

Allie Mills

**University of Huddersfield**

**That which is Not Yet There**

**Keywords**

National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Sir Alec Clegg

Bretton Hall College

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**Abstract**

*In 1949 Bretton Hall College was founded as a Teacher Training College designed for the promotion of art education in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It opened with fifty six students and by 1964 the college had expanded significantly resulting in an extensive building programme encompassing nine student hostels, a music block, gymnasium, sanatorium, dining hall, library and Principal's residence. Fifty years on (in 2014), the site is earmarked for development and many of the 1964 buildings are potentially going to be demolished. This research will adopt a psychogeographical approach to the site of the college by transposing the 1964 campus map onto the existing landscape to produce a juxtaposition of narratives that exist in the space and supported by secondary data from the National Education Arts Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (NAEA). This retrieval method – allowing what was once there and what is there now – creates a new archive of experience*

*before the 1964 campus map route disappears forever.*

## **Introduction**

In 1964, to celebrate the founding of Bretton Hall College and the formal opening of the buildings, a sculpture by Austin Wright was commissioned and installed opposite the Mansion House, entitled *Ring and Wall*. The sculpture is now in storage at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. A publication by the County Council of the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Department was released to commemorate the events, including an illustration of the expanded campus map. In addition to the 1964 extensions the map shows the Bretton Hall Estate, pre-1720, with several architectural additions. The history of the site is therefore multi-layered and since 1964 further adjustments to the estate have been made. In 1977 the Yorkshire Sculpture Park opened emerging out of Bretton Hall College. The Sculpture Park wraps around the Bretton Hall Estate which has the Mansion House at its centre.

The National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (NAEA), founded in 1985, which began its life in the Mansion House at Bretton Hall College is part of the current landscape. In 1989, a purpose built centre was erected to house the extensive archive collections called the Lawrence Batley Centre. The NAEA holds materials about art education, in the UK and abroad, including visual arts, music, dance and drama. Amongst its collections are significantly important works by art educators including Sir Alec Clegg, Tom Hudson, Victor Pasmore, Sir Herbert Read and Alexander Barclay-Russell. The Centre was officially opened in 1991 by Kenneth Clarke, the then current

Secretary of State for Education, and in the same year, the building received two commendations, one from the Civic Trust Awards for its contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment and a second from Wakefield Council Design Awards (NSEAD/The National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, n.d. AC/BK/19).

The 1964 map of the College campus shows a green space where the NAEA currently stands. On this map the archive is 'that which is not yet there'.

Other than the addition of the NAEA, the Bretton Hall College site has remained unchanged architecturally. The campus was very much a living archive until 2007, after this date the campus was closed and all teaching was moved to the University of Leeds and the site became an empty and unused space. The route illustrated on the 1964 map (see Figure 1) is still accessible, although the site is now in part overgrown, the buildings uninhabited and in a state of disrepair. What will remain of the 1964 buildings in the future development of the site is yet to be seen, however, what is known is that fifty years after they were erected, this is potentially the last chance to capture the experience of walking the route of the 1964 College campus map.

## **Methodology**

Psychogeography is a relatively new methodology having its roots in 1950s Paris. The term eclectically encompasses literature, politics and new modes of thinking about urban environments. All engagements with psychogeography have a common thread: that the environment impacts on individuals in emotional and behavioural manifestations. The key activity of

psychogeography is walking and founded in the Situationist era of psychogeography, is the term *Derivé* meaning 'to drift'. In using a *derivé*, coupled with the revivalist approach of Iain Sinclair (Sinclair, 2010), this article reflects on the transposition of the 1964 campus map onto the existing site to produce a juxtaposition of narratives that exist in the space. In this way, layered narratives can emerge, not vying for attention, but retrieving and producing an archive simultaneously. A secondary narrative from 1964 is present from the detailed literature held at the archive itself. This literature provides a voice to the events leading up to and beyond the extensive building expansions of the College that took place in 1964. Bringing this narrative together with the *derivé*, allows all narratives to meet in the same place. The route starts from the Mansion House, through to the library, across the courtyard to the refectory and the hostels beyond, around the music block and dropping down to the gymnasium before returning to that which is not yet there.

### **Creating the narrative**

Map (Figure 1)

Stilled silence, engulfed by trees, dwarfed by buildings, it's cold. There are no other footsteps walking across the deserted campus. Winter bird song and a low sky hangs heavy, a Narnian-like signpost in an empty courtyard, quadrangle, overgrown, stilled silence. In, through a glass and wood door, unassuming, no clues of what lies behind it. With a head full of ideas, of what a college in an eighteenth century mansion might be like, an invisible timeline is crossed and suddenly I'm inside the building, expectant and excited to step

into this world. It's a back door, a side door, a tradesman's entrance, a feeling of entering unnoticed into a space once inhabited by hundreds. A feeling of charged adrenalin. A long corridor lies ahead and to the side are small rooms with empty book shelves, a desk, chairs in others. Someone could be about to move in, start a new job, except for the smell, which reveals the emptiness, that abandonment. They moved out.

1964 – Sir Alec Clegg, Foundation Lecture delivered on the occasion of the celebrations to mark the founding of the College and the opening of the extensions:

We, as a nation, are compelled to bear our part according to the new conditions of the time. Hence, cost what it may, we cannot afford at this juncture to remain inactive in our educational policy.

(Clegg 1964: 4)

2014 – College empty, seven years empty.

The corridor is cold and further into the building the smell of not being lived in, of not being used, is more prevalent. It is dark, some light comes through the windows and where doors are open helps to show the way. As far as you can see the corridor continues, sloping downwards on brown corded carpet, worn and used. Heading down and back towards the door, with a staircase to the left, there is the suggestion of a different space. A black and white checked tiled floor, wide, dark wooden doors to the right with brass name plates, the appearance of a large staircase to the left casts a hazy light, blurring the stairs. The further in one walks, footsteps hardly audible, reveals the extraordinary beauty that an old, historie(d) building can provide. The space is vast and walking up the staircase raising to meet you is a balustrade, beyond

which is a dome glass ceiling surrounded on three sides by frescoes. They are enough to reveal why such a building would inspire, shape and influence whoever crossed its threshold.

### **The Mansion Staircase**

(Figure 2)

1964 – Sir Alec Clegg, Foundation Lecture delivered on the occasion of the celebrations to mark the founding of the College and the opening of the extensions:

Educational methods and traditions have always to adjust themselves to those profound changes in current ideas which come about through great extensions of human knowledge.

(Clegg 1964: 3)

2014 - Darkened passages, not a sound of life. Deadened.

Alone, no faces, no voices, no teaching, no learning, no making, no community. Empty history around every wall and room. Tangible isolation. A ghost story. Every move that is made sounds amplified, when once it would have been lost in the crowd. Tracked movements as rooms are entered. Louder footsteps now as the emptiness of the space is interrupted. Shuttered windows with cracks of light sharply cut into the room. Tall windows defuse the light falling and cast shadows onto exposed wooden floors, a lone chair and empty fireplace. What clues to the purpose of the room? And which history? The familie(d) history or the educational history? A relief above the door frame depicts floating, intertwined musical instruments. A sheet of A4 white paper on floor with the words 'Music Room' typed on it reveals a purpose for which the room is no longer needed. Like a diary with the pages

torn out, its secrets are held by those who once inhabited it. There is heat now but it's still cold, the cold that appears when there is fear, unexpected and unnerving.

1964 – Dame Ninette de Valois, Founder of the Royal Ballet unveiled the commemorative plaque of the expansion.

What constitutes the dignity of teaching?

It is to realize that knowledge leads to understanding, and understanding is something that must be patiently and devotedly unmasked. Surely the dignity of teaching is to unmask it with simplicity, to guide the pupil into the inner centre of learning and to know that you can leave him there to browse with insight, self-assurance and discrimination.

(Clegg 1964: 1)

2014 - No dignity. Masked. Alone.

There's something, just waiting. The life that was there.

It's crumbling, it's decaying, there are holes, cobwebs, there's damage. To the history? It's intact, it's cared for, it's waiting. It's huge and impressive and amazing. The long walk to the Principal's Office, pushing further towards the lake. The Oval Room. Capability Brown's masterpiece ahead. Rolled up carpet, a filing cabinet, no Principal. And then a rabbit warren, of steps, landings, climbing, dropping, horizontally split through the building, an extra layer of history physically created to house students, teaching and life.

Hidden panelled rooms and the warmth of wood. Tables, chairs, filing cabinets, equipment, a lesson on a board; all these belie the lack of people and activity. Stepping outside. The birds return, louder, clearer, encircling the view and looking down, at time, of then and now. Viewing a future. The

Mansion House stands in its own history. It is a holder of history. Echoing sounds. Pockets of heat again.

### **The Dining Hall**

(Figure 3)

The Sir Alec Clegg building, founder, namesake, now unused. No hyacinths. The gold emblazoned letters spelling out his name dazzle and hint at what treasures he unlocked for so many, yet it now stands empty as a rich vessel of aspiration. A ship without its captain. Covered shelves, rain leaking in and memory leaking out. Towards the dining hall, passing the Bank on the way in, cashier desks with no cashiers. The light seeping in and onto empty tables and chairs, plates, cutlery, unused food mixers and cold ovens. The price list and menu waiting for an order with no-one to give one. Across the courtyards, to the hostel, passing the empty strip of grass where Austin Wright's sculpture once stood, trees have lost their leaves, car parking spaces stand empty. No-one arrives or returns.

### ***Ring and Wall* – Austin Wright Sculpture**

(Figure 4)

1964 – John F. Friend, Principal:

To mark this vital stage in the history of the college, on Friday, March 20th, a day of snow, County Alderman Ezra Taylor, received the sculpture by Austin Wright.

(Friend 1979: 62)

Austin Wright's celebratory sculpture *Ring and Wall* is a consolidation of the achievements so far, of new life through new buildings, of a new chapter.



2014 - Austin Wright's sculpture no longer stands. It sits in storage. The buildings are also dormant. Broken windows, ivy clad, waiting for the bulldozer? Onto slippery steps, Yorkshire stone and the front door of 1964, like a Doctor's Surgery, has numbered rooms with signage pushed to 'Out'. Up turned beds, curtains half closed. Rooms are permanently in darkness. The bathroom opposite the kitchen, empty cupboards, doors half opened and a toilet seat up.

### **A Courtyard between Hostels**

(Figure 5)

Into the cold again and up to the Sanatorium to medical beds with no patients. The music block to the left, nature's companion, is in need of music. Contemporary life emerges with visitors to the park heading away and past the site, all with a map of their own, seeking out sights which are not of the college, not of this past time. Mingling with then and now, down to the Gymnasium, on stilts, floating above its own lily pond. Chained off, peeling paint, no movement. An open window.

### **The Gymnasium**

(Figure 6)

1964 – John F. Friend, Principal:

The whole college greatly benefitted from the provision of a gymnasium, beautifully designed by the architect in relation to an area of water over which it partly stretched, also well related to the drama studio, the tennis courts and playing fields [...] a movement space where group and individual movement and some agilities could be explored.

(Friend 1979: 61)

2014 - Uninhabited.

The Camellia House beyond tells another history and another story. Turning left, dropping further down, deep leaves, squirrels and birds, I stop at the Principal's House. Long and low, barely visible and covered in green, hidden by trees, the painted windows are closed in by the elements. Doorways are greeted by mounds of leaves, mulch. Views are long gone. The garden is hidden.

1964 – John F. Friend, Principal:

The residence for the Principal, a very pleasant bungalow, was almost the last section of the buildings to be completed. At last, we were able to move in.

We enjoyed our years in the bungalow with its large sitting/dining room and its huge picture window overlooking the lakes. This room was just large enough to allow the staff, wives and husbands to gather and I remember with great pleasure the social meetings there before enjoying a meal together on the first evening of a session.

(Friend 1979: 62)

2014 - Hidden History.

1964 – John F. Friend, Principal:

After the formal opening, Dame Ninette attended a masque especially written for the occasion by students and performed by them. She was delighted by the originality of the production. The day ended with a grand dance, enjoyed in high spirits and in thankfulness for a happy completion of a major development in the life of the college.

(Friend 1979: 62)

And into that which is not yet there.

## **Analysis**

The 1964 quotations, interspersed in the narrative above, provide these long forgotten events with a voice and also remind the reader of the stature of the individuals who were present and contributing to building the learning environment and its successes. What is saddening is that the life and pride that is apparent in 1964 is absent in 2014. The derivé allowed all of the narratives to emerge. The 1964 narratives which describe the College's environment are held together in the safety of the past, of memories and what they evoke. The 2014 narration began with an expectation of discovery, of a history coming to life in all its richness, when in reality, it presented deep echoes of a past that felt lost.

So, what remains? What is revealed? What will be lost?

Before walking the route with the 1964 map, my expectation was, that being on the route, in amongst the buildings and inside the buildings, would make the spirit of the College immediately evident; that the people, places and events I had read about would be there, in three-dimensional forms. I hoped that the vividness in my mind would become manifest in the spaces I walked through. This happened in the student hostels: being in a dedicated student space was palpable, the fixtures and fittings yelled the era but the feel of the space was timeless. The small bedrooms, the single beds, small sink, communal kitchen and bathrooms were recognizable student accommodation spaces, allowing the life that was there to be re-imagined. From the outside, however, is a building that looks soulless, and yet, when I entered the building, I was aware of the life presence of the College: inhabited, created,

shared and remembered. This life presence is tangible in the hostel. The same feeling is in the Dining Hall, less so in the Library. The empty shelving does not generate the same human intimacy as the communal spaces. What was unexpected was the Mansion House itself, it *is* a stately home and the history of the house comes through more than the history of the College itself, which felt disappointing. I wanted the Mansion to feel full. My expectation was fuelled by photographs of much activity and conversations with past students and staff. But now there are empty rooms, even with lessons still intact from seven years ago on the teaching board, but not the hive of activity once inhabited it. What I hadn't worked out and couldn't possibly have worked out beforehand, was that the soul of the College is in the buildings – the real purpose-built 1964 buildings. Prior to 1964, students and staff lived in the Mansion House. However, with the passing of time and the intervention of the building expansion, viewing the site in 2014 with outside eyes, the spirit and soul of the final forty-three years of the College lives in the buildings on the map. The route makes the map come alive. But what will keep Bretton Hall College on the map, when those buildings have gone?

## **Conclusion**

As the life of the Bretton Hall College site evolves, the work of the archive continues. This piece of research contributes to and forms part of the continuing story of the history of Arts Education in the United Kingdom, of the life and contribution of Bretton Hall College and of Sir Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer of the West Riding of Yorkshire, whose achievements and legacy to education, children and the arts should live on in the educational

landscape now and in the future.

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### **Contributor details**

Allie Mills is a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield. Her research is analyzing the influence of Sir Alec Clegg's leadership and its impact on education policy during 1949-1974 to determine if the ideologies can be used to develop a sustainable model for twenty-first century Higher Education leadership in art and design.