The Forgan Smith Building is the centrepiece of the Great Court complex at the core of The University of Queensland’s St. Lucia campus. Construction began in 1937, the Forgan Smith Building was completed in the early 1950s, and the Great Court was completed in the 1970s. The construction of the Great Court complex was a statement by the Queensland Government and the university that Queensland intended to take tertiary education seriously and that Queensland was an equal of other Australian states. The Great Court is a unique space of historical and cultural importance which has now influenced generations of students and staff through its powerful gravitas and iconic power. This article looks at the construction of the Great Court and how it became embedded in the collective memory of The University of Queensland.

Construction of the Forgan Smith building on the St. Lucia campus of The University of Queensland began in 1937. It remains the main building on the campus and when it was first built was one of the most impressive in any Australian university. During its century of existence, the university has produced many histories. The largest was produced in its seventy-fifth year, authored by Malcolm Thomis. For its hundredth year, The University of Queensland produced a short, largely pictorial, study by Ben Robertson. Buildings loom quite large in these histories, but the emphasis here is on the construction of just one building—the Forgan Smith—and its relationship with the other Great Court buildings and the unique sculptural work that unites the complex. The argument suggests that although the building project was initiated during the Great Depression as part of deliberate stimulus of the economy, and it took another thirty-five years to complete, the construction of the Great Court complex was also a statement by the Queensland Government and the university that Queensland intended to take tertiary education seriously, and that Queensland was an equal of other Australian states. Construction of the Forgan Smith building and the Great Court complex signified a change in emphasis in a rural State which had until then placed a low emphasis on the education of its citizens. It was the first time that the Queensland Government invested a large sum of money in tertiary education, and signified a change in attitudes that, after the Second World War, was also taken up by the Commonwealth Government.

1. Malcolm I. Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland’s First Seventy-Five Years (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1985); Ben Robertson, The People’s University: 100 Years of The University of Queensland (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2010).

2. This article is an extension of a section of Clive Moore, The Forgan Smith: History of a Building and its People at The University of Queensland (St. Lucia: The University of Queensland, 2010).

Clive Moore is Professor of Pacific and Australian History, and Head of the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, at The University of Queensland. His major and rather eclectic publications have been on Australia’s Pacific Island immigrants, the Pacific labour reserve, Australian federation, masculinity, gay Queensland, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.
though its Universities Commission. Today, tertiary education is a multi-billion dollar business, and The University of Queensland has positioned itself as both a leading university in Australia and competitive in the international market. In the 1930s, when the decision was made to construct the new campus, none of this was envisaged, yet the investment was substantial and showed great foresight.

The University of Queensland is a community and its buildings are embedded in the cultural memory of the State of Queensland. The Forgan Smith and the surrounding Great Court buildings have been absorbed into the collective memory of its students and staff, providing a shared experience of engaging in the privileged journey of higher education. The Great Court is a unique space of historical and cultural importance which has now influenced generations of students and staff through its powerful gravitas and iconic power. Governors-General, Premiers and captains of industry have been affected by this cultural core. The Great Court is central to the memories of all University of Queensland students, although few know the history of its creation nor the long period of time involved. As one of the most important cultural spaces in Queensland, its influence on them has been profound.

**The Beginnings**

The idea of a university in Brisbane to serve Queensland was first mooted in 1874, although the real impetus came from a Royal Commission in 1891. In 1893, a Queensland University Extension Board affiliated with the University of Sydney began to provide lectures, matriculation classes and examinations for the University Extension Certificate. Then, as part of the celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Colony of Queensland, The University of Queensland begun by Act of Parliament in 1909, officially came into existence in 1910, and received its first students in 1911. Although there were pretensions to match the older universities in the southern capitals, it was also to be a working man’s university, training students to increase the level of technical education in the rural State.

Old Government House at the bottom end of George Street was chosen as the initial site for The University of Queensland. Situated on 14.97 hectares (37 acres) of the Domain next to the Botanic Gardens in the inner city, the building was the residence of Queensland’s Governors from 1862 until 1910. Its size, location, and availability made the building a highly attractive location. In its early years The University of Queensland had three faculties: Arts, Science and Engineering, with an emphasis on practical activities that would benefit the pastoral, agricultural and mining economy. Over the following decades, the academic core expanded: Commerce and Agriculture were added in 1926; Law and Dentistry in 1935; Veterinary Science and Medicine in 1936; Education in 1949; and Architecture in 1950. Student numbers increased from 83 in 1911, to 1,613 in 1939.

In 1935, UQ had 1,090 students, thirteen Professors, two Readers or Associate Professors, twenty-one Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, and ten Tutors and Demonstrators. A mismatched series of buildings surrounded Old Government House (called Main building), crowded into the grounds, and the University was accommodated in other inner city buildings. UQ needed a large new area of land, impossible within the bounds of the Domain, and initially (from the 1900s) the plan was to create a new campus in Victoria Park, 20 hectares (60 acres) opposite the present-day Herston campus, although the site was small and hilly.

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5. These dates come from a manuscript by F. W. Robinson (F. W. Robinson, *Manuscript* [Fryer Library, UQ5, Box 11, 482]). Architecture sometimes is said to have begun in 1948.
7. J. D. Story, Vice-Chancellor, to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Department, 16 November 1943, Facilities—Buildings—The University of Queensland, 19/5/3 Part 1, A1361 (National Archives of Australia [NAA]).
Plans to alleviate the overcrowding moved one stage further in 1926, when two children of a wealthy Brisbane family, Dr. James O'Neil Mayne and his sister Mary Emelia Mayne, offered £50,000 to purchase 111 hectares (331 acres) of land at St. Lucia in the bend of the Brisbane River. The St. Lucia name came from the birth place of W. A. Wilson, one of the 1880s developers of the land subdivision, who was born on the island of Saint Lucia in the West Indies. The final cost to the Maynes was over £60,000, and the final area, with the addition of land on the west side of Mill Road, consisted of 98 hectares (242 acres). The St. Lucia land was resumed by the Brisbane City Council, and the title of the consolidated site handed to UQ's Chancellor, Sir James Blair, by Alderman William Jolly in 1930. The university then surrendered its interests in the Victoria Park site and in return received 3.678 hectares (11 acres) adjacent to the Brisbane General Hospital, upon which the Medical School building was erected, opened in August 1939.

The St. Lucia land is situated on a boundary between the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera Aboriginal peoples. The typical pattern of early European settlement in the nineteenth century was to mark out large pastoral leases: the St. Lucia bend of the river was included in the land of John Frederick McDougall, who had pegged out the northern bank of the river from Milton to Moggill in 1855. This caused little disturbance to the Aboriginal inhabitants, although a central east-west track was constructed (later named Carmody Road) which divided the peninsula into the alluvial lands in the northern half and the forested ridges and gullies in the southern half. The alluvial land was surveyed and sold as farming blocks in 1857, and the forested area was divided up two years later. The longest continuous early European occupation was by the Carmody family, who settled there in 1857, and the McCaffrey family, one of whom married a Carmody daughter in 1873. Their cottages were just north of Carmody Road, close to the lagoon which has become the university lake. The first large-scale European use of the land was for William Dart's Coleridge sugar cane plantation and mill in the 1860s and 1870s. Cane was grown on the Darts' land and by other settlers who lived in the bend of the river and as far as Long Pocket. These small-scale farmers grew sugar cane, bananas and lucerne and grazed small numbers of cattle. A slaughter yard existed near the present 'village green' oval between the present southwestern university buildings and the colleges. Until the 1870s, Aborigines managed to remain on the western side of the St. Lucia loop of the river, using the scrub and rich waterways down around Anderson's Creek, now in the St. Lucia Golf Club's area. They would have been totally dislodged when the area was subdivided in the 1880s into 976 sections of farming and suburban land with 284 individual owners.

The area flourished as a farming community supplying Brisbane until extensive damage was done by the 1893 floods, which destroyed many crops and houses. The St. Lucia and Ironside communities in the early twentieth century remained isolated, with the nearest tram and railway routes at Toowong.

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9. Robinson, The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane, 3.


11. This explains the origin of Mill Road. It was once called Jetty Road, after the jetty used by early settlers to ship their produce down-river to Brisbane.

12. The source of much of this information is several interviews conducted by F. W. Robinson and J. C. Mahoney in 1950 and 1951 with members of the Dart and Carmody families. These are held by The University of Queensland Fryer Library, UQ5, Box 11, 492–494. Extra information is also available in Robinson, Manuscript.
Despite complaints about the isolation and the desire to incorporate the Faculty of Medicine with the rest of the university, the choice was made to shift to St. Lucia. The problem was no longer land; it was finding the money to build a new campus.

The University of Queensland was state-funded and reliant on the government for support for large building projects. The original statutory grant was £10,000 per annum, which had doubled by 1922, then increased in slow jumps until it stabilized at £40,000 in 1941. There were few private benefactors, other than a large donation by Sir Samuel McCaughey in 1919, and the Mayne bequest (not only the St. Lucia land, but also city buildings, other real estate, and the endowment of Chairs in Medicine). The expansion in Dentistry, Medicine and Veterinary Science was sponsored by the State Government as necessary for the people of Queensland, and the expansion of Law came from a donation by leading Brisbane retailer T. C. Beirne. The great depression years were a bad time to ask the Government for extra funds. However, the Queensland Government decided to stimulate job creation by beginning large infrastructure projects such as the construction of the Story Bridge, the Somerset Dam and Mackay’s Outer Harbour, as well as the new complex of buildings at St. Lucia, centred on what became the Forgan Smith building. In 1935, the State Government agreed to proceed with building the St. Lucia campus, and Labor Premier, and M. L. A. for Mackay, William Forgan Smith, established a special committee to implement the decision. Between obtaining the land and starting construction, a St. Lucia Farm Training School, near the intersection of Mill (referring to the former Darts’ mill) and St. Lucia Roads, had been established, operating between 1933 and 1937, another Depression measure, to provide agricultural training for the unemployed.

The general layout and provisional design accepted for the new campus was by architects Hennessy, Hennessy and Co., intended to provide adequate housing for the University over the next fifty years. Preliminary cost estimates for the St. Lucia buildings were slated at £1,000,000; allowing for inflation, this is probably close to the $100,000,000 the University spends today on any one new building. The plan included the Main (later Forgan Smith) building to accommodate the Faculties of Arts, Commerce and Law, and the university administration. The 299 metre (980 feet) long Main building was designed with a six-story 22.7 metre (91 feet) high central tower to house a carillon of bells, splitting a western Law wing and an eastern Arts wing, the building flanked on each end by the library and a Great Hall. At its rear was a double arc of buildings to accommodate Chemistry, Geology, Physics, Biology, Architecture, Veterinary Science, Anatomy, Physiology, Engineering and the Student Union. The D-shape group of buildings that became known as the Great Court was positioned on top of a small hill, the high point in the bend of the river, to give the best views and to be above flood level.

The site of the Forgan Smith building is on the original farm of the Carmody family, their name preserved in Carmody Road, which leads to the university, and Carmody Creek which runs from the UQ lake to the river. The Forgan Smith building is officially described as a good example of a large and well-executed inter-war stripped classical style. It is also a striking example of 1930s art deco along with a hint of grand fascist-style architecture, with its exaggerated entrances intended to overwhelm the individual. There are few 1930s buildings in Australia that can equal the Forgan Smith and none in other universities. In Brisbane, only City Hall, built in the 1920s, was a larger public building project; and when one considers the entire Great Court complex, the St. Lucia project was much larger. The importance of the Forgan Smith also relates to its centrality to the university and as the central building in a cohesive group that forms the Great Court.
Construction began in 1938, with £100,000 allocated for each of the first five years. Initial construction was limited to the Main building and the three-story library abutting the east wing. The Senate room and the Great Hall, intended to abut the end of the west wing, were never completed. The early part of the project used casual relief labour for basic tasks, plus a skilled team of craftsmen as befitted such a major building project. Construction continued until early 1942, by which time £500,000 had been spent to complete the Main, library and Chemistry buildings, although work on the Geology building had already ceased due to the wartime shortage of materials. Much of the internal flooring and partitioning was unfinished. The approach road and some tree planting were complete, as were several sports facilities, including the main oval. Some work had begun on the approaches for a £130,000 bridge linking from Boundary Street, West End to St. Lucia, but this too stalled. Six decades later, the Eleanor Schonell Green Bridge was built to link the university with Dutton Park, at a different site. The 1930s City Council also promised a vehicular ferry and perhaps a tram service, neither of which eventuated.

The logistics of the huge building project were supervised by the Bureau of Industry, its powers delegated to the Works Board. There were two UQ staff on the committee, representing the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Senate: Geology and Mineralogy Professor H. C. Richards, and History Associate Professor A. C. V. Melbourne. The chairman was J. R. Kemp, Commissioner of Main Roads, and other members included J. D. Story, the Public Service Commissioner, and G. M. Colledge, Under Secretary of the Department of Public Works. While one could envisage a similar level of public service expertise involved in planning a new campus today, any university representatives would be at the Pro or Deputy Vice-Chancellor level, indicating the high regard for professors seventy years ago. The Professorial Board ruled the university and professors and associate professors were as powerful within the institution as today’s senior executive. Melbourne was the in-coming chairman of the Buildings and

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17. The exterior of the Forgan Smith building had been completed, but interior walls and ceilings were, for the most part, unfinished. The Chemistry building was only partly roofed and lacked some windows; its exterior was practically complete, but the interior was rough, with no plaster on the walls and no partitions.

18. Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning, 160.
Grounds Committee. Richards had been President of the Professorial Board and a member of the Senate. After the war, under the *Labour and Industry Act* of 1946, the Works Board was disbanded and J. R. Kemp, Coordinator of Public Works, became the responsible government authority, while also serving as chairman of the UQ Buildings and Grounds Committee. John Douglas Story joined the Queensland public service in 1885 as a junior clerk and by 1906 had risen to be Under Secretary for Education. In 1918 he was made a Royal Commissioner to examine the classification of Queensland public service officers, and between 1920 and 1939 was appointed sole Public Service Commissioner. He was also a member of the Bureau of Industry, established to assist with post-Depression job creation. He retired in 1939, only to become Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland until 1960. The committee and the cross-over roles of Kemp and Story was an unusual but very satisfactory combination.

The Main building was constructed as a two-story concrete-framed structure clad in freestone (commonly called sandstone), with a two-level basement in the east wing and a central five-story tower. The core structure was made from concrete and bricks, clad with granite from Greymare, near Warwick and from Samford, sandstone from Helidon, and marble from Bajool, south of Rockhampton. All of the Great Court buildings were to be joined together by colonnaded sandstone cloisters around the two hectares (six acre) courtyard. The mix of violet, lavender, cream and brown sandstone from Helidon created a mottled but beautiful unified core for the St. Lucia campus, which remains much as the architects envisaged. Internally, the parquetry flooring is composed of Queensland hardwoods, and most of the other woodwork in the building—doors, cupboards and skirting boards—is comprised of Queensland silky-oak and maple. The style of the building’s exterior and the colonnaded passageway is described as Romanesque-Byzantine revival with a pseudo-Norman tower, which indicates its hybrid nature.

The building was decorated with nine sections of sculptured friezes depicting Queensland history and aspects of learning. These can be found along the parapet of the two-storied section of the Forgan Smith building, six on the front each side of the three entrances, two either side of the Great Court tower entrance and one on the tower. There are also another seven blank panels ready to receive future friezes. Other decorative features continue to be added to the colonnade. Some of the carving was completed as early as 1939, but most of the work was done in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s as the Great Court colonnade was completed. The Main building was ostentatious and expensive, meant to be practical while at the same time advertising the importance of the university and the state.

In 1969, Professor Gareth Roberts, then Head of the Department of Architecture, which was situated in the Forgan Smith building, gave his assessment of the Great Court buildings:

> Although they are of comparatively recent construction, having been started in the 1930s, the particular importance (of the Great Court buildings) lies in the fact that they are the visual symbol of the University at St. Lucia. For this reason, their external appearance should be preserved for posterity, and future work should endeavour to integrate the new with the old.  

But not everyone was enamored of the new buildings. *Aspect*, a news sheet produced by the Architectural Students’ Bureau in 1951, provided a more jaundiced view:

> The general layout and details of planning are awkward ... the presence of the sun and wind seems to have been ignored ... façades are the same whether they face N, S, E or W ... the long hospital-like corridors don’t seem capable of comfortably accommodating the throngs of students who will one day, be all on the move every hour, to and from lecture rooms.

> The whole design is socially repressive. It is reminiscent of the huge Pentagon block in Washington, the huge Palace of the Soviets in Moscow, or a Mussolini stadium. It is inhuman, out of scale with the human figure. It belies the climate, it belies the structure, it belies its purpose. It is designed to impress people, in a pompous manner, with the importance of the University, the Architecture and the Government. It is popularly known among students as 'the Mausoleum.'


21. Extract from ASPECT: *Australian Architectural Students News Sheet* (September 1951) (Fryer Library, UQ458, Box 12, Folder 9).
In 2010, at the centenary of the university’s formation, and in looking back over more than seventy years to when the Great Court buildings were conceived and construction began, they have stood the test of time and have remained central to the identity of the campus and the university. The detractors seem to have lost the battle of words. While the Great Court buildings have no one architectural style, they have their own unique style, just as the initiating architects intended. Periodic cleaning of the sandstone and refurbishment of the interiors every few decades has maintained the buildings in good order. The sculpture work around the Great Court never ceases to fascinate, and will take generations to complete. While the newer buildings on the campus all have limited lifetimes, the Great Court and its centrepiece, the Forgan Smith building, will survive and be a constant reminder of the 1930s vision of the Queensland Government and The University of Queensland.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR YEARS, 1942–1944

When the Second World War began in 1939, the university had around 1,700 students. The first two St. Lucia buildings were already under construction, along with the foundations of a third. The Main (now the Forgan Smith) and the Chemistry (now the Steele) buildings became the Advanced Land Headquarters of the Allied Defence Forces (Landops). It occupied these buildings from 1 August 1942 to 31 December 1944, although most of the occupation was over by August 1944. Landops was concerned primarily with preparation and development of operations for the field armies, notably the First and Second Australian Armies, which were established at St. Lucia.
in-Chief, General Sir Thomas Blamey, working under the American Allied Commander General Douglas MacArthur, created a forward Allied Army Headquarters. St. Lucia Landops was the forward headquarters, while Melbourne became the rear headquarters, in command of the south and west of the continent. Melbourne continued to function as the main War Office, dealing with civil and home administrative matters. The two headquarters handled procurement of all needs, supplied troops and provided upkeep in the field. Blamey commanded the field through the forward headquarters, but was ably assisted by his Chiefs-of-Staff who actually ran Landops.22

**POSTWAR EXPANSION**

During the final stages of the war, the university was already planning to resume occupancy of the buildings that Landops had appropriated. The George Street campus was overflowing and there was expected to be an imminent increase in student numbers. In early 1942, the university had begun to use the St. Lucia buildings. The Engineering Faculty conducted classes in surveying and engineering in the dormitory of the Farm School building on the St. Lucia site (which makes Engineering the first academic discipline on the St. Lucia campus). The overflow of books from the Main Library at George Street had filled a large section of the basement of the new St. Lucia library building and spilled out into the basement of the Main building. A 1940s-style library storage sign remains on the door of one of the east Forgan Smith lower ground floor rooms, which is still used by the library.23 Once Landops left the Main building at the end of 1944, it had to be restored to its former functional state. Rooms had been fitted out with blackout shutters, there was cane-ite sheeting on many of the walls to carry maps and charts, and some of the parquetry floors needed repair. Army occupation of the Chemistry building continued until 30 May 1945, which delayed similar repairs there until mid-1945. Repairs were made to seventy-eight rooms on the Main building ground floor, to eighty-nine rooms on the first floor and to eighteen rooms on the lower ground floor in the eastern wing, and to the large basement lecture theatre. Another forty-three rooms were repaired in the Chemistry building. In total, Landops used 229 rooms in the two buildings, costing £12,668 to restore to their former state.24

| Table 1: University of Queensland Students, 1939 and 1945 |
|----------------|--------------|
| **1939** | **1945** |
| Medicine | 205 | 280 |
| Science (including Forestry, Medical Science) | 177 | 250 |
| Engineering (including Applied Science, Architecture and Surveying) | 114 | 217 |
| Dentistry | 44 | 71 |
| Veterinary Science | 25 | 8 |
| Agricultural Science | 16 | 29 |
| Commerce | 206 | 227 |
| Arts | 770 | 970 |
| Law | 28 | 63 |
| Physiotherapy | 28 | 50 |
| Physical Education | 0 | 42 |
| **TOTAL** | **1,613** | **2,207** |

*(Source: J. G. H. Hoeben, Officer in Charge, Queensland Branch, Universities Commission, to Secretary, Universities Commission, 22 March 1946, Faculties C.R.T.S, Buildings, University of Queensland, Policy and General, Universities Commission, A1361, 19/5/1 Part 1 [NAA]).*

23. Memorandum, Re Hiring Services Serial No. 1249, University, St. Lucia, Brisbane, 21 December 1942, 259/737/1262, MP742/1 (NAA); J.D. Story, Vice-Chancellor, to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Department, 16 November 1943.
24. 1945 Claim for Physical Damage, Hiring Service Serial Number 1249, St. Lucia University, MP742/1 (NAA); Major-General and Quartermaster-General, to Finance Member, 2 July 1947, 259/2/1245, MP742/1 (NAA).
The rapid demobilization of troops after the war caused fast changes in Australian tertiary education. In 1945 there were around 2,207 students enrolled at the university, 1,000 in first year studies. By 1949 this number had increased to 4,400 students. There was a post-war tertiary boom once soldiers arrived home and obtained a level of access to universities that most of them could never have hoped for before 1939. Customary matriculation requirements were modified to encourage ex-servicemen to enrol. From 1945 onwards, the Commonwealth Universities Commission and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme began to fund the construction of more buildings and equipment, based on student numbers.25 In 1946, 1,000 ex-servicemen had enrolled, and one year later this number had swelled to 1,548,26 spread through day, evening and external enrolments. This quickly changed the relationship between staff and students from the old master-pupil style to one of more equality—the servicemen were never as compliant as pre-war students. The move to St. Lucia also changed the university from an inner-city campus to one in a new suburban area where transport was sparse. In 1945, Vice-Chancellor J. D. Story was negotiating for completion of the St. Lucia Great Court buildings, hoped for by 1946.27 For the first time, the Commonwealth provided two-thirds of the costs of employing new staff. The Queensland Government grant was still only £50,000, and by 1950 the university had to borrow heavily from the state to meet commitments. Relief came from the Commonwealth in 1953 when its annual commitment to The University of Queensland increased to £160,000 a year.28

Table 2: Student Numbers at The University of Queensland, 1940–1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1,789</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>2,207</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>4,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3,735</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>4,112</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>5,329</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>5,615</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>8,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>11,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>16,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>18,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning, passim).

THE GREAT COURT BUILDINGS

Early in 1945, work on the St. Lucia buildings resumed on a small scale, along with repairs to the buildings to remove the minor scars from the army’s occupation. The university had already spent approximately £600,000 on the St. Lucia site and its buildings: £343,500 had been spent on the Main building, with another £63,500 needed for completion; £55,000 had been spent on the Chemistry building with another £50,700 needed to make it fully habitable; £10,000 had been spent on the foundations of the Geology building, with another £57,642 needed. The Physics building was scheduled to cost £85,700, the Biology and Agriculture building was slated at £111,614 and the building to house Anatomy and Physiology required a further £150,000.29 Even with space at a premium, the university was still not ready to make

25. The Commonwealth assumed the major responsibility for financing universities in 1958.
26. Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning, 177.
27. R. C. Mills, Chairman, Universities Commission, to J.D. Story, Vice-Chancellor, 14 July 1945, Faculties C.R.T.S., Buildings, University of Queensland, Policy and General, Universities Commission, A1361, 19/5/1 Part 1 (NAA).
the transfer from the old George Street campus. Anxious to see the buildings used, in late 1945 the Queensland Government drew up plans to turn the Main building into an industrial high school,\(^{30}\) and during 1948 the western half of the first floor of the Main building was leased out to CSIRO while the site of permanent CSIRO laboratories was prepared, opposite the UQ St. Lucia site.\(^{31}\)

In 1948, the Department of Physical Education was the first UQ occupant of the Main building. Just before the war, a Diploma of Physical Education had been introduced, and in 1948 the programme was accepted into the BA schedule.\(^{32}\) Physical Education occupied a large amount of space in the Main building: there was a gymnasium and other equipment to house, which took up roughly half of one floor, and a large room on the ground floor of the east wing. Despite shortages of materials after the war, by 1949 work on the Main building progressed sufficiently to enable the transfer of the departments of Classics, Economics, English, History, Modern Languages, Music, Philosophy, and Law, all part of the Faculty of Arts. Mathematics, Commerce and Education and the Library moved in 1950.\(^{33}\) Surveying classes remained at St. Lucia, but the rest of the Engineering Department returned to George Street, relinquishing their temporary quarters to the Student Union. The Main building was opened by Premier Ned Hanlon in May 1949 and re-named after William Forgan Smith to commemorate the ex-Premier’s vision to begin construction of the St. Lucia campus, and his Chancellorship of the university from 1942 (which continued until 1953). There was a token first meeting of the Senate in the Main building

\(^{30}\) Director-General of Education to Under-Secretary, Department of Public Works, 16 October 1945, TRI1158/4, E469D, (Queensland State Archives).

\(^{31}\) J.D. Story, Vice-Chancellor, to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Department, 7 July 1943, Facilities—Buildings—The University of Queensland, 19/5/3 Part 1, A1361 (NAA).

\(^{32}\) Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning, 185.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 211.
late in 1949. The Administration moved to the building in 1952, and at the same time the first floor vestibule of the tower was prepared to display the Darnell Art Collection. The collection, which began in the 1940s as the result of a £17,000 legacy bequeathed in 1930 by John Darnell, was initially directed by Dr. J. V. Duhig and Professors R. P. Cummings and H. C. Richards. They were instrumental in collecting more than 400 works of art, assisted by artists and art advisors Daryl Lindsay, Lloyd Rees, Lucy Swanton, Lillian Pedersen, Sydney Long, Roland Wakelin, Max Ragless and Vida Lahey. The Architecture Department moved into the bottom floor of the tower in late 1955, where it remained until the mid-1970s. Subsequently, from 1976, these rooms housed the University Art Museum Collection which included the Darnell Collection, and later also the Stuartholme Behan Collection, and for a time the Lionel Lindsay Collection of Australian Art.\textsuperscript{34}

In the 1930s, when Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. presented their plans to the University Senate, they described their vision of ‘a great central semi-circular quadrangle around which the various buildings are arranged, all connected by means of an arcade, enabling students to reach any portion under cover.’\textsuperscript{35} However, as has been outlined, this vision was not fully achieved until 1979.\textsuperscript{36} The Main (Forgan Smith) building was completed between 1937 and 1952, or even longer if the final work on the Duhig tower and the Library is included. Construction of the Chemistry building was not as advanced in 1942 as construction of the Main building; it was completed after the Second World War, and occupied in 1949. In 1966, the Chemistry building was named after Professor Bertram D. Steele, foundation Professor in Chemistry (1910–1930), President of the Professorial Board (1911–1914) and the university’s

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 211–212; Pascoe, \textit{A Guide to the Great Court}, 17.
\textsuperscript{35} Thomis, \textit{A Place of Light and Learning}, 211.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 211–212; Pascoe, \textit{A Guide to the Great Court}, 17.
first Fellow of the Royal Society in London, from 1919.\textsuperscript{37} The Geology building was completed in 1951, named after Henry C. Richards, foundation Professor of Geology and Mineralogy (1919–1947), and President of the Board of Faculties from 1925 to 1931. The Physics building was constructed in 1955, although, for reasons of economy, completion of the external stonework was delayed. It was named after Professor Thomas Parnell, the first Lecturer in Physics in 1911 and the inaugural Professor in the discipline (1918–1948).\textsuperscript{38} The remaining void in the D-shape plan that defined the Great Court was finally filled in by the Biological Sciences building, later named after Professor Ernest J. Goddard who held an appointment as Professor of Biology from 1923 to 1948.\textsuperscript{39} Construction of the Goddard building began in 1957. It was occupied in 1962.

At the eastern end of the Forgan Smith building, the library was much smaller than today’s Social Sciences and Humanities Library complex. It consisted of three floors with a central reading room embellished with a decorative glass ceiling. The Duhig tower was a 1965 addition, named in honour of the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Sir James Duhig, who served on the University Senate from 1916 to his death in 1965.\textsuperscript{40} Unfortunately, the glass ceiling was destroyed during the renovations. In 1960, the west wing of the Forgan Smith building was extended to match the east wing and plans were drawn up for a Western Arts building. This building was planned to include two extra wings and a central courtyard, which were never constructed. The eight-story Michie building, the only section built, was completed between 1972 and 1979. It was named in honour of Professor J. L. Michie, foundation Professor of Classics between 1910 and 1946. Michie was also Dean of the Faculty of Arts on three occasions between 1911 and 1945.\textsuperscript{41} The modern-style high-rise Michie building was initially not clad in sandstone. This was added in 1979, a gift to the university from the Queensland Government. It matched the Duhig tower at the eastern end of the Forgan Smith building. The western end of the cloisters was completed at the same time. The university chose the serviceable Michie structure rather than build the Great Hall originally envisaged for the site by Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. Although there was a suggestion in 1960 to build the Great Hall in the middle of the Great Court, the final decision was to create a separate building for ceremonial occasions, opposite the Forgan Smith west wing. Mayne Hall, as it was subsequently named, was completed in 1976, and became the site of all graduations and many concerts and public lectures until it underwent a major restructure. In 2004 the building reopened as the James and Mary Emelia Mayne Centre and University Art Museum. For graduations, Mayne Hall was replaced by the UQ Centre.

THE SCULPTURES, FRIEZES AND GROTESQUES OF THE GREAT COURT

The carvings around the Great Court have been a ‘work in progress’ since construction commenced on the Great Court buildings and are still not complete. The nine Forgan Smith friezes depict stages in the development of primary and secondary industries and historical events: the landing of Lieutenant James Cook on Possession Island in 1770, and of Lieutenant John Oxley at Redcliffe in 1823; the discovery of coal at Ipswich in 1826; the arrival of Patrick Leslie’s expedition on the Darling Downs in 1840; Ludwig Leichhardt’s 1844 expedition; the discovery of gold at Mount Morgan in 1882; the ceremonial beginning of the Commonwealth of Australia; the signing of the University Bill in Queensland Parliament; and the Australian Army during the Second World War. Space has been allowed for extra friezes to be added at some future time. Aboriginal culture is also recorded in thirty panels over the Arts and Law entrances.

The shields and coats of arms from universities all over the world were added to the colonnade, in addition to carvings of native animals and flora. At the entrance to the Steele (Chemistry) building one finds panels depicting eminent chemists, Antoine Lavoisier and John Dalton, along with friezes of sixteenth century alchemy, and of Dmitri Mendeleev, Joseph Priestley, and Louis Pasteur. Further, the Richards (Geology) building has a large frieze of prehistoric animals and forms of vegetation depicted on its façade. Finally, the Goddard (Biological Sciences) building has bas-reliefs of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel on each side of its main entrance.

The Forgan Smith is the central building of this complex, replete with more decorative features than all of the other Great Court buildings combined. Low-relief statues on either side of the front entrances to the Arts and Law wings are accompanied by the names of and quotations from great thinkers and teachers. These bas-reliefs are intended as a portrayal of the Western intellectual traditions on which the university is based. Over decades, decorative features were added to the Forgan Smith and the other Great Court buildings, which provide unity to the central core of the university. The most unique aspect of the carvings is the larger-than-life-size bas-reliefs incorporated within the Arts, Law, Chemistry and Biological Sciences entrances. However, it is the grotesques, or wall-protruding sculptures, which depict known and unknown identities from the early days of the university and some classical figures, that catch most eyes. Even Confucius is included, coincidentally outside the area in the Forgan Smith now occupied by the Confucius Institute. The grotesques, the crests and other ornamentation around the Great Court are too numerous to discuss here. The best way to comprehend them all is to walk the precinct with a copy of Pascoe’s *A Guide to the Great Court*.

In 1939, the decision was made to design bas-relief carvings over the doorways of each wing of the Forgan Smith to depict the disciplines housed within. Geoffrey Chaucer (right) and William Shakespeare (left) can be found each side of the Arts entrance, along with the names of Homer, Edmund Spenser,
Robert Browning, Desiderius Erasmus, John Milton and Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) above the lintel. Emperor Justinian I (right) and Plato (left) guard the Law entrance, along with the names of Francis Bacon, Socrates, William Blackstone, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes and Edward Coke. The Greek sentence carved over the Arts entrance is attributed to Athenian leader Pericles, who in a 431 BCE speech said: ‘We seek beauty in a spirit of moderation and wisdom without forfeit of manliness‘ (freely translated). The Latin text over the Law entrance comes from the Institutes of Justinian, an attempt to set down the elemental moral concepts at the basis of all laws. The translation is: ‘These are the precepts of law: to live honourably, to do no harm to anyone, and to give every man his due.’ The central entrance, below the tower, is emblazoned with ‘Great is truth and mighty above all things,’ an extract from a story from the court of Darius III of Persia in the time of the Jewish captivity in the third century BCE. The quotation over the tower entrance – ‘A place of light, of liberty and of learning‘ – is drawn from Benjamin Disraeli. The university crest and motto – ‘Scientia ac Labore,’ which translates as ‘By means of knowledge and hard work‘ – appears above the main entrance and on the vestibule pillars.

There are five low-relief figures on the tower, two of which act as support for the clock, with another three on the left-hand side. The exact significance of these bas-relief figures is not clear, as documentation has been lost. Some believe that these figures were intended to represent the classical muses of the learned professions, while another interpretation suggests that they are part of an unfinished series of figures depicting the university’s nine pre-Second World War faculties.

Although other stonemasons and sculptors have also been involved, John T. Muller, Frederick J. McGowan, and Rhyl Hinwood have been prime contributors to the on-going creation of stone works of art adorning the Great Court. Sculptor Muller began work on the buildings in 1939 and continued to carve until his death in 1953 at more than eighty years of age. He was responsible for the statues and friezes on the Forgan Smith and Steele buildings, the prehistoric-themed frieze on the Richards building, and for the majority of the grotesques, coats of arms, arches and roundels. Sculptor Hinwood carried on Muller’s tradition and has been responsible for carving completed since 1976, including a grotesque of Muller, additional coats of arms, other grotesques and the bas-reliefs of Darwin and Mendel at the Goddard building entrance.

CONCLUSION

The Forgan Smith Building was fully incorporated into The University of Queensland in the early 1950s and the Great Court continued to grow over the next decade. Tens of thousands of students have passed through the doors of these hallowed buildings and generations of Queenslanders have received their university education amid their grand rooms. After the Second World War, the Forgan Smith building was used by the university to house the Arts Faculty, the Department of External Studies, the administration, libraries, and an art gallery. It was once also the ceremonial and social hub of the university. Today, it still houses sections of the Arts Faculty as well as the T. C. Beirne School of Law and the Walter Harrison Law Library. Any building is a structure and a community. Few buildings in Australian universities are as grand at the Forgan Smith and its role as the centrepiece of the Great Court complex ensures its continued dominance. The building’s heritage status means that it will be preserved for future generations. This essay has charted its beginning, concentrating on the physical side of the building. Its peopling and the building’s role in the pedagogical and social history of The University of Queensland are another study. The Forgan Smith building and the other Great Court buildings are

42. Robinson, The University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane, 9, 11.
43. Ibid., 9-20.
44. Pascoe, A Guide to the Great Court, 24-25.
45. Others who have worked to sculpt the carvings include R. N. Mackenroth, H. A. Thurlow, A. Brooks, R. Campbell, D. J. Grieve, and P. J. Paten (Pascoe, A Guide to the Great Court, 11).
46. Thomis, A Place of Light and Learning, 355; Pascoe, A Guide to the Great Court, 11–14.
a potent statement of the importance of tertiary education. They were a huge 1930s–1970s investment in the future of the state and its citizens, in a manner never before attempted. With their completion, Queensland came of age after a century and a half of European settlement. In 2010, with The University of Queensland celebrating its own centenary, the significance of the buildings deserves to be acknowledged as central to the history of education in Queensland. Tens of thousands of students and staff have inhabited the Forgan Smith building and its Great Court neighbours. To many, the Great Court is The University of Queensland, not the encircling newer buildings. The cultural space of the university will be forever marked by the Great Court. While many take it for granted, its construction was a deliberate statement about the nature of the state and the centrality of education.47

47. Thanks are due to the anonymous reviewer of this article and to Håkan Sandgren for proofreading.