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MONASH UNIVERSITY GAZETTE

CONTENTS

THE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST DECADE	1	DEDICATION OF THE RELIGIOUS CENTRE	19
MUSIC ON HIGH	4	EVALUATION OF THE P.S.S.C. PHYSICS COURSE IN	
COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITIES CONGRESS	6	VICTORIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS	22
FIRST INDEPENDENT RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE	7	OPENING OF THE LAW SCHOOL	25
RHODES SCHOLAR FROM MONASH	7	LEARNING EXPERIMENTS WITH FISH	27
THE CODE FOR LIFE	8	SOCIAL VALUES AND OCCUPATION	30
FOUR HONORARY DEGREES CONFERRED	11	DEVELOPMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND RESEARCH	32
THE MONASH LIBRARY AND THE COMPUTER	14	OBITUARY	34
THE LENINGRAD—MONASH EXCHANGE SCHEME	16	UNIVERSITY STAFF	35

THE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST DECADE

30 May 1968 marked the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the Act which established the University.

In recognition of the event a special supplement giving some account of the development of Monash was published by *The Age*.

In a comment on the occasion the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J. A. L. Matheson, said:

The ten years of Monash's life can now be seen to fall into definite phases, each characterized by some distinctive features that clearly differentiate it from other periods.

The first phase belongs to the Interim Council and to Sir Osborn McCutcheon, the planning architect. This was a time of great urgency when the dominant consideration was speed, so that the new University might be able to take students before the University of Melbourne was completely overwhelmed by numbers.

Into this short period of less than two years was packed all the preliminary investigation and planning that might well have taken twice as long; the site was chosen, surveyed and laid out; the broad lines of the academic structure were decided; senior staff were appointed.

The second phase occupied the year 1960 and centred on the Vice-Chancellor's house. This home of the former owner of the property was fortunately available and large enough as to act as headquarters for the Registrar as he assembled his staff and set up the administrative arrangements for purchasing, keeping accounts and so on. Professors, as they arrived, were given desks in a

nearby gardener's cottage and in a hut which was hired from the builder; temporary buildings were avoided completely.

During this year which, incredible as it now seems, was very wet, the first group of buildings was being constructed. A violent rainstorm in April destroyed most of the early work and throughout the year the site was inches deep in mud. It seemed as though water flowed uphill at Monash, but in spite of the discomfort and the hard work it appears, in retrospect, as a happy, uncomplicated period. There was a job to be done and not much time to do it in and we were all content to work together in reasonable harmony.

11 March 1961, the day of the official opening, saw the end of that stage. The buildings were ready, almost; the final sweeping up at the entrance was done by the Vice-Chancellor and his wife as they waited for the Premier (Sir Henry Bolte). An academic procession was formed; speeches were made; a little undergraduate humour brightened the scene; tea was served; we were open.

13 March was the first day of teaching in the five faculties of Arts, Economics and Politics, Engineering, Science, and Medicine with which we opened. All these classes were accommodated in the science buildings, the only ones ready, while building operations continued all round.

Thus began the game of academic chequers, which is still not quite complete; at the end of each building phase a redevelopment of activities took place, each aimed at getting departments into their right place.

In 1961 improvisation was the order of the day and perhaps neither students nor staff were any the worse; there was no Union, of course, and only rather elementary canteen facilities; the library was in a future physics laboratory; car parking was easy and cows grazed where buildings now stand.

In a sense this phase still continues for we are still growing and building and developing new activities. Perhaps a change could be detected about 1964 when we held our first graduation ceremony for those who had been with us from the outset. This was the purpose of it all; Monash graduates were moving out into the world to take their place alongside the graduates of other universities.

After that we had to wait until 1966 for the first doctors to graduate and until 1967 for the first Bachelors of Jurisprudence. Somewhere in those years was the end of the beginning.

Now we are in a period of self-criticism and question-

ing. Why do we do this? Could we not alter our procedure there? Why was that decision taken? Could not the library, the car parks, the Union have been made a bit bigger, with rather more foresight?

With the clarity of vision that hindsight brings one can see what might have been done differently and perhaps better. But at the time the decisions were not unreasonable; resources were certainly limited and, if things did not work out as well as might have been wished, there was the whole of the future in which to make improvements.

So in our second decade we move into a period of revision. It will not be easy to make changes for there are now many more people to convince, more opinions to consider, and a complicated organization to be kept running while the changes are made.

But this is how it must always be; a continual process of self-examination, adjustment and renewal — if that should stop Monash would surely die.

DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

By a Special Writer

Anyone who visited the site of the new University in 1959 would be astonished by what exists to-day. In little more than eight years since construction of the first building started, a muddy paddock has been transformed into a modern and attractive university campus.

In terms of money, the campus today represents an expenditure of about \$32 million, and although a further \$8 million will be spent in the next two years the University will still be far from complete. This money has been provided by the Commonwealth and the State on a fifty-fifty basis. In addition the University has been greatly assisted by donations towards the cost of the Great Hall and the gift by the Churches of the Religious Centre.

It is interesting to turn back to the initial plans that were drawn up in 1958 and 1959 and to compare them with the situation of today. The basic factor was a maximum full-time student body of 8000. That figure has been passed already and the University is still growing.

The site, of about 244 acres, was described as satisfactory though lacking in special dramatic interest or quality. It was unsewered and was occupied in part by the Talbot Colony which had to be transferred elsewhere. But it had a fine view eastward to the Dandenong Hills and the master plan was drawn so as to preserve that view.

The master planner was Sir Osborn McCutcheon. Bates, Smart and McCutcheon were appointed architects-planners to the University at the end of 1958 and drew up the development plan which has been followed to this day. In 1964 they were requested to revise the master plan to provide for a larger number of students, but there was no need to alter the original concept.

The first buildings, for science and engineering, were designed by Bates, Smart and McCutcheon and constructed of dark manganese brick with very dark pointing and white concrete columns and slabs. This character has

been maintained, wherever appropriate to the particular building, by the eleven other firms of architects who have designed buildings for the University.

The initial plan was that no building should have more than three or four storeys with the exception of the Arts building. The latter, now named The Robert Menzies School of Humanities, has thirteen storeys and is one of Melbourne's landmarks. However, growth of the University within the limitation of 244 acres has forced a change of policy for other buildings. Evidence of this is Howitt Hall, a residential hall of fourteen storeys, and the medical school tower block which has seven storeys. Most of the new buildings have been designed for future vertical extension.

The layout of buildings is in the form of a horse-shoe, open to the east and with a central pedestrian precinct. The maximum walking time between faculties is six minutes. The arrangement of roads and car parks on the perimeter of the campus posed a problem of access to the Union which was sited centrally to serve pedestrians, but which generates a large volume of goods traffic for catering and the bookshop. The solution was a large tunnel 300 feet long leading into the basement of the building.

Another problem, not yet satisfactorily solved, is car parking. The area of car parks built and under construction is twenty-five acres, giving a capacity of about 3,500 cars. It was originally thought that thirty to forty acres would be sufficient but, judging from experience, fifty would now be nearer the mark.

The eastern part of the campus is devoted to sports, but here again the University is short of space. Thirty-four acres have been developed into playing fields against a requirement that was originally thought to be sixty acres but may be nearer 100 when the University has grown to its full size. The pressure has been eased by the purchase of thirty-six acres off the campus.

The north-east corner has been reserved for halls of

residence of which three have so far been built. There is no room on the campus for affiliated colleges, nor for the University-CMF Training Depot, but sites have been acquired nearby. One college, Mannix College, is nearly complete and a second, the Marist Brothers College, is now under construction. Taking account of the necessary expansion of faculty buildings and allowing for new developments it can be seen that the University is sorely pressed for space.

The current construction programme has acquired increased impetus with the acceptance of new building tenders so that, in October, the University had eight contracts in progress worth some \$4.5 million.

The eight new buildings embrace the Education building which will rise to four floors and be connected to a child study centre where the present Birch Cottage kindergarten facilities will be incorporated. The second stage of the main library is also going up to four floors and will eventually have three additional floors added. This new stage will greatly increase the present reading facilities and more room will be provided for research stock.

The Great Hall is another of the new projects which have been started, and the completion of this building is expected at the end of 1969. Other new buildings of note are the Science North building to house Mathematics, Information Science and the Computer Centre, and the Science South building for Botany and Psychology. This latter project also covers an extension to the medical school for Anatomy and Physiology.

Student amenities are receiving attention with additions to the Union which will provide a further 1000 dining seats and incorporate additional games and music rooms.

The biggest new development is the Monash medical

centre which is being planned to occupy the south-west corner of the campus, about fourteen acres, and to contain a major teaching hospital joined to the University's medical school, a development unique in Australia.

The University buildings speak for themselves. Their surrounds take longer to mature, but there can be no doubt that the ground work already done will result in a campus worthy of its purpose.



Student cafeteria in the Hargrave Library building



The Forum. Buildings shown left to right are: The Main Library, The Robert Menzies School of Humanities, The Bio-medical Library, the Union, and University Offices