

ACLAND BURGHLEY SCHOOL
CONSERVATION & HERITAGE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Acland Burghley School, Tufnell Park NW5, is a major work by postwar architects Howell, Killick, Partridge & Amis (HKPA), designed and built between 1963 and 1967. The building is recognised as one of many important contributions to post-war modern architecture, and in particular the assimilation of modernism by State funded education programmes. The school was listed Grade II in 2016, though not before some significant alterations had been made to the fabric (see below).



1.1 Aerial contemporary view of the Acland Burghley School from the north.

BUILDING HISTORY

(See also: LIST DESCRIPTION IN APPENDIX 1)

The first school on the site opened in 1884 as the Burghley Road School, a mixed elementary school for 118 girls and 127 boys designed under E R Robson, architect to the School Board for London. It was joined in 1895 by a second building to the east for senior pupils. In 1905, the senior boys moved to a new school in Fortress Road named Acland School, the senior girls staying at the Burghley Road site until 1931 when they were moved to a school on Chesters Road (later known as Brookfield School). The junior boys and girls stayed at Burghley Road.

After the Second World War, the Labour-dominated London County Council (LCC) pioneered single-stream ‘comprehensive’ education. Acland and Burghley schools were amalgamated in 1959 in a new building to be built on the site of the Burghley Road school buildings. Like most authorities, peaks in the capital programme were flattened by farming out work to private architects on an approved list. It was under Leslie Martin (Architect 1953-56) that the LCC became a major public patron, with commissions handed to the likes of Denys Lasdun, Erno Goldfinger, Chamberlin Powell and Bon, Powell and Moya, Architects’ Co-Partnership and Stirling and Gowan. By 1960 Michael Powell was in charge of the LCC’s Schools Division and it may have been through his offices that Howell Killick Partridge and Amis (HKPA) were offered a 1,320-place comprehensive school in Tufnell Park, the amalgamated Acland Burghley school. It was an early commission for the practice, whose partners met in the Housing Division of the LCC Architect’s Department in the 1950s, designing the Alton West estate.

The plan had to be sufficiently flexible to permit educational reorganisation and allow for the retention of the old buildings until the new school was ready for occupation. Between 1963 and 1967 the new building was completed in phases, its layout stepping around the C19 buildings, allowing the school to continue on its site. The assembly hall was the last element to be completed, after the occupation of the teaching towers. As the new building was occasioned by the merger of two schools, the senior teaching staff was involved in briefing. Unusually, the educational structure was dictated not by the LCC’s educational officers but by the ambitious headmaster, L A V Abley. There were to be no houses but a horizontal division into lower, middle and upper schools, with three pairs of year groups. The school was officially opened by Dr Tait, Vice Chancellor of the City University, on May 24th 1968.

There have been some alterations to the building. Most notably the original casement windows have been replaced with double-glazed aluminium alternatives. The front entrance at the south elevation has been set back and the door replaced. The gymnasia and games hall, a large-span, folded-plate structure designed by John Partridge, burnt down in 1979, to be replaced by a lightweight, large-span steel structure. In 2007 a new two storey music and dance centre was designed by Gollifer Langston Architects attached to the south of the west range. Grilles have been added to the ground floor of the south elevation of the library in the west range, and the recessed ground floor of the west elevation of the administration core has been built-out to be flush with the floors above. A new lift tower has been constructed to the right (east) of the main entrance and a glazed entrance has been added to the ground floor of the southernmost teaching tower.

Internally the student reception in the main vestibule is remodelled from the original medical room and store. The cloakrooms to each teaching tower are now offices. The ground floor of the west range has been remodelled to form a specialist learning centre for autistic pupils. New build in the covered space accommodates the computer suite. The dining room has been extended and reconfigured and the toilets and cloakrooms have renewed fittings. A Learning Disability Department has been formed in the central core and both this and the remodelling to form the new Sixth Form Centre has necessitated the removal of some of the ground floor. The internal acoustic walls to the assembly hall have been punctured and some of the original lights have been removed.

(OPPOSITE) As built photographs. (Clockwise from top left)

- 2.1 Entrance ramp and teaching block
- 2.2 Assembly Hall and outdoor amphitheatre
- 2.3 Gymnasium (destroyed by fire 1979)
- 2.4 Assembly Hall internal – original condition
- 2.5 Assembly Hall internal – original ceiling
- 2.6 The external architecture of the main teaching blocks





3.1 (left to right) Bill Howell, John Killick, John Partridge and Stanley Amis

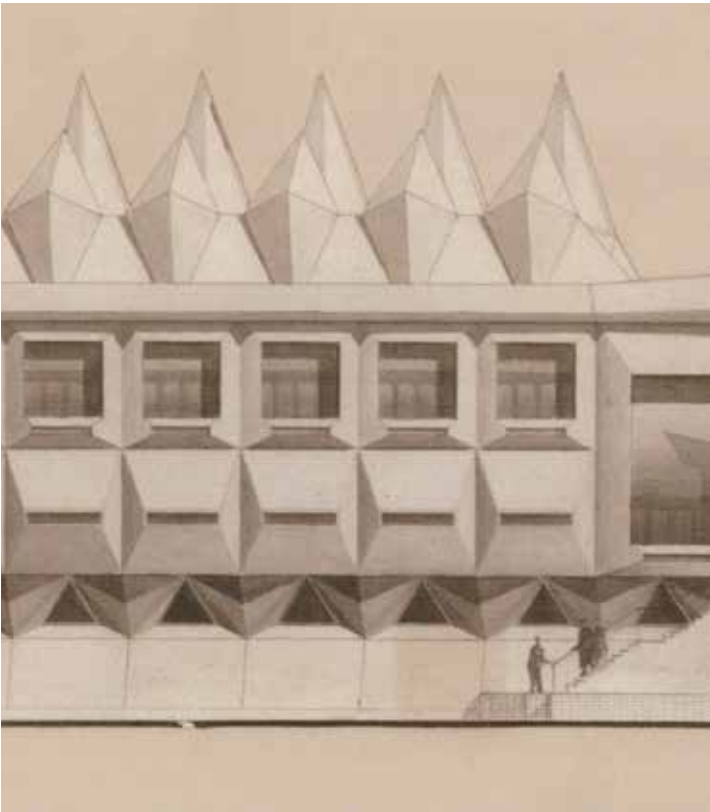
HKPA were a prominent and successful London firm of architects who made their name through elegant, well detailed buildings for education clients. These included a number of college buildings at Oxford and Cambridge, departmental buildings at other universities, and Acland Burghley School for the LCC. The founding partners met at the LCC while working on the seminal Alton West Estate. Acland Burghley, a commission secured through their LCC connections, was one of the new practice's early works.

HKPA rose to prominence as one of the finalists of the Churchill College competition of 1959, alongside established practices Stirling & Gowan, Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, and Sheppard, Robson & Partners. Although Sheppard, Robson were the winning design, all four were extensively published and debated by the architectural press of the day. The strident forms envisaged by HKPA caught the eye of other prospective educational clients, and led to important new buildings at St Anthony's and St Anne's Colleges (Oxford) Darwin & Downing Colleges (Cambridge) and faculty buildings for Birmingham and Reading.

Away from education, performance buildings included the innovative Young Vic Theatre, while HKPA latterly built a number of buildings for the criminal justice system, including Medway Magistrates Court and Belmarsh Prison.



3.2 Alton West Estate, rear of shopping parade with maisonettes over



3.3 Churchill College competition entry, 1959



3.4 Downing College, Cambridge, Senior Combination Room, 1965. Note the increasingly confident use of precast elements.



3.5 Darwin College, Cambridge, Dining Hall, 1965. As at Acland Burghley, beautiful, articulated ceilings were an important design feature for HKPA.

The building was the subject of a number of alterations before listing. Most evident is the replacement of almost all the original hardwood/aluminium glazing with modern double glazed and powder coated aluminium windows. The clerestory over the Assembly Hall shows the original glazing. The imposing main entrance has been substantially altered with new doors, new window over door, and the necessary addition of a accessibility lift tower to the right of the entrance (although this has been designed to complement the original building). Much of the original concrete finishes, both internally and externally, have been over-painted in light cream, substantially altering the appearance when compared to as built photographs from 1967.

The gymnasium, a freestanding timber and steel hall designed by John Partridge, was an interesting large span structure that presumably needed to be of lightweight design because it was sited on the bridged-over railway. The hall unfortunately burnt down in 1979 and its replacement is another lightweight steel structure.

A two storey music and dance centre was added to the south of the western section, this does not attempt to complement the original composition.



4.1 General view to the main building from the south side to the principal entrance ramp.



4.2 View from the south side lower level showing distinctive precast concrete cladding panels to the elevation and recent replacement aluminium windows to the main school building.



4.3 External view of the auditorium. Note the central glazed skylight, Standing seam aluminium roof, timber cladding and original timber clerestory windows to the upper level. In-situ concrete walls form a sturdy base element.



4.4 New music school (2007) and the link to existing building.



4.5 Existing main school building showing the recent replacement glazing, distinctive double layered windows (right) and iconic pre-cast concrete cladding units. Howell Killick, Partidge and Amis made excellent use of the expressive qualities of pre-cast concrete throughout their oeuvre.



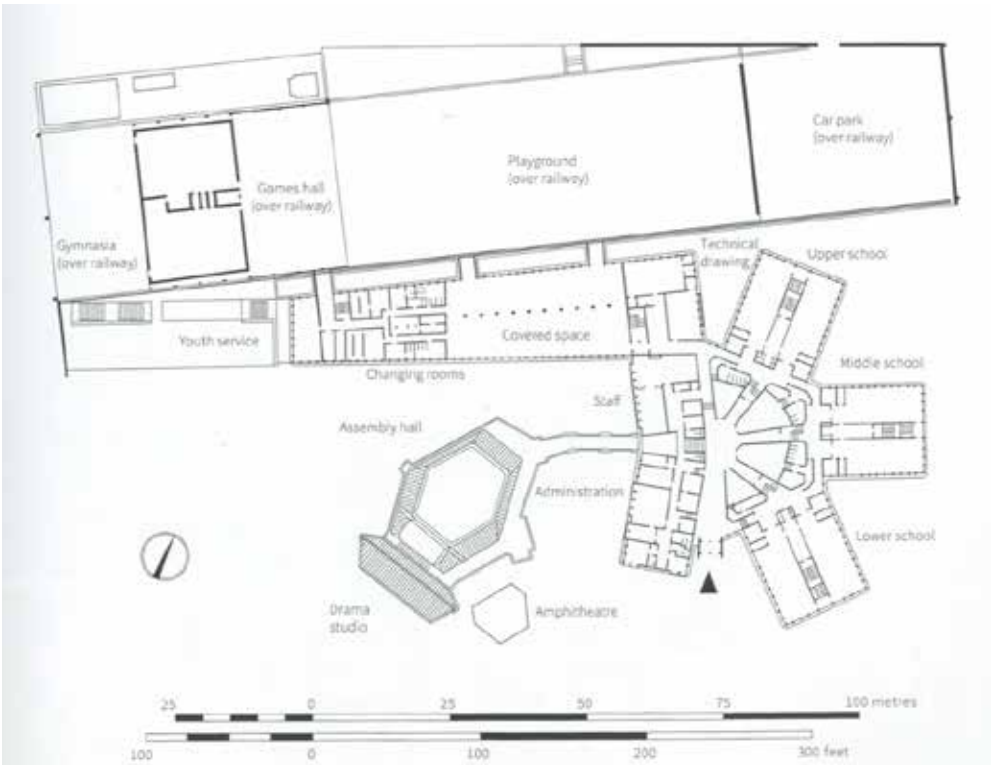
4.6 In-situ concrete covered walkway linking the main school building with the separate assembly hall.

The overall massing of the school and its robust materials still stronger reflect the original 1960s aesthetic despite the changes described. Because many areas of the school remain in the uses for which they were designed - entrance way, lobby, classrooms, art rooms etc the building retains much of its original spirit. Some small details, such as the steel bannisters in the concrete stairwells, remain as signature features of the HKPA house style (comparable details exist at the Oxbridge colleges, for example).

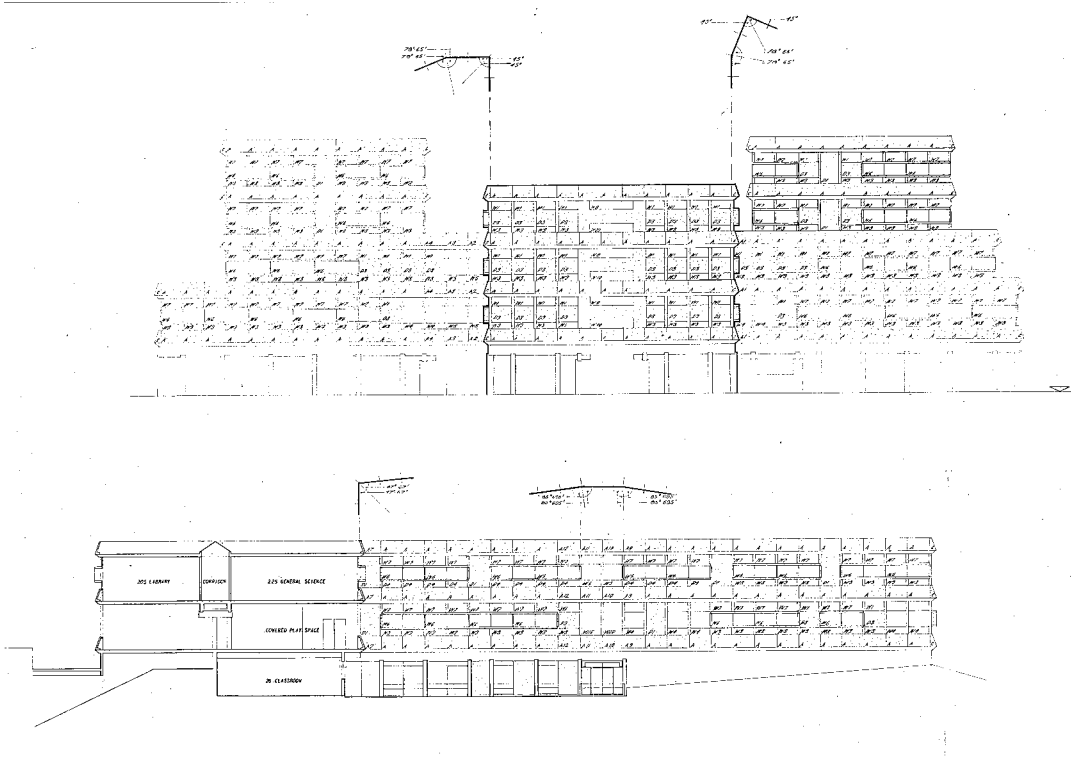
While the main doorway has been altered, a number of subordinate original doors survive. Original paving around the school, particularly around the assembly hall, survives, and the special amphitheatre built for outdoor performances (incorporating ornamental stonework from the Victorian Board School on site, designed by EL Robson.)

The exigencies of modern school operation mean certain elements - particularly the toilets - have been the subject of total refurbishment. Modern services present a problem and it has not been possible to always contain these within their original risers and conduits.

The current teachers and management of the school are highly aware of the value of the school's architecture heritage and are proud of their heritage. They consider the school to be a highly successful design even today, and were pleased to host the launch of Gerait Franklin's book on HKPA in 2017.



5.1 The 1964 ground floor plan showing HKPA's highly original approach to school planning and massing.



5.2 Original elevations of the main school building.



5.3 Ornamental stonework from the former school by EL Robson used to create an outdoor amphetheatre adjacent to the assembly hall.



5.4 The original ramped entranceway remains the principal, monumental, access route into the building.



5.5 The original covered walkway, linking the main building and assembly hall with original pavers. The original doors to the hall can be seen to the centre of the image.



6.1 One of two art rooms with a glazed slot style skylight to the periphery of the original varnished timber ceiling.



6.2 The art room skylight seen from above.



6.3 The art room skylight corner junction and roof construction seen through a window in the main corridor.



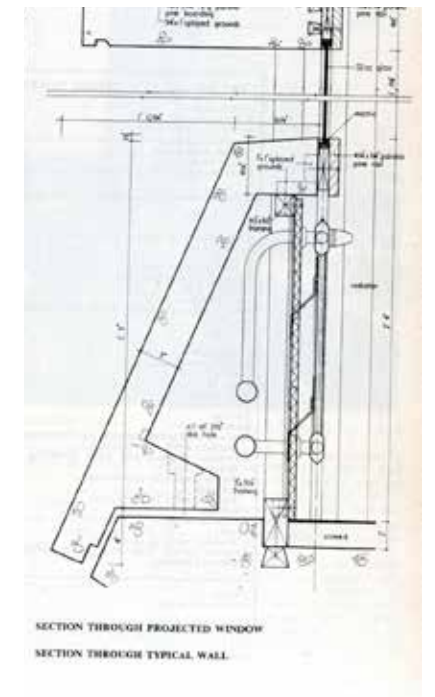
6.4 The original painted steel balustrade to each of the main stair towers.



6.5 The distinctive double window design seen from inside a classroom. Although the original windows have been replaced, the original configuration and useful, deep cill remain.



6.6 The double window design seen from the exterior. The original projecting service conduit still remains below the windows at each level. This technical drawing (*above right*) shows how the hot water pipes to serve the radiators were cleverly concealed in this purpose designed feature. *For full technical drawing see appendix 2.*



The Assembly Hall was the last element of the school programme to be completed, in December 1967. It is both the school's most distinctive architectural element - particularly internally - and the least altered. The hall is entered from a covered walkway to the east. A circulating corridor runs around the edge of the main hall, which is an elongated hexagon in shape. There are two stages at the east and west ends, behind the west end stage is a backstage area under a fly tower. Separately accessed, to the west, are two top lit secondary spaces originally built as a drama workshops and latterly craft teaching areas.

The hall has a number of original features contributing to its character - principally the clerestory windows, the timber roof and floor finishes, & the external entrance doors (though modified, and missing the distinctive bar handles visible in early photographs). The angled soffit running around the room retains its unpainted concrete finish. The dramatic centrepiece of the roof is a recessed rooflight. A number of circular ceiling lights sit in original recesses - included in the listing description as original, they do not however match those in as built photographs, which are fully recessed into the roof.

Detracting from these original features are new strip lights distributed haphazardly across the timber roof. These, and a number of different sized circular holes cut from the hall's internal walls, apparently date from the refurbishment of the hall as a pilot teaching environment for the Building Schools for the Future Programme, approximately ten years ago. The holes sawn in the concrete walls are a particularly regrettable, intrusive and irreversible, alteration to the fabric. In the same refurbishment, dazzling blue/red striped non slip floor coverings were laid in the circulation corridor.

The girls' and boys' toilets retain quarry tiled floors and white tiled walls, together with what appear to be original cubicles and some toilet pans.

(Right) An original view of the Assembly Hall ceiling.





8.1 An exterior view of the assembly hall taken in 1968 by photographer John Donat (1933-2004). To the lower right of the image, the covered walkway linking the main building and assembly hall is visible.



8.2 This photograph shows the main internal volume of the assembly hall. Note the original flush-fitting down lighters integrated into the timber ceiling. These are now sadly lost, leaving behind the empty holes we see today. Also visible are the stainless steel angled lighting to the periphery and the skylight surround.



8.3 One of the dominant features of the assembly hall is the profiled timber ceiling and central skylight. Note the 4 apertures within the ceiling which allowed for studio lighting to be operated from within the void above.



8.4 A covered walkway links the main school building with the separate assembly hall. The original entrance doors to the hall which are visible in this photo remain on site today.



9.1 An external view of the assembly hall upper level. Visible is the simple palette of materials used throughout the building; concrete, timber, glass and aluminium. The distinctive timber-clad form in the centre of this image is the flytower, over the main stage area.



9.2 This photograph shows the timber cladding to the upper part of the assembly hall. The original boarding is heavily weathered and in need of refurbishment. The original timber windows with metal brackets are also in need of a careful restoration but do not appear in too bad a condition.



9.3 A detailed photo showing the timber shuttering imprint on the concrete elevations of the assembly hall.



9.4 To the rear of the assembly hall is an entrance to the textiles room, previously the drama studio.



9.5 A close up view of the high level clerestory windows of the assembly hall.



9.6 The original timber doors survive to the assembly hall.



10.1 View of the main hall showing modern lighting and circular holes in the timber ceiling where the original light fittings have been removed. Note the clerestory glazing with modern blinds to the upper level and white boarding to the ground level, covering over the original timber cladding.



10.2 The central lantern to the assembly hall roof currently leaks and is in need of attention.



10.3 A close up view of one of the timber clerestory windows.



10.4 The original rectangular stage lighting apertures.



10.5 Round ceiling lamp next to modern strip lighting.



10.6 The original timber cladding to the internal periphery survives behind modern white boarding.



11.1 One of several circular apertures cut through the concrete wall of the assembly hall as part of the 'Schools for the future' pilot initiative.



11.2 A view toward the original main entrance doors of the assembly hall. Circular sky-lights to the ceiling and varnished timber cladding to the projection room to the right.



11.3 View of one of a series of domed skylights to the circulation corridor.



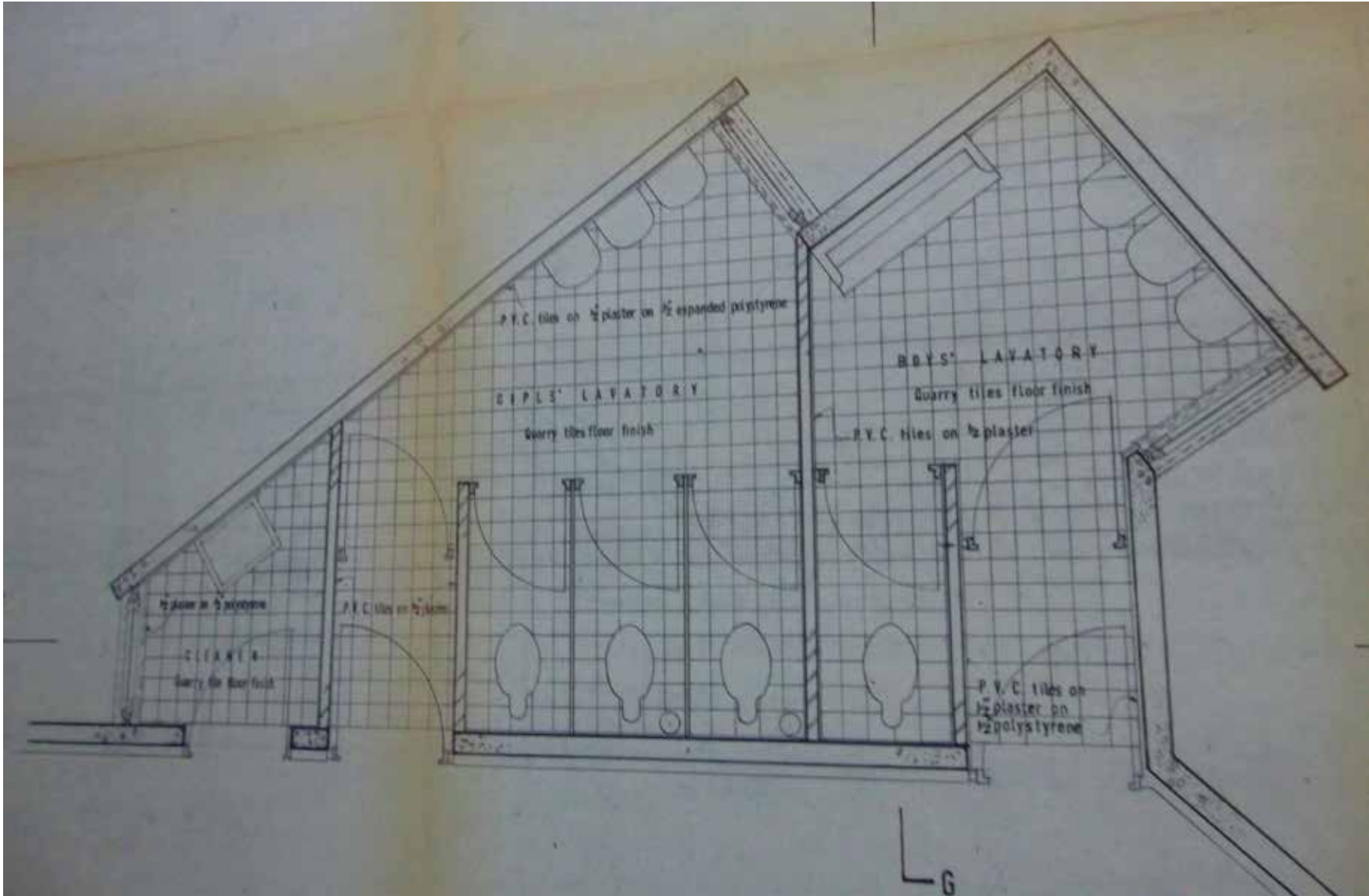
11.4 Existing corridor lighting.



11.5 Original exit doors from the assembly hall.



11.6 Signs of damp to the south-east side of the hall at ceiling level.



12.1 An original plan of the girls and boys toilets to the periphery of the assembly hall building.



12.2 The original quarry tiled floor is intact to both toilets. These could be cleaned of paint and retained as a heritage feature.



12.3 Modern plastic piping and plinth to the urinals in the boys toilet.



12.4 The original door signage should be retained where possible.



12.5 Modern sink unit with original white glazed tiles behind.



12.6 The original toilet cubicle partitions survive to both toilets. This photo shows an original style toilet to the right and a modern replacement to the left.



13.1 The entrance door to the former drama studio - later textile room is located toward the rear of the assembly hall complex.



13.2 This photograph shows how the glazed roof is currently obscured by blinds, to the right of this image, and a suspended ceiling, to the left. The life expired glazed roof to this classroom is to be carefully replaced in its entirety.



13.3 Leaves on the floor of the computer area caused by the damaged skylights above.



13.4 A view of several existing skylights with the blind retracted.



13.5 A collection of leaves on top of the sun blinds caused by damaged skylights.



13.6 An original ventilator opener crank to operate the skylights above.



14.1 An external view of a series of classrooms in the main building. The original projecting services conduit, constructed from pre-cast concrete panels, still remains below the windows at each level. The services void cleverly conceals the hot water pipes that serve the classroom radiators, situated directly underneath the windows to the periphery.



14.2 The flat roof deck above the art room with the continuous skylight to the periphery.



14.3 One of three original stair towers that serve the main teaching blocks.



14.4 The painted steel balustrade and handrail to the stair cores is original to the building. These are to be retained and repainted where necessary.



14.5 Existing surface mounted services conduits to a meeting room at ground level. Where new conduit / trunking is installed, these can be 'painted in' to match the wall finishes to minimise the visual intrusion.



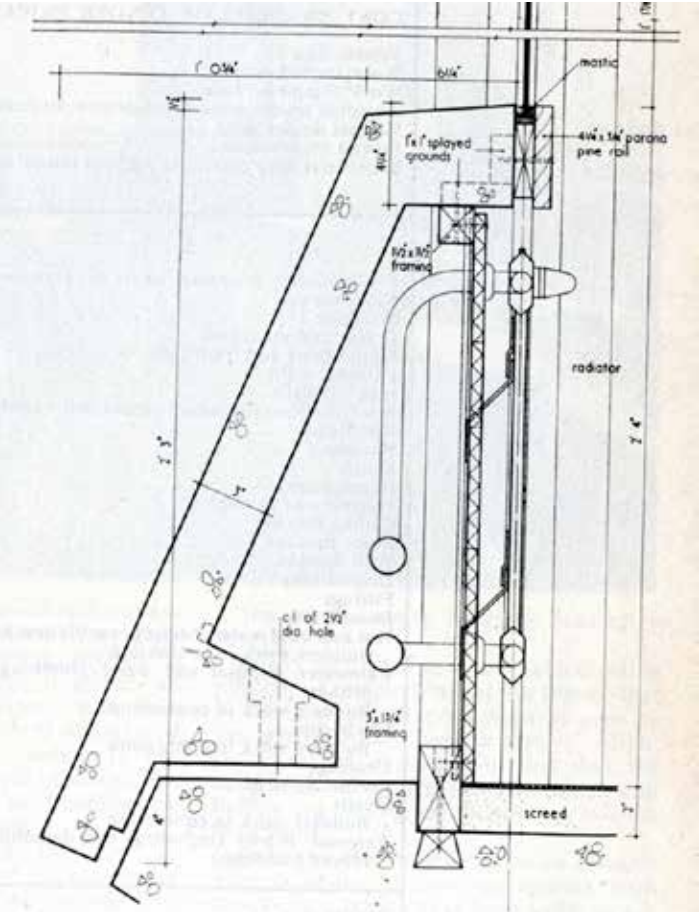
15.1 An internal view of the art room skylight to the periphery of the ceiling.



15.2 The original timber roof to the art room. Note the inappropriate modern strip lighting, also used in the assembly hall which detracts from the original design.



15.3 The original quarry tiled floor to the art room. These tiles are to be cleaned and retained where possible throughout the building and celebrated as an attractive heritage feature.



15.4 This original detailed drawing shows how the hot water pipes to serve the radiators were cleverly concealed behind the external pre-cast cladding panels. For full technical drawing see appendix 2.



15.5 A typical classroom radiator with concealed pipework to the rear. The existing painted timber board is to be upgraded with a new fire rated Supalux cladding panel. The proposed improvements can help with cable management.

Anticipated refurbishment programme - September 2018 - August 2019

The proposed works for the forthcoming cycle of repair, and our out-line methodology for limiting heritage impact, are as follows;

1. Replacement Lantern Light to Assembly Hall and skylight to T4 classroom - The original lantern is life expired and lets in rainwater - double glazed replacements are proposed to match original design with reference to original architectural drawings, and aluminium frames.
2. Replacement Patent Glazed Roof and Valley Gutter Linings to Textile Classroom (former drama studio) - new double glazed roof to a design matching the original, with aluminium frames to match the original finish.
3. Clerestory Windows to Assembly Hall - refurbish and add new blinds/opening mechanisms - retain the glazing units rather than replace, ensure new mechanisms complement the original building design.
4. Replacement rooflights to circulation corridors in Assembly Hall - replacements to duplicate polycarbonate originals.
5. External Fire Escape Doors to Assembly Hall - Overhaul 4 No. existing painted timber emergency exit double doorsets - reference drawings and pictures of originals, consider reinstating original external handrails (now lost). Research and duplicate the original paint finishes.
6. Circulation Corridors to Assembly Hall - take up existing floor covering, lay new screed and new rubber floor covering - choose appropriate colour sympathetic to original design and surviving original features.
7. Female Toilet (currently out of use) - refurbish to modern standard retaining original features where possible, including quarry floor tiles, wall tiles and signage. New sanitaryware and sinks to be sympathetic design to date of original building. Re-use the original sanitaryware if possible.
8. Male Toilet (currently out of use) - refurbish to modern standard - retaining original features where possible, including quarry floor tiles, wall tiles and signage. New sanitaryware and sinks to be sympathetic design to date of original building. Re-use the original sanitaryware if possible.
9. The timber cladding at roof level and fly tower of Assembly Hall - partial replacement of decayed timber and re-varnishing. Varnish to complement wooden surrounds of clerestory windows.
10. The covering to walkway between Assembly Hall and Main Building - replace failing roof material with new asphalt waterproofing covering.
11. External paving around Assembly Hall - lift and re-bed existing slabs.
12. Renewal of water supply/heating system throughout school - to be undertaken within existing risers/conduit - radiators to be flushed and reused.
13. Electricity systems - a number of necessary upgrades and replacements have been identified to bring electricity systems up to current safety standards - these affect sub mains/distribution board/ emergency lighting/fire detection/small power and lighting circuits. Much of this work will be unseen. Where upgrades are visible, existing luminaires will be reused. The existing containment systems will be reused where possible however where existing is not suitable for reuse, new galvanised conduit will be surface run fixed to the building fabric walls and soffits to luminaire locations. A similar approach to be taken to small power and power sockets.
14. Renewal of external lighting to soffit around school and Assembly Hall - new fixtures to be agreed to complement and enhance original architecture.
15. Concrete repairs to the Assembly Hall, Covered walkway and outside lobby to the main building. This is very important as the School wish for these areas to be painted as part of the concrete repairs to match the main building, however we are allowing for the isolated repairs to match existing.
16. Replacement pipework within the classroom services voids, including replacing the panels that the radiators are fixed to below the windows.
17. Replacement of the sub-mains distribution boards and electrical rewires which will require new PVC tubular conduit and PVC dado trunking to classroom areas.
18. General replacement of pipework within risers and to the undercroft of the main building.
19. Replacement of 6 in number air conditioning units on a like for like basis.
20. Repair and strengthening works to the 3m high boundary wall to Burghley Road.

We propose a long term, conservation-led approach to the repair and maintenance of the entire complex, with particular regard to those heritage features identified above. We recommend a philosophy of minimum intervention where fabric is sound, and repair and retention rather than replacement of original features. Where replacement is necessary, new fittings (eg rooflights) should match originals.

Enhancing the Asset - Long term recommendations for conservation

We propose that over time, an approach of incremental restoration will best enhance the building and its heritage value. Though this may involve longer or more costly approaches, the building merits safeguarding through particular appreciation of its key features. Long term strategies need to be developed and adopted for key aspects of the buildings operation and repair. In particular these need to cover;

Treatment and repair of concrete surfaces

Design of services, and a consistent and appropriate approach to piping/ trunking

Repair and retention of heating and sanitary features where they have heritage value

Painting and decoration

Floor finishes

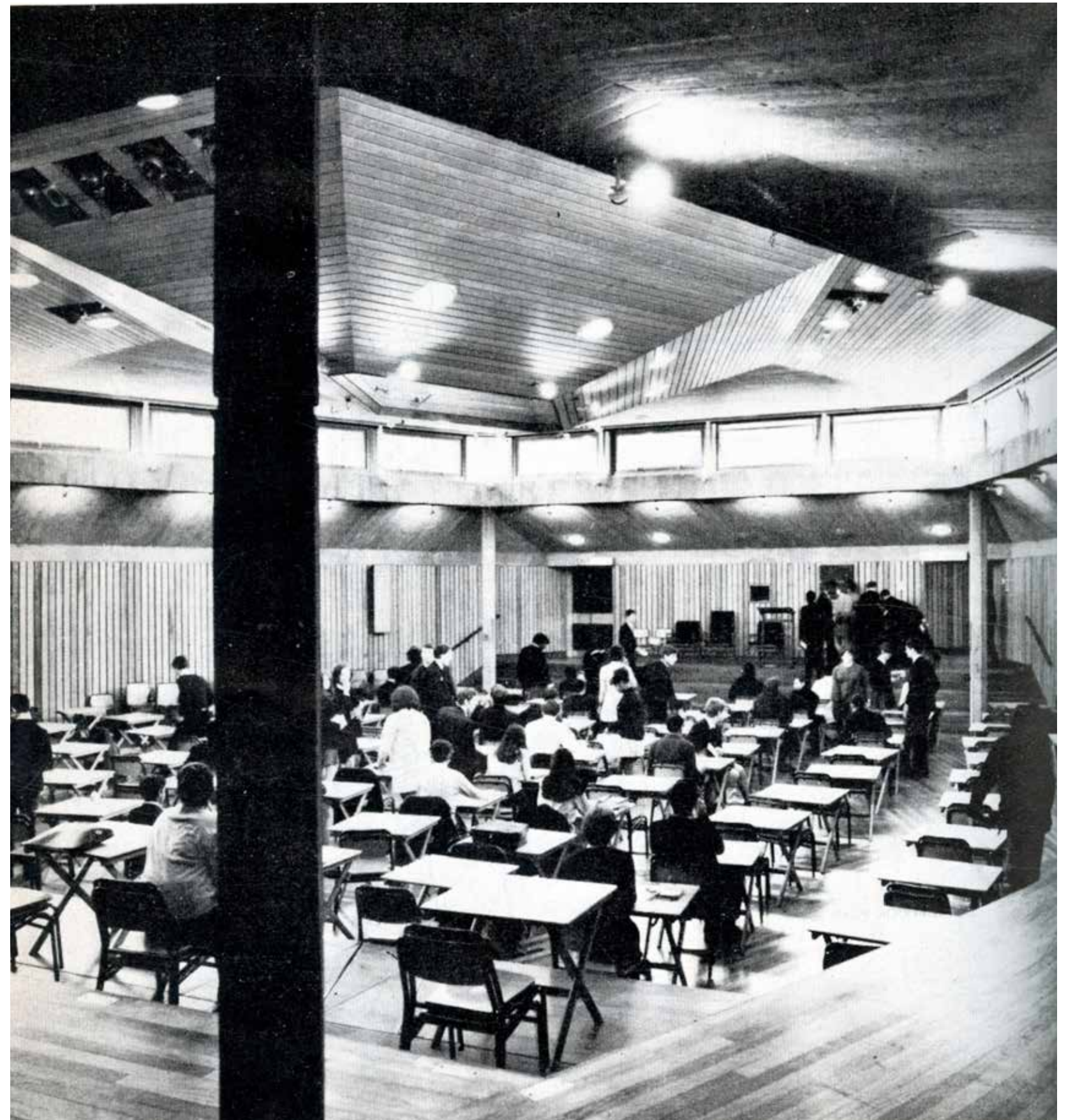
Design and location of lighting and other in situ electrical features

Lettering & Signage (*ideally*)

We recommend that a conservation management strategy be drawn up by the client, as the reference document upon which future interventions can be agreed, budgeted and implemented.

Whilst not included in the current proposed scope of works, we see huge potential for incremental enhancement of the heritage assets through the removal of insensitive accretions, such as the recent Assembly Hall lighting, and the repair of original features. These could include inset lighting, and the timber battens around the periphery, while deleterious alternations such as the wall view holes could be ameliorated through sensitive design.

A long term management strategy for Acland Burghley School should anticipate any potential threat to extant heritage features, and, within the context of a modern school operation, seek to introduce more sensitive maintenance and management approaches through complementary and sympathetic design. With the participation of an enthusiastic school community, the architectural features of this unusual and significant work can be allowed to shine once again.



15.1 Historic photo of the assembly hall showing the original lighting scheme and timber cladding to the periphery.