

**DRAFT**

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**  
LIBRARY DDA WORKS PPG15 JUSTIFICATION

Prepared for  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for the Estates and Facilities Division of University College London (UCL). UCL needs to make alterations to the Wilkins building to improve access to the library (on its upper floors) by the end of the year in order to comply with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

In December 2003 Alan Baxter & Associates produced draft Management Guidelines for UCL which identified what is significant about the UCL buildings and to help streamline the process of gaining future listed building consents. This report is based on these Management Guidelines but includes information from the recent opening-up works.

The Wilkins Building is Grade I listed. The new access proposals involve removing a staircase, one of which was inserted by TL Donaldson in 1849-51, and installing a lift (along with a new staircase) to provide access for the mobility impaired to the library. This report has been written to accompany an application for listed building consent, and to demonstrate that the alterations are required by the DDA, and are justifiable in terms of the criteria set out in PPG15.

Although the proposed works affect only one part of the building, it is important to see them in the wider context of the building. This document begins by outlining the history of the Wilkins building as a whole, from its construction in 1827-9, through various modifications (notably by Donaldson), its reconstruction and restoration by A E Richardson following war damage, to its present day form (Sections 2 and 3). Section 4 also looks at the building as a whole, defining what elements of it contribute most particularly to the 'outstanding' architectural and historic importance given by its Grade I listing. These wider sections allow the current proposals to be assessed both for their impact on and the access benefits that they will bring to the building as a whole. Section 5 therefore focuses on the proposals to provide Disability Access to the library, describing and justifying them according to the criteria of PPG15, showing how they achieve an acceptable balance between the legitimate access requirements of those with disabilities and the special architectural and historic importance of the building.

## 2. HISTORY OF THE WILKINS BUILDING

### As intended, 1825 – 1827

University College London came into formal existence in February 1826. By that time, however, the planning of a building suitable for the ‘godless institution in Gower Street’ was already well advanced, showing just how important it was to the college’s founders that the architecture of the college should emphasise its political and educational ideals.

A site immediately east of Gower Street, already partly laid out as a square (Carmathen Square), had been acquired in August 1825. Shortly afterwards, a public advertisement appeared, seeking designs for the new college buildings. Those submitted by William Wilkins were judged the best (fig. 2).

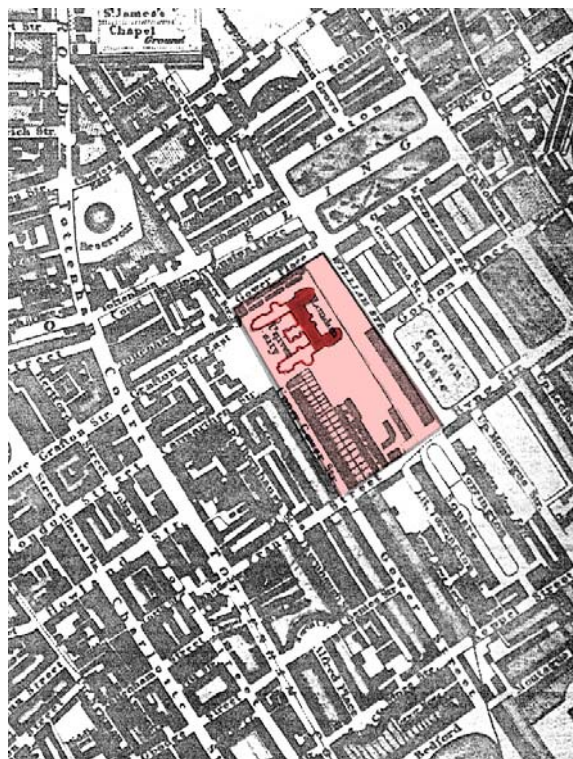


Fig. 1 - Historic map of 1827, showing unbuilt Wilkins plan for the Quadrangle, with projecting arms

Wilkins’ plans and elevations were grandiose. The Greek Revival style successfully epitomised the college’s secular approach: Pugin described it as ‘pagan’ and ‘in character with the intentions and principles of the institutions’. Notably, it also lacked a chapel.

In other respects, the new college was more traditional, being based around a quadrangle. The main feature was a 10 columned portico (the first of that size built in the UK), raised upon a rusticated plinth and approached by flights of stairs. It was modelled on the Temple of Jupiter Olympus at Athens (‘although its details will offer the more chastened characters of architecture strictly Grecian, in which the prototype [...] is deficient’). The portico led to a suite of grand public rooms, all double height, on the first, or principal floor. First came the Great Hall, 80’ x 50’ (24m x 15m), which projected forward of the main building line into the quadrangle.

Behind the Great Hall was an octagonal vestibule, surmounted by a dome, in a Renaissance style. It acted as a central space, with the council chamber to the east and, in the main block, the library to the south and a museum to the north. These spaces both measured 118’ x 50’ (35m x 15m).

On the ground floor beneath these grand rooms lay rooms connected with the everyday running of the college: lecture rooms, student assembly rooms and offices. On the east side, on either side of the dome, were open cloisters intended to allow students to take exercise in wet weather. At either end of this main block, semi-circular projections contained two lecture theatres with banked seating.

To the front, the main block was to be flanked by wings, with further lecture rooms, offices etc. Each had a small dome at its mid point and terminated with a projecting portico.

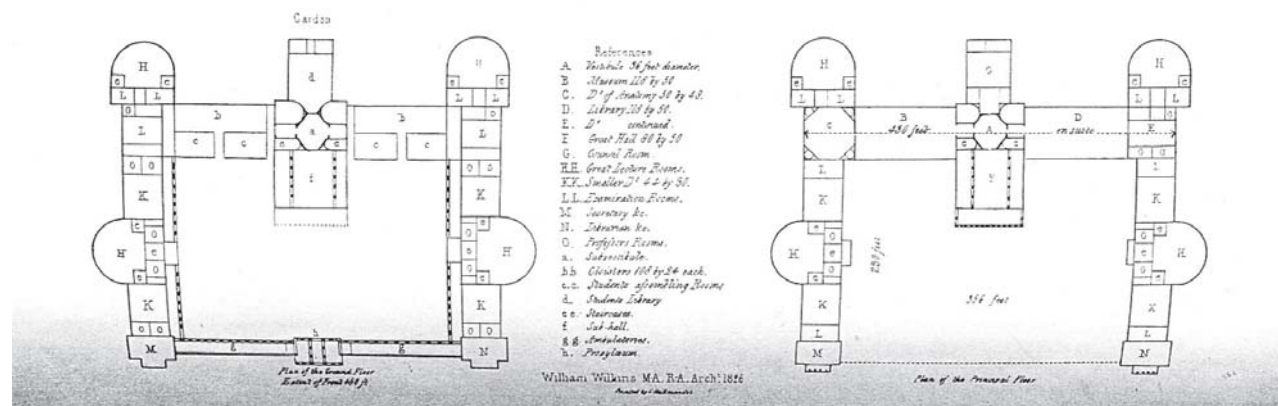
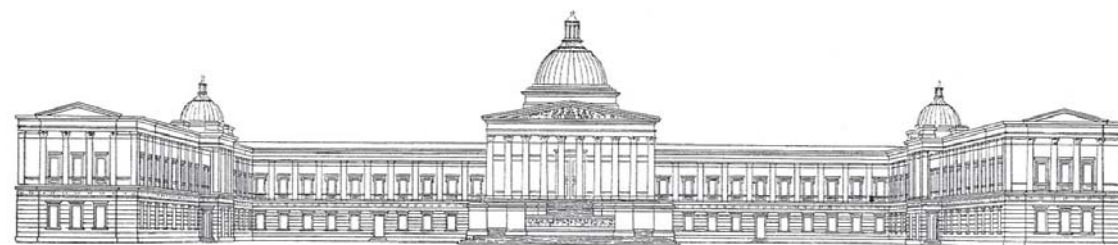


Fig. 2 - William Wilkins’ original scheme, with the Great Hall projecting into the Quadrangle

On the Gower Street side, the quadrangle was to be closed by an ambulatory with, at its centre, a Propylon, 'a noble portico of the Doric order of architecture'.

The new college in general, and its building in particular, were to be funded by the sale of shares. But investors fell short of expectations, forcing a number of economies to Wilkins' designs. An early modification was the omission of the projecting great hall. The portico was pushed back to its present position, so that it opened directly into the vestibule. The great hall moved back to replace the council chamber at the rear.

A contemporary source thought this change 'highly conducive to the grand and imposing effect of the whole *coup d'oeil*'. Later commentators have taken a different view: Pevsner notes the greater prominence given to the dome, 'Renaissance competing with Grecian'.

**William Wilkins (1778—1839)**

Wilkins was one of the leading figures in the English Greek Revival of the early 1800s, first as a classicist, then an archaeologist, then an architect. He was best known for his designs for the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square (18?) and the main buildings of University College in 1826.

He toured Greece, Asia Minor and Italy between 1801 and 1804, before returning to England and winning the competition for Downing College, Cambridge. Thomas Hope had assisted this success by writing a supporting pamphlet and the college was built between 1807 and 1820. Also from 1804, work began at Grange Park, where Wilkins adapted the monumental Greek temple language to a private house set in a landscape.

In 1826 his neo-Grecian design won the competition for the new University College in Gower Street in London, although the built scheme was reduced for reasons of cost. A few years after UCL, his scheme for the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square was built between 1832 and 1838.

He was also known as a scholar, publishing *Antiquities of Magna Graecia* in 1807, *Atheniensi*a in 1816, *Civil Architecture of Vitruvius* in 1812 and 1817 and finally *Prolusiones Architectonicae* in 1837.

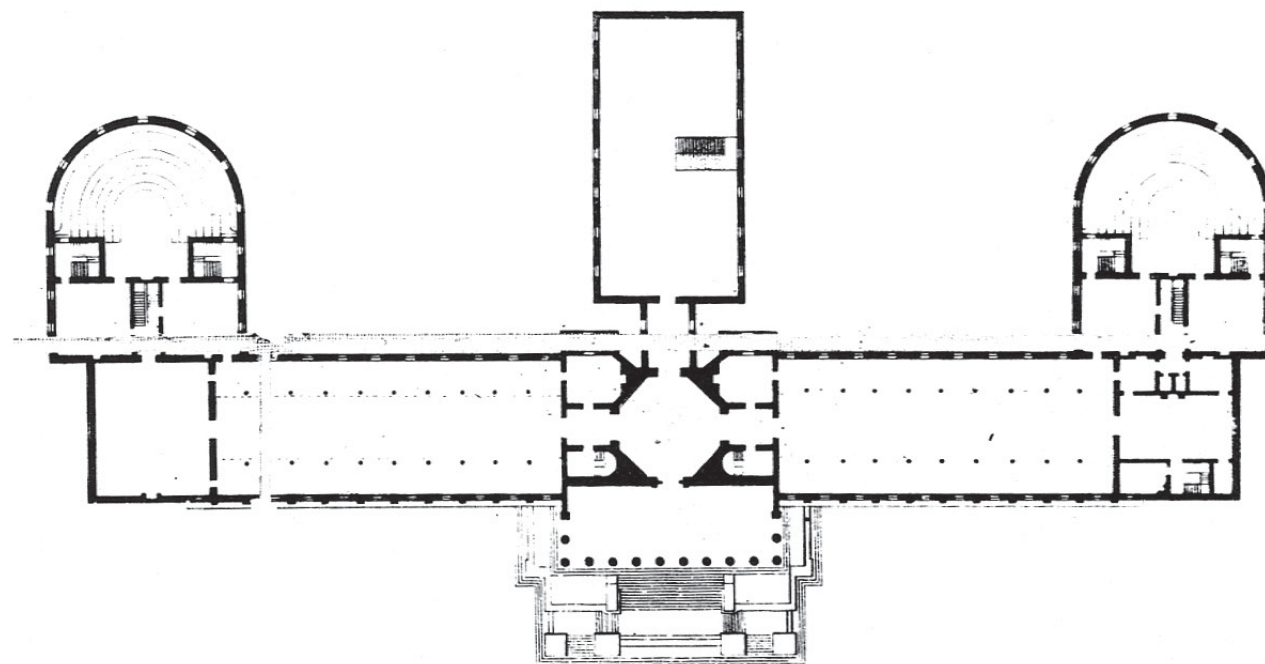


Fig. 3 - Plan of the Wilkins building, as built, with the Great Hall moved behind the dome

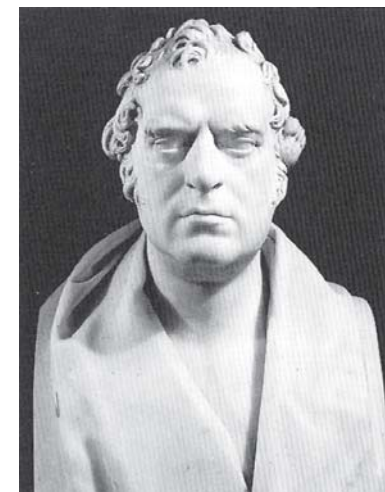


Fig. 4 - Bust of William Wilkins' by E.H. Bailey (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

### As built, 1827 – 1829

Despite serious cash shortages – the builders' estimate of £110,000 represented most of the college's resources – construction started early in 1827; the Duke of Sussex laid the foundation stone on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

Further economies were required, but the college decided that the architectural statement made by Wilkins' building should not be compromised (at least externally) by further modification: 'a great design suited to the wants, the wealth and the magnitude of the population for whom the institution is intended' was more important 'than one commensurate with our present means'. Accordingly, the flanking wings, propylon and ambulatory were postponed until funds became available (fig. 3).

The new college's first academic session (albeit with fewer students than anticipated) began in October 1828, though the portico and dome were not completed until the following year. The great hall, now to the rear of the vestibule, remained unfinished.



Fig. 5 - 1833 view, depicting the early College building and the school playground

It is fortunate that the Strang print room contains a set of Wilkins' drawing relating to the as-built scheme. These throw interesting light on the nature of the double height museum and library spaces, and on the slightly odd structural arrangement by which the load of the roof was transferred via cast iron columns (an economy on the much grander columns that Wilkins wanted) to the central spine wall of the ground floor. Wilkins' original intention was to keep the ground floor free of columns but (perhaps because of concerns of the loading from the library above) a double line of columns was inserted in the south wing. Their location is marked in pencil on Wilkins' drawings (fig. 6).

### Early years, 1829 – 1849

The college struggled financially and academically in its early years and this affected the buildings. The great hall remained incomplete; in 1836 it burned down. The library was unable to move into its intended great space, but instead occupied a smaller room at the south end (the later Mocatta Library). In 1831, the college dispensed with its librarian as an economy measure.

Rather more successful was University College School, which was started in 1830. Its playground was on the site of the intended south wing and it soon took over the great library. It may have been at this period that a floor was inserted into the library's double height space to provide classrooms.

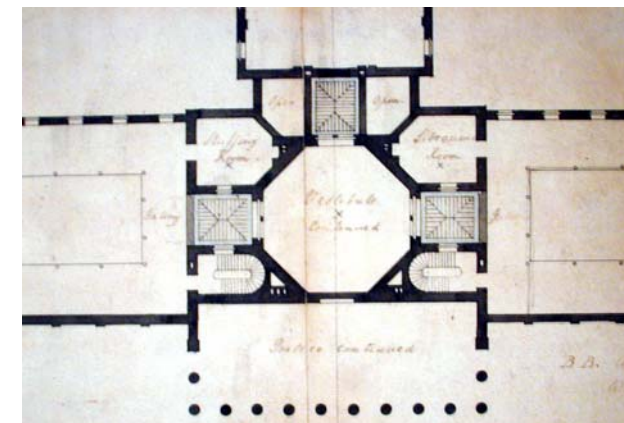


Fig. 6 - Plan of dome area as built, showing galleries for the flanking library and museum

**Thomas Donaldson (1795—1885)**

Thomas Leverton Donaldson was born in London, the eldest son of an architect. He was a pioneer in the academic study of architecture and played a key role in the founding of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was involved in substantial work to Wilkins' main building at UCL, and is also known for designing All Saints Church in Gordon Street, London.

On leaving school, he had travelled to the Cape of Good Hope and worked as a clerk in the office of a merchant, before going as a volunteer in an expedition to attack the French-controlled island of Mauritius. Back in London, he worked in his father's office and later acquired experience during a tour in Italy and Greece. His first significant work was the church of Holy Trinity in South Kensington, London, built in 1826-1829.

In 1841 he became the first Professor of Architecture at UCL, and remained in this post until 1865. In addition to his work on the Flaxman Gallery and library buildings in the college, he was involved with the Great Exhibition of 1851. He died in London in 1885.



Fig. 7 - Thomas L. Donaldson, UCL's first Professor of Architecture, in the RIBA medal established in his honour

**T.L. Donaldson and the Flaxman Gallery, 1849 – 1851**

By the 1840s, the college was slightly more secure and able to contemplate some further building. In 1846, the country's first purpose built chemistry teaching laboratory was built to the east of the Wilkins building. The architect was T.L. Donaldson, first holder of the chair of architecture and the first of a long line of UCL professors to leave his mark on the college buildings.

His next projects were a Hall of Residence in Gordon Square and, more significantly, a new library on the site of Wilkins' burnt out and incomplete Great Hall. The footprint of the new building was broadly the same, but Donaldson's building varied in one important respect. Whereas Wilkins had designed the great hall to be on the same level as the vestibule, Donaldson (perhaps to accommodate higher basement rooms) raised his library 11 steps above Wilkins' principal floor level. There was a similar difference in ground floor levels.

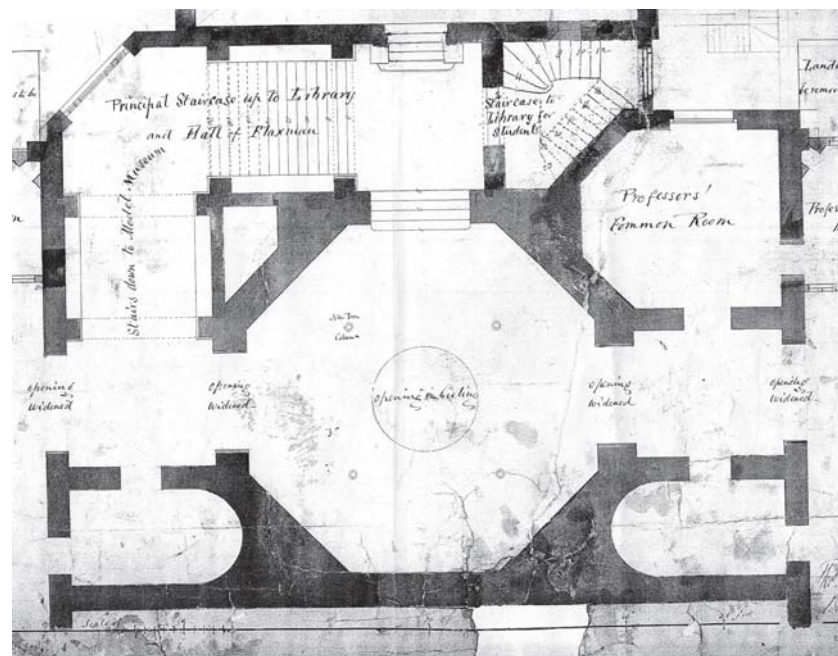


Fig. 8 - The dome area showing the alterations made in 1849 by T. L. Donaldson, for the Flaxman Gallery and to link to his new library

At the same time, Donaldson set out to remedy a perceived fault in Wilkins' planning: the lack of links between the grand rooms of the principal floor and the more everyday rooms of the ground floor. Wilkins had relied on two fairly small stairs, almost service stairs, behind the portico. Donaldson added a 'principal stair' (the current way up to the library) on the north-east side of the vestibule. Its more generous proportions necessitated a rebuilding of the junction between the vestibule and his new library. At the same time, Donaldson widened the door openings from the octagon to the cloister. He also created a visual link between ground and principal floors, by means of a glazed oculus. New columns at ground floor level were inserted, perhaps to support the floor (fig. 8).

In the south-east corner of the octagon, opposite the new 'principal stair', a more modest and concealed staircase was inserted to allow students to reach the library.

In 1847 the college was given the collection of casts and pictures built up by John Flaxman and it determined to display them in the vestibule, on the new principal stair and in an adjoining room<sup>2</sup>. The centrepiece was the large group of *St Michael conquering Satan* which stood on the glazed oculus, beneath the dome. The casts were fixed to the wall. Some, fairly minor architectural alterations were needed: the windows of the dome were enlarged to improve the lighting and a niche was created by blocking the doorway to Wilkins' north stair. Donaldson received advice on the decoration from Sir Charles Eastlake (first director of the National Gallery – another Wilkins Building) and the architect C.R. Cockerell. After some debate, the statue of Flaxman, now at the entrance to the south cloister, was positioned on the lower landing of the principal stair.

Paint investigation has recently allowed the reconstruction of the original (and subsequent) decorative schemes.

**The evolving building, 1850 – 1941**

The late 1860s and 1870s saw a spate of new building including, at last, the north and south flanking wings of the quadrangle. Wilkins' scheme was not carried out. Instead, Donaldson's successor as professor, T. Hayter Lewis designed buildings which harmonised successfully with the main building, but substituted a Corinthian half rotunda for Wilkins' domes at the mid-point of each façade.

University College School moved into the south wing and this allowed the library to move into the space that Wilkins had intended for it. However, it occupied the space in a very different way: the original double height had possibly already been divided by the insertion of a new (2<sup>nd</sup>) floor and by partitions into smaller rooms. This arrangement perfectly suited the later 19<sup>th</sup> century arrangement of the library which was classified and arranged in separate rooms under the control of the librarian.

In 1862, the cloister openings were glazed (fig.10).

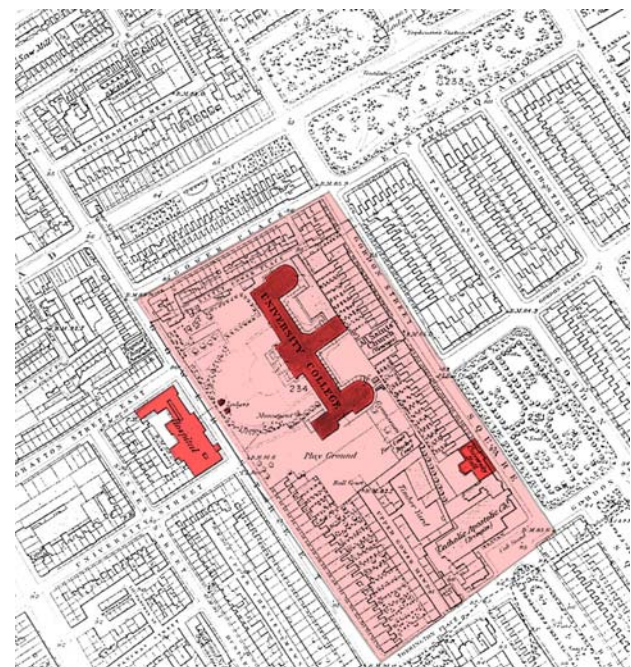


Fig. 9 - Historic map of 1870, showing first addition to South Wing



Fig. 10 - A view of the South Cloisters between the two world wars. In Richardson's post-war reconstruction the pillars down the centre were not replaced.



Fig.11 - The main quadrangle in 1915



### Restoration and reconstruction, 1945 – 1956

The task of rebuilding the college after the war fell (inevitably) to A. E. Richardson, Professor of Architecture from 1919 – 1946. Richardson had an extensive private practice and had already designed new buildings for the college. Furthermore, he was a champion of the Greek Revival and an admirer of Wilkins. It was appropriate, therefore, for him to carry out the post-war rebuilding.

#### Albert Richardson (1880—1964)

In a career spanning over 60 years, Sir Albert Richardson was at various times Professor of Architecture at UCL, President of the Royal Academy and Editor of the *Architect's Journal*.

He was born in London, and worked as both an architect and teacher from an early age. In 1906 he set up practice as Richardson and Gill, a partnership that lasted until 1939. During this time, he designed many buildings in London and elsewhere, including many in and around the UCL campus.



Fig. 14 - A. E. Richardson

The Architecture school at UCL moved to Cambridge for the duration of the Second World War, and following 1945 Richardson was heavily involved in the reconstruction of many churches, offices and public buildings throughout London. These projects included the devastated main buildings of UCL, where he completely redesigned the north and south pavilions.

Richardson is perhaps best known for the design of Bracken House for the *Financial Times* in 1954-8, which became the first building of the post-war period to be listed. He was awarded the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture in 1947, and elected President of the Royal Academy in 1954.

He died in London in 1964.

A set of plans in the college archive, dated to 1914 (fig. 13), shows the extent to which Wilkins' concept of open spaces on his principal floor had been all but destroyed. Only the north wing remained open to the roof, though the galleries were gradually extended until only two octagonal light wells remained and half of the room had been partitioned off and appropriated as the Science Library.

The 1914 plans show a draft lobby in the main portico, indicating that Wilkins' original principal entrance was still in use. It also shows the architectural amendments made by Donaldson to house the Flaxman collection and the location of some of the statues. Apparently absent is *St Michael overcoming Satan* which, by 1937, had been moved to the portico<sup>3</sup>.

In September 1940 and April 1941 UCL was seriously damaged by bombing. Damage was most severe in the main block, the Donaldson library and the area to the rear. Photographs show that the dome and the roof of the main block were burned off and the interior almost totally destroyed (fig. 12). Recent investigations have shown that the Portland stone treads of Donaldson's stair were also likely to have been bomb damaged, as were many of the Flaxman casts. Only the external walls still stood.

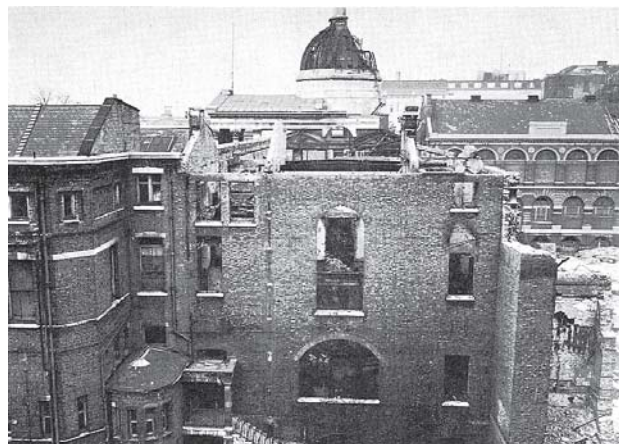


Fig. 12 - Bomb damage to the Wilkins building, looking north

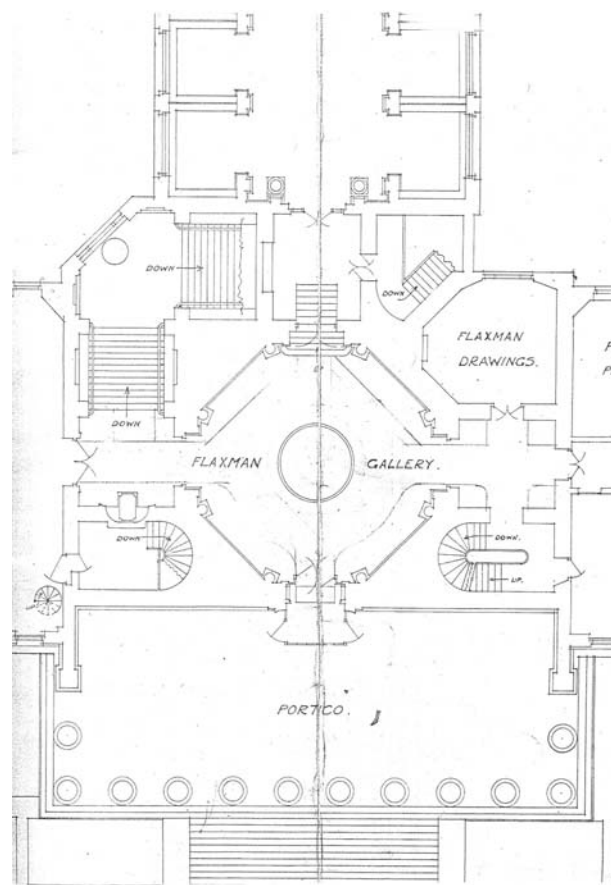


Fig. 13 - The Flaxman Gallery in 1914—15, from a survey by F. M. Simpson

Richardson's scheme for UCL combined extensive new building (mostly unrealised) together with the restoration of Wilkins' gutted main building and Donaldson's library. In the former, however, the damage to the interior had been too great to restore, so that new building behind the restored facades was unavoidable.

All the floors were rebuilt in concrete (with over-ceiling heating), thus making permanent the hitherto ad-hoc in-filling of Wilkins' double height spaces. The columns in the south cloister were now structurally redundant and could be removed. Those higher up were also removed and replaced by walls which formed the first and second floor central corridors, as well as taking the weight of the entirely new roof and providing vertical vents for an air-cooling system. A void above the corridor allowed horizontal distribution of services (fig. 16).

The south east corner of the octagon was rebuilt to match Donaldson's north-east corner and to contain an enlarged room for the library. Elsewhere, the subdivision of the library into its departmental components was reflected in the subdivision of both first and second floors into smaller rooms, opening off the new central corridor (fig. 15).

At the north and south ends of Wilkins' building, the two semi-circular projections were completely rebuilt by Richardson in the style of Sir John Soane (fig. 17).

Finally Richardson restored Donaldson's library and the Flaxman Gallery. The extent of works to Donaldson's stairs has been revealed by the recent opening-up works. These showed a layer of concrete (presumed to be post-war) laid over the damaged Portland Stone steps. The current wooden treads are laid onto this concrete and the handrail is set into it.

The restoration was completed in 1956. Two years previously, the building had been added to the statutory list of buildings of national architectural and historical importance.



Fig. 15 - The Library main corridor, rebuilt by A. E. Richardson.



Fig. 17 - Richardson's new library space at the north end

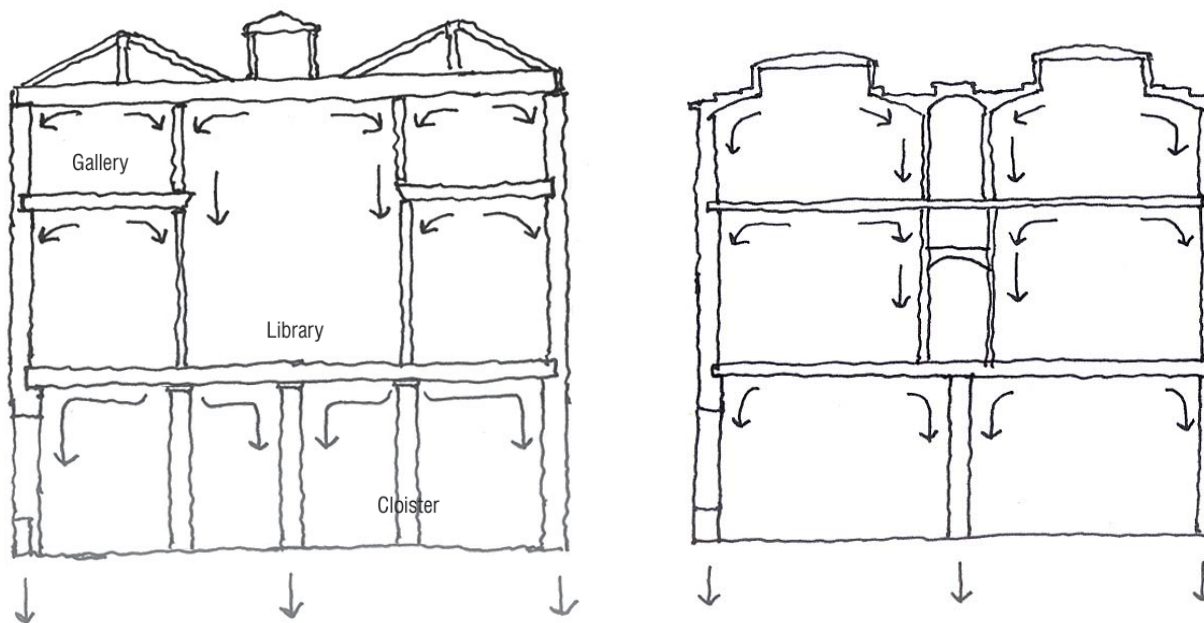


Fig. 16 - Cross sections of Wilkins' original and Richardson's reconstructed library

### 3. THE WILKINS BUILDING TODAY

Since Richardson completed his works of restoration and rebuilding in 1956, no significant structural changes have been made. In 1972, *St Michael overcoming Satan* was moved to the V&A, together with all the Flaxman casts except those in the Gallery. In 1986, the Flaxman Gallery was redecorated in a rich, mid-19th century scheme. Eight years later, *St Michael overcoming Satan* returned from the V&A, causing the oculus to be blocked. The casts were also returned but were not remounted (fig. 18).

In the library, some new reading rooms have been created and new shelving installed. The need for security has also increased and a book detection barrier has been installed on the landing of Donaldson's stair.



Fig. 18 - Photograph of *St. Michael conquering Satan* in its original position in the Dome

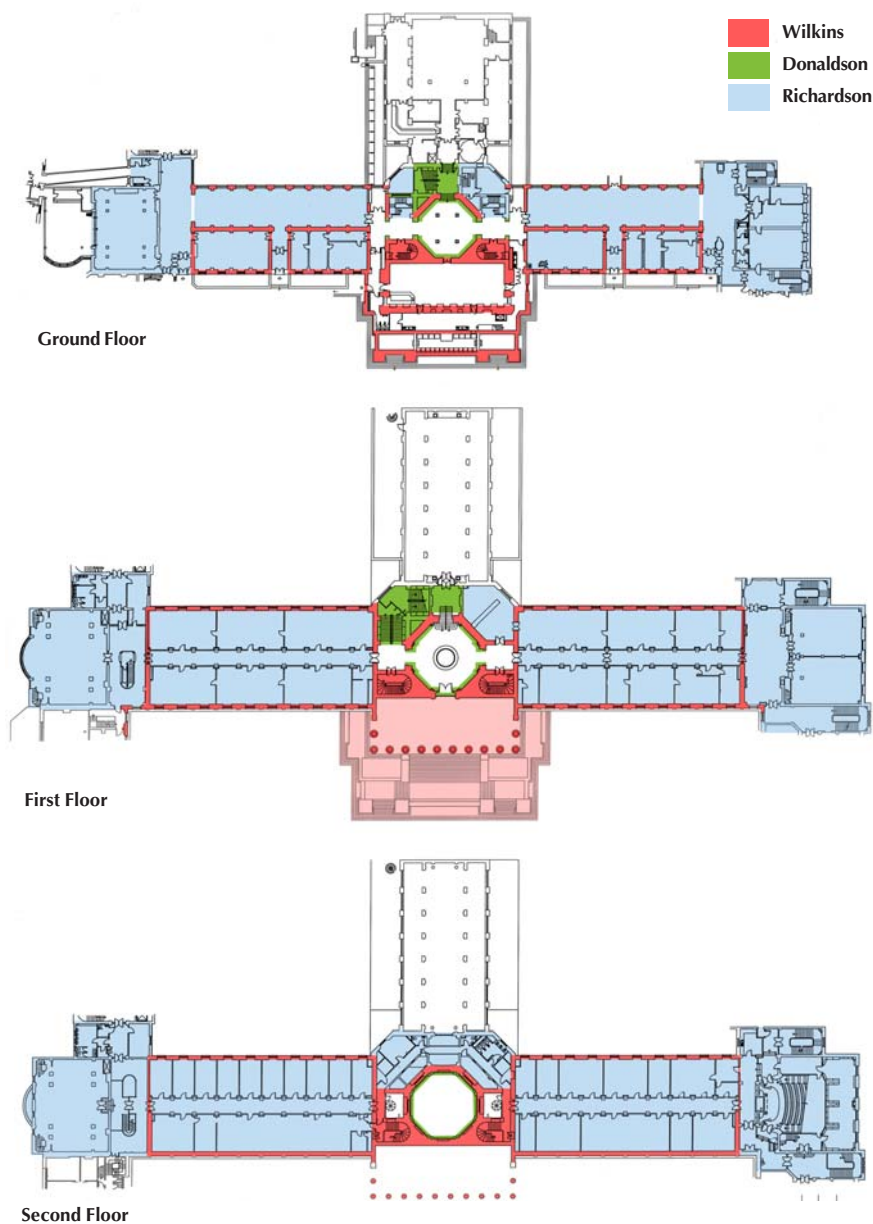


Fig. 19 - The Wilkins Building: dates of fabric

Architecturally and structurally, the Wilkins building divides into five distinct areas:

- **The principal (east) façade of Portland stone and the rear (west) façade of brick.** Though restored by Richardson, these are essentially as Wilkins intended them. The fabric too is predominantly early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Richardson's repairs to the rear elevation are clearly distinguishable).
- **The dome area.** The dome itself was largely rebuilt and the area generally restored by Richardson following war damage. Otherwise it remains the vestibule that Wilkins intended as the core of this building, as modified by Donaldson with the insertion of the new 'principal staircase', the stairs to the new library and the creation of the Flaxman gallery. Recent paint investigation in the gallery revealed evidence for earlier schemes; similar evidence may survive on the stairs and in the ground floor octagon.

Richardson remodelled the south-east corner of the dome area (fig. 20), creating and fitting out the current Main Issue Desk room. The link bridge at 2<sup>nd</sup> floor level is also his, as (probably) are decorative details such as the handrails on the stairs and elsewhere.

- **The north and south wing ground floor interiors:** Walls and plan form are essentially as Wilkins intended, most notably (despite later glazing) the cloisters where Richardson's removal of the columns probably restored the original concept. Floors and ceilings were rebuilt by Richardson on the same level. With the exception of the Flaxman statues and Jeremy Bentham, all fixtures and finishes are by Richardson.

- **The north and south wing first and second floors, and roof:** Behind the facades, these are entirely Richardson rebuildings, with the new central corridor replacing the columns, and the layout of small rooms reflecting the library compromise of 1907, which created separate subject rooms.
- **The north and south ends of the Wilkins building:** These are entirely by Richardson, replacing the bombed out ruins of Wilkins' semi-circular lecture rooms. The layout of spaces in these areas indicate that Richardson was less constrained by the need to create small library rooms and was able to introduce more interesting double height spaces.



Fig. 20 - Richardson rebuilt the junction between the Wilkins building (right) and Donaldson's Library (left) and added the low level colonnade. Pale brickwork (top left) shows areas rebuilt after bomb damage

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source uncertain, but a magazine or newspaper. Photocopy in Strang Print Room annotated 'Enclosed in letter from W. Wilkins, 2 June 1827. UCL College Correspondence no. 213. Said to be by a 'friend of W'.

<sup>2</sup> For the information on the Flaxman Collection, I am indebted to Dr Eckart Marchand, UCL Department of History of Art, who has been researching its history.

<sup>3</sup> It was subsequently moved to the Science Library and the north junction, before going to the V&A in 1972. It returned to its current position in 1994, when Richardson's oculus was closed.

## 4. SIGNIFICANCE

William Wilkins' building is listed at Grade I, putting it in the top 2.5% of architecturally and historically significant buildings in England. As para. 3.6 of PPG 15 states, 'These buildings [Grade I and II\*] are of particularly great importance to the nation's built heritage: their significance will generally be beyond dispute'.

The list description, recently revised, also includes the later buildings around the quadrangle (and the attached Physics Building), but it is clear that the focus is Wilkins. This is rightly so, as the principal reason for the Grade I listing is that it is a triumphant piece of architecture, translating into stone UCL's secular principles and aspirations as London's first University. As discussed above, the college's founders attached great importance to the message it gave. The choice of the Greek Revival style was deliberate, as was their determination to build the principal façade as designed by Wilkins. The result may later have been described as 'the grandest entrance in London with nothing behind it', but at the time its message was clear<sup>1</sup>.

It is also – despite the compromises forced on him – William Wilkins' best work, described by Pevsner as 'an impressively monumental composition, more concentrated and intense than [his] later National Gallery and more ornate than his earlier Downing College, Cambridge'. It represents almost the final flowering of the Greek Revival, before Gothic swept it away.

The Grade I listing applies to the whole building, but it is acknowledged that not all parts are necessarily of the same degree of importance. Although, as para C.5 of PPG 15 points out, 'subsequent additions to historic buildings are often of interest in their own right, as part of the building's organic history', it is often possible to establish a hierarchy of significance. This can in turn form a reliable base planning the building's future.

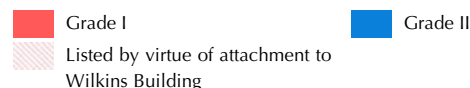
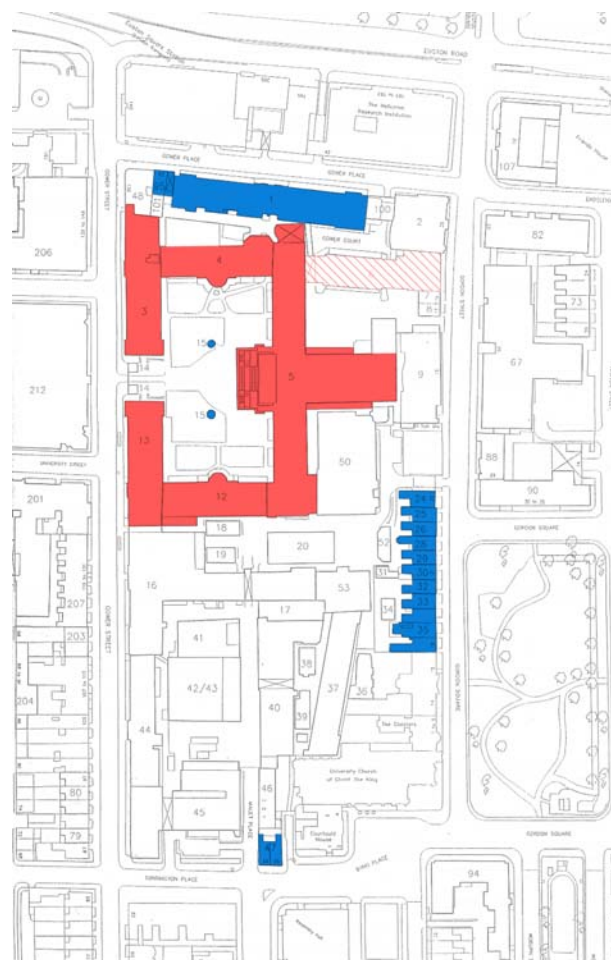


Fig. 21 - Listed buildings on the main UCL campus

The criteria for assessing relative importance are given in para 6.10 of PPG15. They are:

- **architectural interest:** the lists are meant to include all buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; also important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;
- **historic interest:** this includes buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history;
- **close historical association:** with nationally important people or events;
- **group value,** especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).

In addition, age and rarity are significant considerations. As paragraph 6.11 of PPG notes: 'most buildings of about 1700 to 1840 are listed, though some selection is necessary. After about 1840, [...] greater selection is necessary to identify the best examples of particular building types, and only buildings of definite quality are listed. For the same reasons, only selected buildings for the period after 1914 are listed'.

In applying these criteria to the elements of the building defined in section 3, it is clear that none of the later alterations matches up to the architectural and historical importance of Wilkins' original work. On their own, they would not merit Grade I listing.

The following levels of significance have been defined:

- **Highly Significant Areas**

**The main Wilkins façade** (together with the dome behind) is clearly of the highest importance for its architectural interest, its historic interest in the founding of UCL and its group value in the quadrangle.

**The Flaxman Gallery** is highly significant as the only surviving part of the Wilkins' suite of public rooms on the principal floor. The Flaxman collection displayed in it has considerable art historical and historical interest, both in itself (it is the only area where the casts have remained *in situ*) and for the history of its display, reinforced by the survival of earlier decorative schemes beneath later paint layers.

The overall architectural effect of the gallery has been somewhat compromised by the closure of the Portico entrance, as well as loss of the flanking double height spaces – library and museum – for which it was intended as a vestibule.

This high level of significance also applies to the surviving original fabric throughout the dome area.

- **Significant Areas**

**Donaldson's principal staircase of 1849, the stairs up to his library and the Octagon** represent an important phase architecturally – the opening of new links between ground and principal floors – and historically – as UCL's finances and academic standing improved sufficiently to allow it to expand.

T.L. Donaldson was a competent architect, but he is better remembered for his academic studies and role in the foundation of the RIBA than for his buildings. The principal stair is not, in itself, an impressive space. As recent investigations have shown it was significantly altered after (probable) war damage when elements such as the wooden treads and central handrail were added.

On the ground floor of the north and south wings **the cloisters** are significant for their plan form and for their spaces, surviving as Wilkins intended, despite later 19<sup>th</sup> century glazing and the post-war floors and ceilings. If anything one can argue that Richardson's removal of the columns in the south wing actually recreates Wilkins' intentions. Other ground floor spaces retain Wilkins' general plan form, particularly the pattern of entrances in the centre of each wing. The various statues (including that of Flaxman) and the college's celebrated autoicon of Jeremy Bentham are clearly individually of the highest significance, but are not in their original locations.

**The rear elevation** is less significant than the main elevation. It was intended to face the backs of house on Gordon Street, lacks any architectural enrichment and has been much restored. The wartime destruction of the two protruding semi-circular lecture theatres, added to the loss of Wilkins' proposed great hall, means that the architectural composition of the rear of the building has been lost.

Of Richardson's work on the Wilkins' block, his entirely **new library additions at the north and south ends** are the most significant, for it was here that he was less constrained by the demands of the library for smaller rooms. Pevsner praises '*the elegant, shallow Soanian dome with central lantern*' of the double height reading room at the north end. It is in these areas too that the original reading desks and bookcase, along with other woodwork, are most intact.

- **Less Significant Areas**

**The first and second floors of the north and south wings** (the library) have been seriously compromised. The insertion of floors and partitions (made permanent by Richardson) means that the original character of Wilkins' double height spaces has been lost. The architecture of Richardson in this area is entirely utilitarian. The moving of original shelves and desks and the addition of newer, less good shelving, has cluttered rooms and corridors, and compromised any unity which might once have existed. The servicing (over-ceiling heating and cool air) is not of any technological interest.

**The basements** preserve the original plan form but are not important spaces.

These levels of significance have been marked on Fig. 22

**(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Harte, N. and North, J., *The World of UCL, 1828-1990*, p.26.

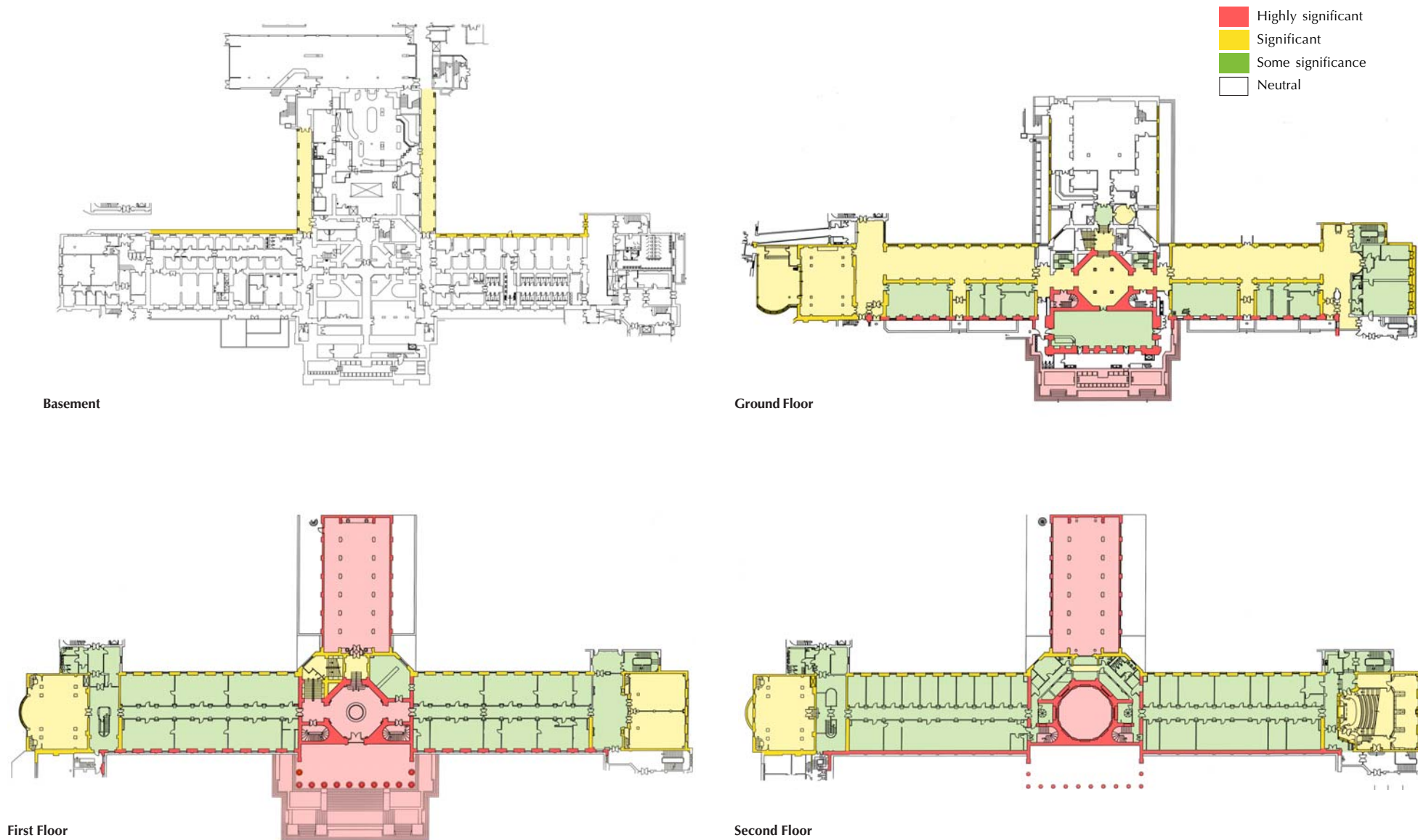


Fig. 22 - Wilkins building: levels of significance

## 5. IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

### Description of the proposals

The current proposals only affect a small area of the building, but it is important to understand them in their wider context. The following is an outline of the proposals in terms of their impact on the historic fabric; a full description of the proposals is found elsewhere in the application.

In order to provide all students with equal access to the library and comply with the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), a lift needs to be installed in the Wilkins building. The proposals to comply with the DDA include the removal of a staircase inserted by Donaldson in 1849-51 (the principal stairs leading to the library) and the post-war north-east basement stairs. This will make space for the lift, connecting all floors, and a new staircase between the ground and first floors. This staircase will include a half-landing to allow access to the lift from the first floor and to accommodate some new lavatories on the ground floor. The library security system will be located on the ground floor, close to the entrance to the lift and the bottom of the new stairs.

The impacts of the proposals on the existing historic fabric are as follows.

**Basement:** The proposals entail the removal of some brick work in the basement to make space for the lift shaft. This area is of 'neutral' significance.

**Ground Floor:** The proposals include the removal of the Donaldson staircase to make space for a lift and new staircase. The north-east basement staircase and some of the brickwork would also be removed to make space for the lift shaft, which will be installed in an existing ventilation shaft, and for access to the lift. The staircases and these walls have been identified as a 'significant' part of the building.

**First Floor:** The principal Donaldson staircase leads to the first floor and has been identified as a 'significant' part of the building. The installation of the lift would also require the removal of some 'significant' brickwork added by Donaldson and Richardson, and possibly a small amount of Wilkins' original brickwork, which has been identified as 'highly significant'.

**Second Floor:** The installation of the lift would have a limited impact on fabric identified as of 'some significance' on the second floor.

### PPG15 Justification

The Disability Discrimination Act stipulates that:

"a provider of services discriminates against a disabled person if -

(a) for a reason which relates to the disabled person's disability, he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat others to whom that reason does not or would not apply; and

(b) he cannot show that the treatment in question is justified." (20. 1)

The current access arrangements treat disabled students less favourably than other students. There is a lift in the south wing but users must ring a bell to be let in by a member of staff in order to gain access to the main library. This lift does not provide access to the Donaldson Library, and as a result people who are mobility impaired are unable to use this library. Listed buildings are not exempt from the DDA, and so in order to comply with the DDA by the end of the year, alternative arrangements must be made soon.

PPG15 states that:

"It is important in principle that disabled people should have dignified easy access to and within historic buildings...it should normally be possible to plan suitable access for disabled people without compromising a building's special interest." (3.28)

However, in this case the possibilities are limited. In order to provide equal access for all users a lift needs to be installed in the central vestibule area, close to the main staircase between the ground floor and library. The central vestibule area is a sole survivor of Wilkins' original concept and is a significant part of the building, and so it will be difficult to install a lift without having an impact on some fabric of architectural and historic significance. The location for the lift has been chosen to maximise the benefits of the new access, whilst minimising the impact on the historic fabric of the building.

Alternative locations for the lift have been considered in detail and the proposed location is judged to be the best:

- The lift would be installed in an existing ventilation shaft, minimising the impact on the historic fabric.
- The lift would be adjacent to the new main staircase, providing lift users with the same experience as stair users, as required by the DDA.
- The same security system would manage access to the library for both stair and lift users on the ground floor. This is preferred by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) because it removes the current "pinch point", where the current library security is, on the half-landing.
- The lift would also provide access to all levels including the Donaldson library, which has previously been inaccessible to people who are mobility impaired.
- The LFEPA said that the removal of the north-east basement staircase is "the preferred option with minimum disruption to evacuation procedures". The north-east basement staircase is not currently a major fire escape, and as there are alternative fire-exits nearby it is safe to remove it. The south, primary access stair to the basement will therefore be retained.
- New lavatories can be accommodated on the ground floor under the new staircase half-landing.



The architects considered installing the lift on the opposite side of the dome, which would have the advantage of retaining the Donaldson staircase, but this idea was rejected for a number of reasons:

- The first floor exit from the lift would not be adjacent to the new stairs, and would require a separate security system; lift and stair users would have a different experience when accessing the library, counter to the requirements of the DDA.
- This location would also reduce library space on the first floor.
- The LFEPA raised objections to the removal of the south basement staircase because it is in a busier part of the building and is currently a significant fire escape. Fire-exit routes on the ground floor would also be extended.
- There were unresolved space issues about adding a lift lobby and mezzanine providing access to the Donaldson library
- The primary access stair between the ground floor and basement would also be lost.

The requirements of the DDA need to be balanced with preserving the special interest of the Wilkins building. PPG15 states that the “importance of the building” (section 3.5.i) should be considered when assessing an application for listed building consent. The Wilkins building is a Grade I listed building, and as such has been identified as of “outstanding” architectural and historic interest.

“The particular physical features for the building...which justify its inclusion in the list” (PPG 15 section 3.5.ii) should also be considered when assessing applications for listed building consent. The proposals principally affect the Donaldson staircase, which has been identified as a ‘significant’ part of the building. However, this significance stems from the staircase’s historic associations rather than any special intrinsic architectural or aesthetic value. The staircase is significant because it illustrates how Donaldson improved access between floors and solved flaws in Wilkins original design. The recent opening-up work also revealed that much of the existing fabric is not original. Although the Portland Stone steps date from 1849, it is likely that the staircase was badly damaged by bombs during the Second World War (see fig. 12). Richardson altered the staircase in 1946 during his repairs programme; he added a layer of concrete above the Portland Stone and some new oak treads (see fig. 23). Although holes for original balustrades are visible in the stone steps, the current central handrail is fixed into concrete, and so is probably also post-war. The half-landing at the bottom of the staircase is made from reinforced concrete, which reveals the extent of the post-war work.

In normal circumstances the removal of the Donaldson staircase would be hard to justify; however, by providing equal access to the libraries for all, “the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community” (PPG 15, section 3.5.iv.) and meet the requirements of the DDA.

The new stair and lift, finally, have been designed to complement the Grade I building. The stair’s helical form will make of the most of the double height space created by the removal of the existing stairs. Its solid structure (of in-situ concrete) and its use of finishing materials (stone finishings and plaster painted to match the existing) will blend with the fabric of the existing building.

The use of frameless glass for the balustrades and stainless steel and bronze handrails reinforce the overall light-weight yet sturdy appearance of the staircase. Together with the new library entrance and security barriers and the lift, and will signal the new work as a contemporary addition to Wilkins’ building.

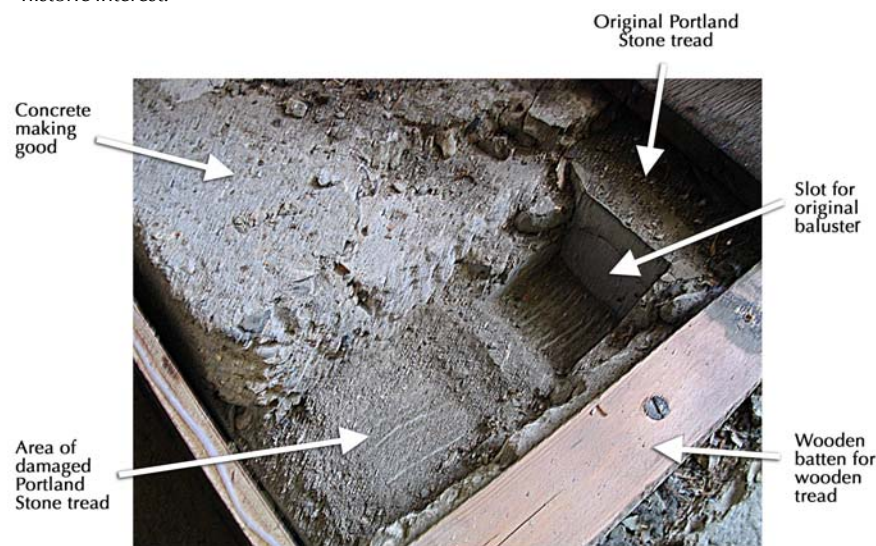


Fig. 23 - Opening-up works detail

## 6. CONCLUSION

Access between floors has always been a problem in the Wilkins building. The lack of connection between the ground and upper floors was a flaw in Wilkins' original design which Donaldson resolved in 1849-51 by adding a new staircase. People's requirements have evolved since then. The 1995 DDA requires that disabled people are provided with equal access to the library. The access arrangements in the Wilkins building currently contravene the DDA, and the new proposals will mean that UCL will be brought into compliance. Essentially, the current proposals are a continuation in a process, began with Donaldson's alterations, to resolve an access issue intrinsic to Wilkin's original design.

Although much altered, the Wilkins building is Grade I listed, and it is inevitable that work to provide disabled access will have an impact on the historic fabric. However, the location of the new lift has been carefully chosen so that whilst it complies with the DDA, it minimises impact on the most significant parts of the building. The proposals provide the best solution for compliance with the DDA, and for the maintenance of the building's architectural and historic importance.

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