutions, including the Technical School. This was regarded as a significant lost opportunity by some observers.<sup>5</sup> But the School underwent rapid expansion and in 1894 it assumed a new form when Wertheimer took the title of Professor of Chemistry and Metallurgy and became Principal of the re-styled Merchant Venturers' Technical College (MVTC).

While the MVTC was expanding in this way, a similar growth was occurring in the University College of Bristol, which had been established in 1876 and had shared in the increased liberality of the government towards advanced education. It seemed to several commentators that a merger between the University College and the MVTC was desirable, and negotiations took place intermittently in the 1890s to explore the possibility of a federation between the two institutions. They reached agreement on a title – 'The West of England University and Technical College' – but not much more. Deadlock was reached when both bodies insisted on keeping their own classes in engineering. The problem was resolved in a fashion by the intervention of the Wills family, the tobacco merchants and manufacturers with large factories in Bristol. As prominent members of the Society of Merchant Venturers, the family supported the priority of the MVTC in providing engineering courses. And as princely benefactors of the University College, they were able to insist that when this institution received its Charter and became the University of Bristol in 1909, it should recognize the prior claim of the MVTC in respect of engineering education. Thus, an agreement was made whereby the MVTC provided the Faculty of Engineering in the University, while it relinquished its advanced science teaching to the University, but in all other respects the two institutions preserved their separate identities.

Professor Wertheimer, in addition to being Principal of the MVTC, thus became also Dean of the University Faculty of Engineering. When he died in harness in 1923 he was succeeded in both posts, after a brief interregnum, by Professor Andrew Robertson. Robertson also held the Chair of Mechanical Engineering in the Faculty to his retirement in 1949. The opportunity was then taken to make a major reorganization. In the euphoria after the end of the Second World War, and with the new objectives provided by the Education Act of 1944, the Bristol Local Education Authority (LEA) was anxious to expand the provision of technical education. At the same time the SMV was becoming increasingly apprehensive about the drain on its funds caused by the escalating needs of the College. In 1949, therefore, the SMV relinquished its sixty-four year commitment to the College, which was handed over to the LEA and re-named as the College of Technology, Bristol, with

F.W.Partington as its Principal. The LEA split off the Commercial Department to become a separate College of Commerce, the first Principal of which was W.B.Armstrong. At the same time, the formal links between the Technical College and the University of Bristol were terminated, both institutions acquiring their own departments of science and engineering, with completely separate staffs. Moreover, it was realized that the Unity Street premises, although not themselves seriously damaged in the war, were no longer adequate to accommodate the enlarged role in technical education envisaged for the College of Technology, and a search for larger premises was undertaken.<sup>6</sup>

As it happened, the five substantial buildings that comprised Muller's Orphan Houses on Ashley Down became available around this time. The Orphanage, built in grey pennant sandstone between 1849 and 1870, had been made redundant by the development of alternative facilities within the Welfare State, so the buildings were acquired by the Corporation of Bristol for educational uses. They were put at the disposal of the College of Technology so that, after extensive internal refurbishment between 1953 and 1958, the re-modelled College was fully consolidated at Ashley Down. The Unity Street premises were left to the College of Commerce, and the Department of Art was hived off to become the new College of Art at Ashton Park. George H. Moore had succeeded F.W.Partington as Principal of the College of Technology in 1954. The construction of the new Great Hall and Administration Block at Ashley Down appeared to complete this phase of expansion and prepared the College of Technology for a period of stability under the Bristol LEA. But even more far-reaching changes were ahead.

The first hint of dramatic developments in technical education came in the government White Paper on *Technical Education* in 1956.<sup>7</sup> This emphasized the determination of government to reinvigorate the whole structure of technical education, and as one of the positive actions to achieve this it proposed to designate a few of the larger and more important technical colleges as Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs), with the intention of concentrating on the development of degree-level courses in technological subjects. Eight of these colleges were soon named, and it was announced that others would be designated when they reached the appropriate standards. It was by no means clear that the Bristol College of Technology, with barely 500 full-time students, could meet these standards. However, the South West of England was specified as one of the desirable areas for the establishment of a CAT, and under the energetic leadership of George Moore the Bristol College began to prepare itself for the role.

As a first step towards fulfilling the requirements of a CAT, it was decided to separate the higher- from the lower-level work in such a way that two distinct colleges could be formed. The higher-level work was then placed largely under the supervision of the National Council for Technological Awards, recently set up by the government to award the new Diploma in Technology for 'sandwich'-type courses of degree level. From the outset, the higher-level college was able to offer courses for the DipTech in Applied Biology, Applied Chemistry, Mechanical Engineering, Aeronautical Engineering, and Electrical Engineering. It also provided courses for the Higher National Diploma in Engineering subjects, advanced level courses in Pharmacy and Architecture, and preparation for various professional qualifications. In accordance with the requirement that for the award of the Diploma in Technology one tenth of the tuition must be of a non-specialized nature, a General Studies Department was created, and there were also strong service Departments in Mathematics and Physics.

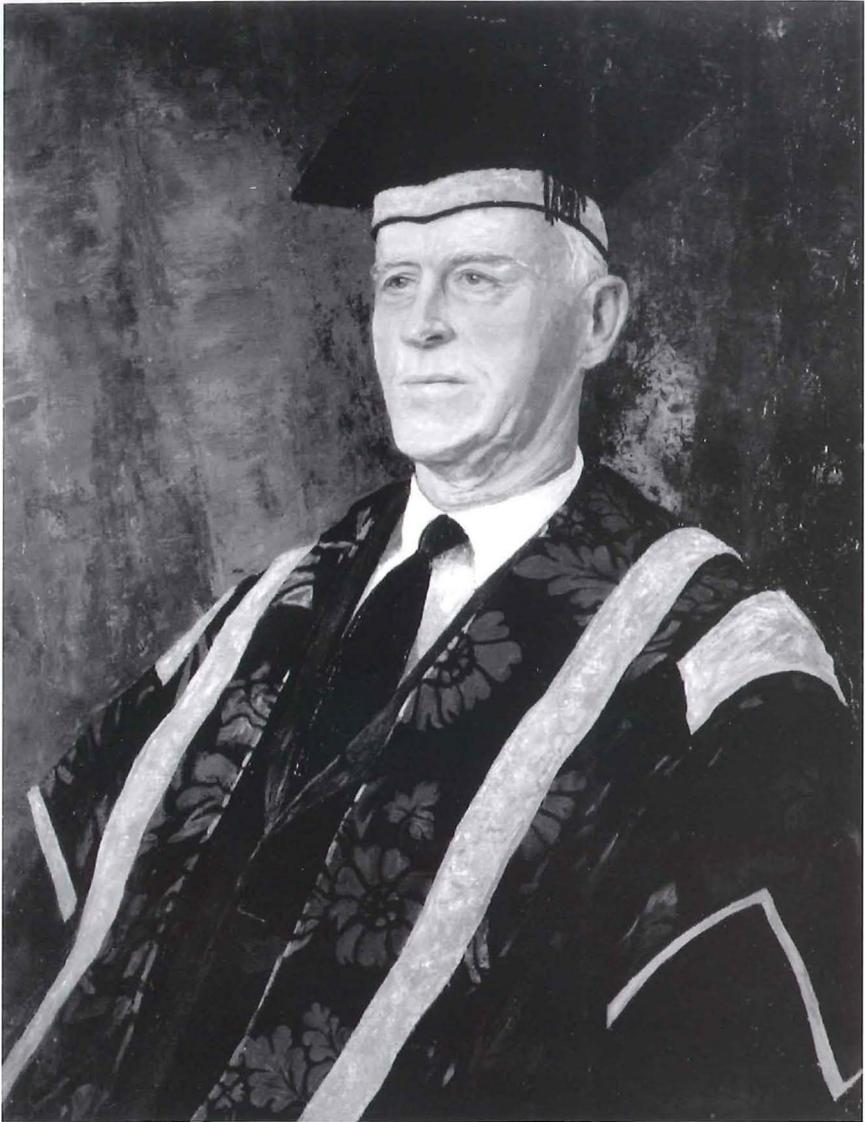
Thus equipped, the higher-level work was approved for CAT status, and in September 1960 the College split into a newly designated CAT, now renamed the Bristol College of Science and Technology, and the Bristol Technical College, which took over the lower-level work. Both colleges remained under the auspices of the Bristol LEA, and they both remained on the Ashley Down site. The Technical College was allocated one of the five formidable Orphanage buildings, and the CAT took responsibility for the other four. Many of the amenities, such as the Great Hall and Common Rooms, were shared, but otherwise the two colleges acquired completely distinct administrations, staff and students. George Moore became Principal of the CAT, and E. Poole, who had been Vice-Principal of the College of Technology, became Principal of the Technical College. The existing staff divided between the two new institutions, and both began to appoint new staff of their own. The full significance of this division emerged in subsequent decades, when the CAT became the University of Bath and the Technical College grew to become, first, Bristol Polytechnic College, and then the University of the West of England. Professor R.W.Bolland, who served as the first Head of the School of Chemistry at the University of Bath, moved across to become the first Director of the Bristol Polytechnic, and the sibling institutions have maintained other links.

It was not intended in 1960 that the two colleges should co-habit the Ashley Down site indefinitely. When the split was made, the plan was for the CAT to expand at Ashley Down while a new home would be found for the Technical College. But it quickly became clear that the scale envisaged by the government for the CATs would make the site too small for the higher-level

institution, so it was decided that it was the CAT which would have to move. Consequently, it was announced by the LEA in December 1960 that a new site had been found for the CAT at Kings Weston House, an elegant Vanburgh mansion standing in its own grounds on the western edge of Bristol. The mansion was promptly appropriated for the Department of Architecture, and the interior was extensively renovated to equip it for this new function. A distinguished firm of architects, Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners, was commissioned to design new buildings in the grounds of Kings Weston, and all seemed set fair for the development in Bristol of a large institution specializing in high-level technological studies.

Once again, however, things did not work out so simply. By the end of 1962, serious snags had begun to appear in the development plans. The Planning Committee of Bristol City Council had begun to have misgivings about the projected size of the College, and was delaying planning permission for new developments. The problem was accentuated by the fact that in April 1962, together with the other nine CATs, the Bristol College of Science and Technology had been converted into a direct-grant institution, freeing it from LEA control and making it responsible directly to the Minister of Education. The new status was accompanied by a cooling of the relations between the College and the City, culminating in the summer of 1963 when the Planning Committee formally vetoed further development on the Kings Weston site. An alternative site was offered, at Coldharbour Farm on Pur Down, to the east of Filton, but this was not regarded as satisfactory by the Governors of the College, although it subsequently became the home for the Polytechnic. On top of this crisis, the Robbins Report on *Higher Education* was published in October 1963, recommending that the ten CATs should be elevated to university status. The government promptly accepted this recommendation, and planning commenced for the transition from Colleges of Advanced Technology to Universities.<sup>8</sup>

The Bristol College of Science and Technology was thus on the threshold of becoming a university, but had nowhere to call its home, even prospectively. Rumours circulated freely that the Principal had been observed, sometimes wearing gum-boots, inspecting properties in the West Country, in places as far apart as Clevedon and Swindon. But it was in the course of a conversation at a formal dinner that George Moore found the answer to his searches. The dinner was in Bath early in 1964, and speaking there to H.W.Brand, the Director of Education for the City, about his problem he was asked if he had considered Bath as a possible home for the new University. Being himself a Bathonian, Moore responded warmly to the idea, and within a few weeks the scheme whereby Bath City Council generously offered a 150-acre site at



**Fig.2** Dr George Moore, the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bath, 1966 to 1969. Previously Principal of the Bristol College of Science and Technology. Portrait painted by Dr A.M. Hardie, the first Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University and an accomplished artist, who also designed the University coat of arms and ceremonial dress. *(reproduced by courtesy of the Senior Common Room, University of Bath)*

Norwood Playing Fields on Claverton Down had been worked out and accepted by all the parties concerned. Now, at last, the way was clear for Bath to become a University City (fig.2).

While it has been necessary to pursue the emergence of a university in Bath by considering the history of a Bristol institution, it is important to observe that higher education in Bath had made substantial advances in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The city had established a sound educational system with some excellent schools, and had already recognized the growing importance of further and higher education. It had acted as the home base for the Bath and West Agricultural Society from its foundation in 1777, and had enjoyed a flourishing intellectual life through bodies such as the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, founded in 1825. In 1864 it had hosted a visit from the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and other intellectual organizations had found it a congenial meeting place. A Technical College was set up in 1896 in response to the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, housed first in a wing of the Guildhall and then in the building which had been a Hospital in Beau Street, before moving to the uncompromisingly modern buildings in Avon Street in the 1960s. Bath Technical College did not itself aspire to university status, but it attracted some well-qualified staff such as the distinguished economic historian and historian of Bath, Professor R.S.Neale, who began his teaching career there before going to Australia. A small School of Pharmacy had been set up in Bath in 1907, and when this moved over to Bristol in 1929 it became part of the MVTC and thus became responsible for the strong Pharmacy component in the putative university. And after the Second World War an Emergency Teacher Training College was established at Newton St. Loe, with affiliated departments of arts and domestic science within the city. The Bath Training College, which became Bath College of Education and subsequently Bath Spa University College, undertook degree-level work and came close to merging with the University of Bath in the 1990s. Despite all these developments, Bath faced a novel role in becoming a University City in the 1960s.<sup>9</sup>

The years 1964 to 1966 saw a flurry of activity as the move of the new university from Bristol to Bath began, to the accompaniment of organizational transformation and the construction of a brand new campus. Negotiations for a University Charter were put in hand, to be fulfilled at a ceremony in Bath Abbey on 9th November 1966. Detailed discussion of the composition of the University resulted in the definition of a dozen 'Schools', which were designed to be more inter-disciplinary and flexible than traditional Faculties, and the customary apparatus of university independence – Council, Senate, Court, and Convocation. The architects Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall



**Fig.3** The University under construction  
(photographs by R.A.Buchanan)

(*above*) Work began on the 'Preliminary Building', now the 'South Building', soon after the agreement with the City of Bath to build on the Claverton Playing Fields, in the autumn of 1964.  
(*right*) After extensive preparations, rapid progress was made on the Chemistry Building, now 4 West, in 1967.

(*below*) The complete Hall, Norwood House, and 2 East Buildings, with early landscaping, 1973.



and Partners, so long frustrated by the Kings Weston debacle, tackled the virgin site with enthusiasm and produced a distinctive design for a linear campus, arranged along a pedestrian deck above a central service road, from which the Schools, the Library, and the Common Room facilities could spring like the vertebrae from a spinal column. The design undoubtedly owed some of its inspiration to an aborted plan for a New Town at Hook in Hampshire, for which the architects had prepared drawings, but it has proved itself to be a very workable pattern for a university campus.

There has been widespread disappointment with the buildings that filled out this excellent design, but the shortcomings were largely the result of financial stringency at the time of construction. The standardized prefabricated buildings adopted from CLASP – the ‘Consortium of Local Authority Special Projects’ – with their extensive flat roofs and indifferent woodwork, have not weathered well, so that much maintenance and re-building has been required over the past thirty years, and new additions have abandoned the style. However, the landscaping of the site, with a lake, a small amphitheatre, extensive tree-planting and plenty of informal shrubbery, has been a considerable success, toning down some of the harshness of the buildings (fig.3).<sup>10</sup>

The initial building campaign proceeded very promptly, so that by the autumn of 1966, when the University received its Charter, the shape of the future campus was clearly established and several of the Schools were already installed in it. The first or ‘Preliminary Building’, later styled the ‘South Building’, was occupied in September 1965, when the School of Biology and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences moved in. The University continued to use premises at Ashley Down, Kings Weston, Rockwells (for the School of Management), and in the centre of Bath at Northgate House (for the School of Education) until the end of the decade, but the consolidation of the campus on Claverton Down was carried forwards with all possible speed, and was complete by the early 1970s. In a remarkably short space of time from the original suggestion, therefore, Bath had acquired a fully-fledged and flourishing University. It was a development that gave a distinctive character to the University, and it also had a profound effect on the city.

Every university is a substantial institution and develops in a sort of symbiosis with the community in which it is set. In the case of Bath, this relationship has been complicated by the long pre-university tradition in a neighbouring city that we have just reviewed. The first area of potential sensitivity between the University and the city in which it has made its home was the question of its title. Senior members of the University were anxious to perpetuate its scientific/technological orientation by keeping the word ‘technology’ in the title. In its first form this was ‘The University of Bath: A

Technological University', but this was such a cumbersome mouthful that it was modified within a few years to 'Bath University of Technology'. Despite the agreeably inquisitorial overtones of the acronym 'BUT', this did not prove popular either, and by the mid-1970s it had been altered once again to its present form, 'The University of Bath'. Only Loughborough, amongst the eight CATs which achieved full university status, has preserved the technological association in its title. For the most part, however, the simple connection between university and city seems to have been accepted happily in Bath by both town and gown.

The question of the title was the tip of a much larger problem, which was that of the academic disciplines composing the University of Bath. With its strong technological emphasis at the outset, many of its original members hoped that this would be retained as a permanent feature of the institution. The powerful argument in favour of this was that it had already established its excellence in engineering and the applied sciences, and that it was desirable to use the limited resources available to strengthen this achievement rather than to experiment in new and unfamiliar fields. On the other hand, it was argued that any fully-formed university needed to offer a wide range of accepted disciplines, which should include the 'humanities' such as History, Literature and Philosophy, in which the new university was manifestly very weak. It was pointed out, moreover, that as an international centre for the arts, music and culture, it was particularly desirable that Bath should have a university which recognized the importance of these as fields of academic study. The debate between these points of view has still not been resolved, partly because of the pressures of financial constraints and new funding structures imposed progressively by governments since the early 1980s, but mainly because of the in-built inertia of the institution which has tended to continue doing those things which it has done well in the past. There is thus something of a conceptual gap enduring between the City of Bath, with its long urban traditions centred on culture, leisure industries and tourism, and the University of Bath, with its dominant commitment to technology and applied science.

This gap has been reinforced by physical separation, because for all the tremendous advantages that the University has enjoyed from being free to develop a virgin site in the middle of open space, the fact that Claverton Down is over a mile from the centre of the city, and that most of this mile is a tough up-hill climb, does place an effective barrier to easy communication between town and gown. Students, once on campus, tend to remain there, and townsfolk do not normally have cause to visit the site, although they are made welcome through a programme of public lectures and theatrical events and, more recently, courses of continuing education. While definitely within the city boundary,

therefore, the University has tended to seem in but not of the city. Nevertheless, the city has been proud of, and indulgent towards, its University, from the very first act of outstanding generosity whereby it sacrificed its playing fields in return for a literal 'peppercorn rent', on through the support of countless landladies and the whole service substructure of retailing and transport provision. On the part of the University, members of staff have become active in the city societies, and they have supported the theatre and the International Festival of Music, and taken part in local sport and other civic activities. The new sports and swimming facilities have also been made available to citizens. On balance, the symbiosis has successfully overcome the difficulties placed in its way.

One consequence of the transition from a college of technology to a university was that the University of Bath assumed responsibility for awarding its own degrees. This meant that the Diploma in Technology, which had served so well as a degree-level qualification for students at the CATs, was abandoned in favour of degrees designed and taught in the individual Schools of the University. Also abandoned was the exemplary requirement of the DipTech that one tenth of all tuition should be provided in subjects that were outside the specialism of the main course. The implications of this were that all the degree courses became more intensively specialized than they had been before, and that the members of the Department of General Studies who had provided the non-specialist courses for engineers and applied scientists, in economics, history, sociology, and various literary and linguistic studies, were deprived of the service teaching that had been their main function. In anticipation of this deprivation, the Department had begun in 1963 to provide specialist courses of its own, in the form of a Diploma in Sociology, followed almost immediately by a Diploma in Economics and Administration. These courses provided the basis for the School of Humanities and Social Sciences when the University adopted its new constitution.

It was intended that this School would justify its title by acquiring a third degree-level course, which would be in Humanities and would provide specialized academic work for the historians, philosophers, and lecturers in literature. The preliminary discussions for this were well advanced in 1970, and such a development would have made a powerful contribution to the relationship between the University and the city. The fact that it did not happen at that time was due primarily to the loss of impetus through the premature death of the Reader in Humanities, Gerald Walters, in May 1970. Mr Walters was a highly talented and mercurial character who was equally at home in several of the humanities disciplines, and he had already done much to establish the links which could serve the local community and promote the public relations of the University. He had, in particular,

supplied the intellectual driving force behind several very successful 'Bath Conferences' on science and society, science and religion, and similar themes. He had also created an enterprising journal, *The Technologist*, later to become *Technology and Society*, which acted as a mouthpiece for a lively commentary on the problems of a scientific and technological society, and he helped to make Bath University Press a successful venture.

Yet another initiative of Gerald Walters was the establishment, in conjunction with the Holburne Museum, of the 'Holburne Institute' as a vehicle for discussion between Town and Gown on broad areas of social policy. The Museum was and remains a collection of Fine Art with interests in modern craftsmanship and design, and its links with the University were potentially of great value for the development of studies in the Humanities. Walters used the Institute to set up seminar groups on 'Science and Politics' and 'Science and Religion', and both of these acquired a life of their own for several years. But like the Institute itself, as well as the other initiatives inspired by him, they were not able long to survive Gerald Walters' sudden death. The University established a prestigious Memorial Lecture as a tribute to him, but his hopes and expectations for the expansion of a full School of Humanities were not fulfilled, and they have remained unfulfilled to the present day. The University simply lacked staff of sufficient seniority and vision to find the resources necessary for a viable development in the Humanities at that time, and it has proved impossible to restore the situation since.<sup>11</sup>

Early in the 1990s it seemed possible that the University might acquire a School of Humanities as part of a proposed 'merger' with Bath College of Higher Education. The College had developed out of the post-war Emergency Teacher Training College at Newton St. Loe, and had already built up a range of degree courses under external supervision from Bristol and elsewhere, and was ambitious to expand further. It had much to offer the University in addition to a strong Humanities Department, including an attractive campus and several enterprising vocational courses, but there were also many courses which were not of university standard, involving a considerable number of staff. The plan to fuse the two institutions into a single enlarged University was discussed at length in the summer and autumn of 1991, and went into considerable detail. Teams of staff from different disciplines spent much time devising elaborate schemes for integration at various levels, which generated a great volume of paper-work.

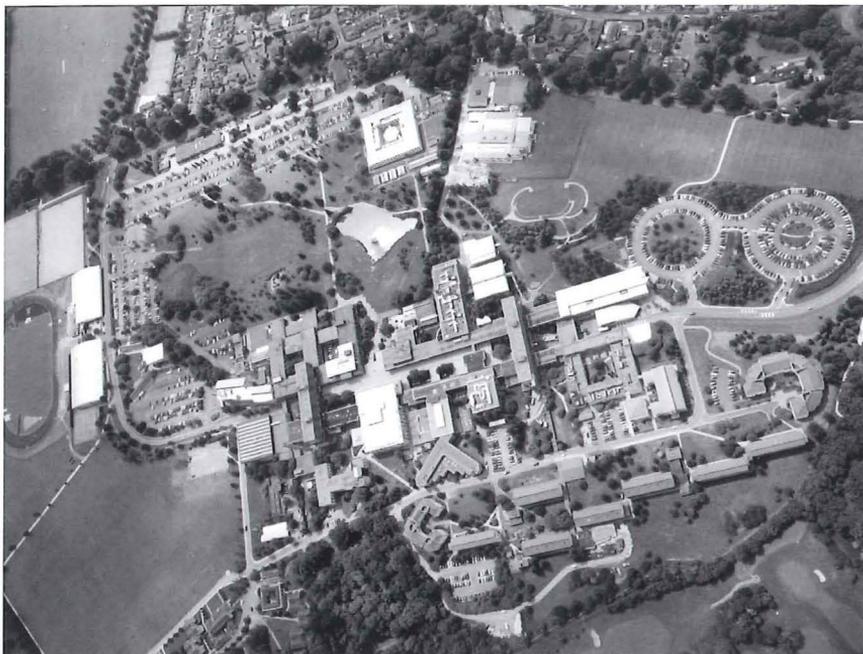
The final proposal was submitted to the University Senate in December of that year and was firmly rejected, overtly because the University feared that the assimilation of too much sub-university standard work would jeopardize the enviable research ratings which were already being achieved. But there

were other problems concerning the leading personalities involved, and the tendency of the College to bid for absolute equality of treatment with the University. This was unrealistic and, in the end, made the scheme unacceptable to the academic body of the University. The two institutions went their own way, the College soon achieving an improved status by adopting the title 'Bath Spa University College'. It seems likely that economies of scale will eventually oblige negotiations to be resumed, but meanwhile the University has clearly lost the opportunity of acquiring a well-established group of young scholars in History and Literature who could have provided the critical mass for a genuine School of Humanities. Apart from other considerations, the City of Bath deserves a distinguished academic status in the Humanities, and this can only be provided by the local University. In a sublime city such as this, deeply imbued with history, literature and the arts, it is highly paradoxical that the University has not managed to do more to pay homage to the traditions of the city.<sup>12</sup>

In many other respects, however, the University has undergone continuous growth since its establishment in Bath. When it received its Charter in 1966 it had around a thousand full-time and sandwich-course students, and it is now almost ten times larger. Most of this growth has been accommodated within the original disciplinary parameters and physical design of the campus, but there have been some important changes. Some new Schools were formed, such as the School of Chemical Engineering, which broke away from Chemistry, and the School of Modern Languages added 'International Studies' to its title. But then, in the late 1990s, the School pattern of disciplines was abandoned in favour of a more conventional Faculty structure, with three dominant Faculties in 'Engineering and Design', 'Science' and 'Humanities and Social Sciences' replacing all the old 'Schools' except the School of Management, which preserves its independence. The original Schools have been broken up and made into 'Academic Departments' within the Faculties. An earlier attempt, in the 1970s, to combine the Schools into disciplinary 'Areas' had not been a success, but the recent changes have been more thoroughly instituted.

The University Library, which inevitably lacked many of the advantages of having possessed a longstanding collection of academic works, pioneered new systems of electronic cataloguing and data retrieval under successive Librarians, Maurice Line, John H. Lamble, and Howard Nicholson.

When the University was established in 1966, it was still sufficiently compact for staff to get to know each other across disciplinary divisions, and a strong Senior Common Room was created, with a vigorous social life. It arranged a series of talks and discussions with eminent visitors, and made a substantial contribution to the early negotiations about the constitution of the University.



**Fig.4** The University from the air A recent view showing the dominant plan of the campus, with the main buildings arranged like vertebrae off the spine of the service road and the pedestrian deck above it. (*reproduced by courtesy of the University of Bath*)

As far as the physical structure of the campus is concerned, the original linear design has been preserved (fig.4), following the plan to develop at both ends while arranging most of the student accommodation in parallel ranks on the slope of Claverton Down north of the main thoroughfare. The two high-rise accommodation blocks across the Parade have required refacing, and have been partially converted to administration uses. The Library has been extended out over the Parade with a smart new façade in order to provide space for Information Technology Services (fig.5). All the extensions over the last twenty years have departed from the prefabricated CLASP construction and adopted more solid forms and pitched roofs, although grey/cream facing material has been maintained in order to fulfil Bath City planning requirements. An old agricultural building, surviving from the 'Norwood Farm' that occupied the site before it was taken over for playing fields, has been renovated as an 'Arts Barn', supporting a wide range of creative activities. A small theatre has been built next to this. The University has also acquired a high reputation for its sports facilities, including a Sports Hall, Pavilion,

Swimming Pool, Athletics Track and excellent playing fields. Sports are now well integrated into University life, with provision for academic study of its activities in a Sports Institute.

The close links with local and national industry, regarded from the outset as essential to a technological university, were recognized in the choice of the first Chancellor. This was Lord Hinton of Bankside who, as Sir Christopher Hinton, FRS, had played a leading part in the development of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the British Atomic Energy Authority. In accepting this office Lord Hinton let it be known that he would not be happy to regard it as a purely honorific function, and he took an active part in the early discussions about the structure and composition of the University. In particular, he entered with some zest into the

task of awarding degrees on Degree Day. For several years, until defects in the restored plaster work made it impossible, degrees were awarded in the Bath Assembly Rooms, which provided a very gracious setting for the occasion. They were, however, too small to admit all the graduands and their families at any one time, so that the function was spread over five or six separate Degree Congregations, and for each of these Lord Hinton diligently prepared a different speech, packed with down-to-earth advice and forthright opinions. These did not endear him to all his listeners, but there can be no doubt that they added a certain liveliness to the proceedings.<sup>13</sup>

Lord Hinton was succeeded as Chancellor by Lord Kearton of Whitchurch, Chairman of Courtaulds, and then by Sir Denys Henderson, Chairman of



**Fig.5** The Library Extension. The original building was extended in the 1990s to provide Information Technology Services in this striking addition cantilevered over the pedestrian deck. *(reproduced by courtesy of the University of Bath)*

ICI, who was followed by the current holder of the office, the economist Lord Tugendhat. The University has been well-served by its Chancellors who, apart from their formal functions, have put their time and professional skills at the disposal of the institution. This has been especially apparent in the attention which they have given to the choice of Vice-Chancellors, the crucial executive office in any British University. Dr. Moore – he had been awarded an Honorary Doctorate on becoming the first Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1966 – retired when he reached the age of 65 three years later. He had guided the University successfully through the difficult years of transition.<sup>14</sup> His place was taken by Dr. Leonard Rotherham, who had served with Lord Hinton in the electricity industry and came to the post with the strong support of the Chancellor. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society – the first of three Vice-Chancellors in succession with this honour – and an able administrator of large organizations. He was succeeded in 1976 by Professor Paul Matthews, a distinguished physicist; and in 1983 by Professor Rodney Quayle, who came to the post from being Professor of Microbiology at the University of Sheffield. In 1992, the University chose as its fifth Vice-Chancellor an American from Baltimore, David VandeLinde, who had been Professor of Electronics at Johns Hopkins University. The present Vice-Chancellor, social psychologist Professor Glynis Breakwell, took over in 2001.

In the space of thirty-six years the University of Bath has thus made itself thoroughly at home in the city that gave it such a warm welcome in the mid-1960s. It has acquired an enviable reputation for its academic and research work, regularly coming in the top ten of the various ratings which have been contrived to give a competitive edge to British academic life. It has become increasingly popular with students, and has attracted high-quality staff who have contributed directly to its research attainments. It continues to grow, with some good quality buildings and fine sports facilities. But in conclusion it is worth recalling some words of Gerald Walters, written in the book he compiled to celebrate the inauguration of the University in 1966, in which he contemplated the role of the new institution:

It is ... with a new university of technology that the real opportunity of finding a coherent relationship between the traditional and the contemporary, between the humanistic and the scientific, lies, since it begins with the fundamental acceptance of the scientific, both in its pure and applied aspects, as the normative activity of contemporary society and with a recognition of the intellectual and social implications of technology. It provides a common frame of reference within which the older traditional activities can find contemporary significance, and science itself recover its role as one of the humanities.<sup>15</sup>

The vision implied in these sentences was essentially forward-looking and catholic rather than traditionalistic, although it was one which fully understood the importance of traditional disciplines and values. It saw the possibility of a new type of university, breaking away from the rigidity of established British institutions to provide 'new types of men who envisage new tasks'. It was and remains a vision pre-eminently appropriate to the University of Bath in the City of Bath. Despite the sound and solid achievements of the University of Bath, however, it is a vision that remains only partially fulfilled.

### Notes

- 1 Little is known about Adelard's personal life, but his achievements have been well reviewed recently by Louise Cochrane, *Adelard of Bath: The First English Scientist* (British Museum Press, 1994). For a more general account of his place in the Twelfth Century Renaissance, see C.H. Haskins, 'Adelard of Bath' in *English Historical Review*, vol.26 (1911), pp.491-98.
- 2 There is a small file on the project in Bath Reference Library, and a copy of the Prospectus for 'Queen's College, Bath', describing it as 'auxiliary to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge', in the University of Bath Library. The architect of the winning design was James Wilson of Bath (1816-1900), but neither this nor the alternative scheme proposed by G.P. Manners was ever built: see James Lees-Milne and David Forde, *Images of Bath* (St Helena Press, Richmond, 1982), p.352; and Charles Robertson, *Bath: An Architectural Guide* (Faber & Faber, 1975), p.142. For a brief account of the project, see R.A. Buchanan, 'From Trade School to University: a microcosm of social change' in Gerald Walters ed., *A Technological University: an experiment in Bath* (Bath University Press, Bath, 1966) pp.12-26. I have drawn extensively on this article of thirty-six years ago for the earlier sections of the present essay.
- 3 John Latimer, *The History of the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol* (Bristol, 1903), p.305.
- 4 *Preliminary Prospectus of the Merchant Venturers' Technical School, 1885*. The emphasis on freedom from sex discrimination is in the original. The *Prospectus* subsequently became the *Year Book*, and a complete series of these from 1885 to 1949 was held in the Library of the College of Advanced Technology at Ashley Down, passing eventually to the Library of the University of the West of England.
- 5 Latimer, *op.cit.*, pp.323-24, reflected sadly shortly before his death in 1904: 'It is disappointing to observe the lack of public sympathy and support in respect of the proposal to create in Bristol one of those large and complete Technical Institutes which, in the opinion of all experienced authorities, are essential for the future of British manufactures and commerce'.
- 6 For the later years of the MVTC, see the *Minutes* of the Management Committee of the College in the five volumes of the *Book of Proceedings: Merchant Venturers' Technical College* in the archives of the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers. I am happy to acknowledge again the kindness of the Society and its Officers in giving me permission to consult these papers many years ago.

- 7 *Technical Education*, HMSO February 1956, Cmnd.9703.
- 8 The Robbins Report was published as *Higher Education*, HMSO October 1963, Cmnd.2154. Eight of the ten colleges designated as CATs made the transfer to the status of independent universities, while Chelsea College was absorbed into the University of London and Cardiff College of Technology went into the University of Wales.
- 9 There is no good single account of the development of Further Education in Bath, but see: *The Original Bath Guide* (Bath, 1917), especially pp.75-7 on the RLSI, pp.87-8 on the Bath and West Agricultural Society, and pp.55-7 on the Guildhall and its educational uses. Also W.J. Williams and D.M. Stoddart, *Bath – Some Encounters with Science* (Kingsmead Press, Bath, 1978), pp.76-9; and John Haddon, *Bath* (Batsford, 1973), pp.161-65 and 208-9. See also Helena L.H. Lim, 'Bath & the "Bath and West of England Society", 1777-1851', in *Bath History*, Vol.VI (Millstream Books, Bath, 1966), pp.108-131.
- 10 Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners, *The Proposed University of Bath, a Technological University: Development Plan, Report Number 1* (Bath University Press, Bath, 1965).
- 11 In addition to the study edited by Gerald Walters, note 2 above, *A Technological University*, Walters edited several sets of Proceedings of the conferences which he organized and which were published by Bath University Press: see, for example, *Technology and Society* (The First Bath Conference, 1965), edited by G. Walters and K. Hudson (Bath University Press, Bath, 1966). The University preserved a close link with the Holburne Museum: for many years Professor J. Black, Head of the School of Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering, and an eloquent speaker on engineering design, served as a University representative with the trustees.
- 12 Details of the merger proposal have not been published, but are recalled here from personal experience on the committee appointed by Senate to conduct the negotiations for the University.
- 13 Lord Hinton of Bankside, *Some speeches of a Chancellor: addresses ... at his installation ... and at degree congregations* (Bath University Press, Bath, 1982).
- 14 For his own account, see George H. Moore, *The University of Bath – the formative years 1949-1969* (Bath University Press, Bath, 1982).
- 15 Gerald Walters, 'A Technological University: the new concept', in the volume he edited, *A Technological University: an experiment in Bath* (Bath University Press, Bath, 1966), p.5.