THE INSTITUTE, CENTRAL SQUARE HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

The Evolution of the Design and Notes on Lutyens's Involvement

by

Chris Miele

Historical Analysis & Research Team
Reports and Papers (*First Series*, 9)
1996

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Table of Contents

Summary	*1*
I. Unwin's Initial Proposals	*2*
II. The 1906-7 Plan	*3*
III. Lutyens's Involvement and the Lost Plan of 1908	*4*
IV. Lutyens's Second Plan, April 1908	*5*
V. The Club Room, 1908-10	*6*
VI. The 1909 Plans and the RIBA Drawings The First Scheme	*7*
VII. The 'Final Plan' of 1911	*8*
VIII. The Institute without Wings. Unwin's Proposals for the Extension, 1912	*9*
IX. The 1916 Plan and Perspective	*10*
X. Reactions to the 1916 Scheme Post-War Changes	*11*
XI. The Last Version of the Institute The Wings Restored	*13*
XI. Later Schemes	*14*
Conclusions	*14*

Summary

Listed Building Consent is being sought by the Institute, Hampstead Garden Suburb, to extend its premises (listed grade II) to the north and south by the construction of wings which, it is claimed, realize Lutyens's original intention. There is no doubt that at every stage in the design process Lutyens imagined that the east side of Central Square would be closed off by buildings; however, the form these would take changed considerably over time (1908-1928) largely due to a chronic shortage of funds. The extension of the Suburb eastwards in 1912 by the purchase of a roughly 300 acre triangular piece of land also forced Lutyens and Raymond Unwin, the chief architect and planner, to reconsider the form of the unbuilt portions of Central Square.*

The challenge posed by the Extension, which effectively doubled the size of the Garden Suburb, was to integrate the old and new parts around the Institute which had been conceived initially as a firm eastern boundary to the Suburb not its centre. Lutyens, it seems, imagined this could be done by varying the form of the wings, Unwin by eliminating them entirely.

There is little in the way of documentary evidence to tell what happened next. The following stages are known: 1908-10, the construction of the Club Room, now the Old Hall (north wing of the present Institute), with an exterior different to its present one and probably relating to the first scheme for the Institute; the Club Room given its present envelope by Lutyens between 1910 and 1912, the details different to the first scheme. In 1916 an entirely new design was published incorporating the earlier fragment of the otherwise unbuilt scheme. In 1918 this was cut down by Soutar in response to a lack of funds. Construction of Soutar's scheme was delayed. The south wing, Queen Mary Hall, was eventually built in 1923-4. Two years later the design for the central block linking the two was published as the joint work of Lutyens and C. E. Hanscombe. This was executed by 1928, though without Lutyens overseeing the work. The only **bona fide** *Lutyens's interior in the entire complex is that of the Old Hall from 1908-10. The rest of the interiors are the work of Soutar and Hanscombe.*

The 1926-28 Hanscombe-Lutyens's scheme provided for north and south wings. The complete scheme along with proposals for gardens and playing fields to the east of the Institute was published in 1928 (see plate following section XI below). This area was filled in by the Henrietta Barnett School, constructed in 1935, thus destroying the original setting for the Institute complex from this side.

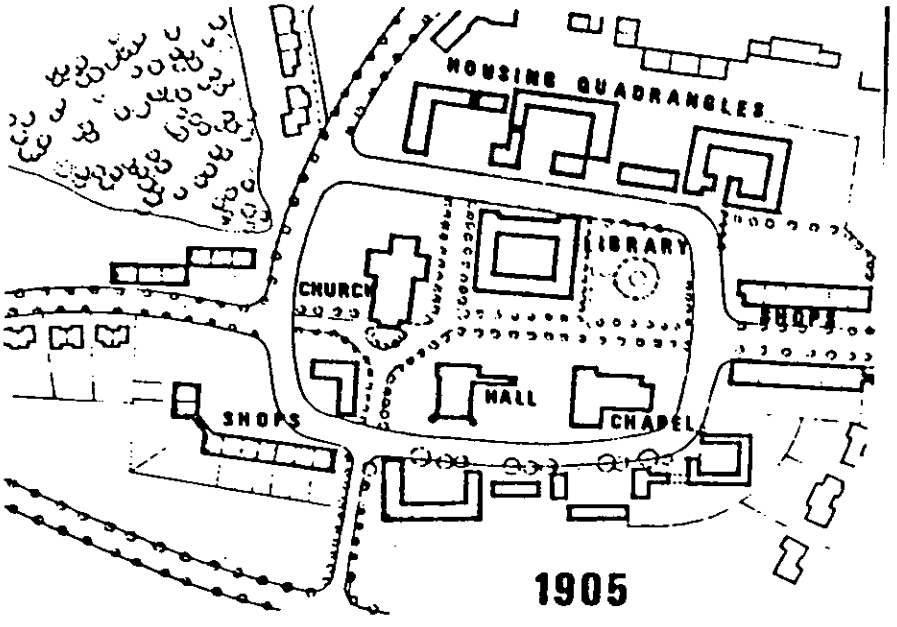
I. UNWIN'S EARLY PLANS FOR CENTRAL SQUARE, ITS CHURCHES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

THE 1905 PLAN

Raymond Unwin's 1905 proposals for a garden suburb at Hampstead in north London (see below) show central core or community area near to the location of what became Central Square.

There was a library, hall, an Anglican church and a chapel in addition to shops. The east side of the square was filled in by quadrangle housing.

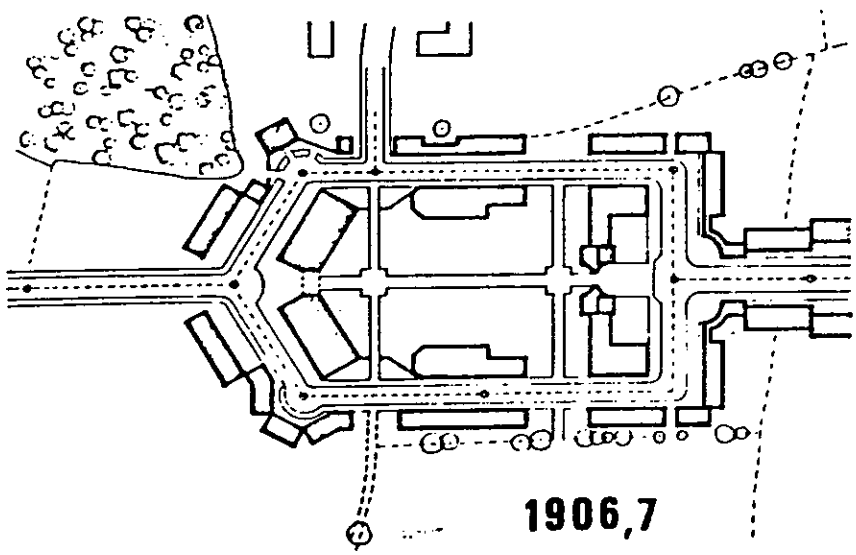
The group is loosely, picturesquely arranged in a way consistent with the rest of street patterns and house groupings shown on this early plan.



Over the following two years a greater regularity and symmetry is introduced into these arrangements, the result, it has been suggested, of Lutyens incipient influence (see below).[1]

However, as Lutyens is not known to have become involved with the suburb until early 1908[2], it seems more likely that Parker and Unwin were responsible for this increase in formality. They might well have been responding to early London County Council Cottage estates, particularly the White Hart Lane Estate begun in 1904.

When the first turf was cut in the Artisans's Quarter of the Suburb in 1907 the final form of Central Square and its buildings was far from being resolved.



[1] M. Miller and A. S. Grey, *Hampstead Garden Suburb* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1992), pp. 87-91 for a discussion of the various schemes.

[2] Christopher Hussey, *The Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens* (London: Country Life, 1950), p. 189.

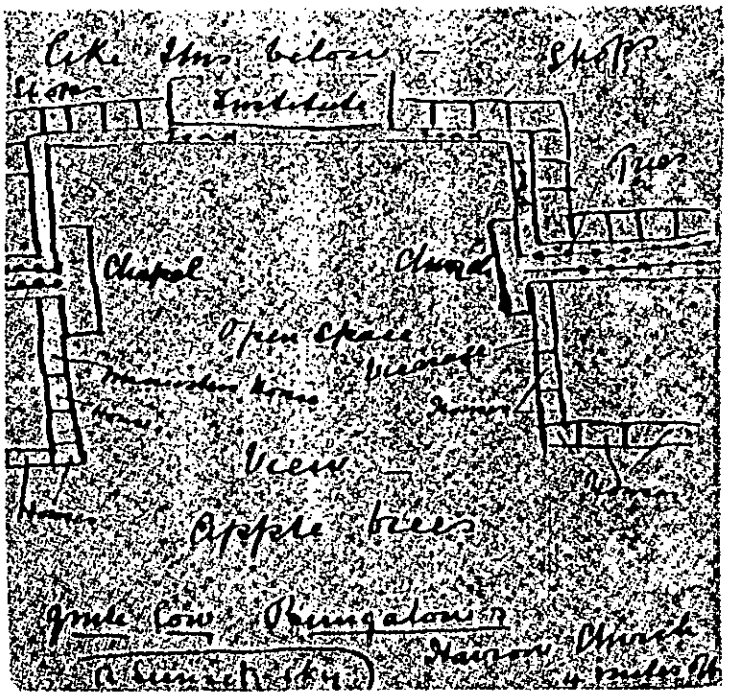
III. LUTYENS INVOLVEMENT.

THE LOST PLAN OF 1908 AND THE 'BARNETT PLAN', 24 FEBRUARY 1908

Early in 1908 Edwin Lutyens was appointed consulting architect to the Garden Suburb and directed to focus his energies on the central buildings and the surrounding streets. The appointment probably came through the influence of Alfred Lyttleton, Chair of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, for whom Lutyens was then transforming Wittersham, a country house near Rye in Sussex.

The first fruit of Lutyens's involvement was a sketch plan for Central Square drawn up early in 1908 and presented to the General Purposes Committee of the Trust on 18 February. It is not known to survive. Fortunately we have Henrietta Barnett's criticisms of it and suggestions for an alternative or different arrangement in a letter 24 February. This is illustrated with a little sketch plan (see below).

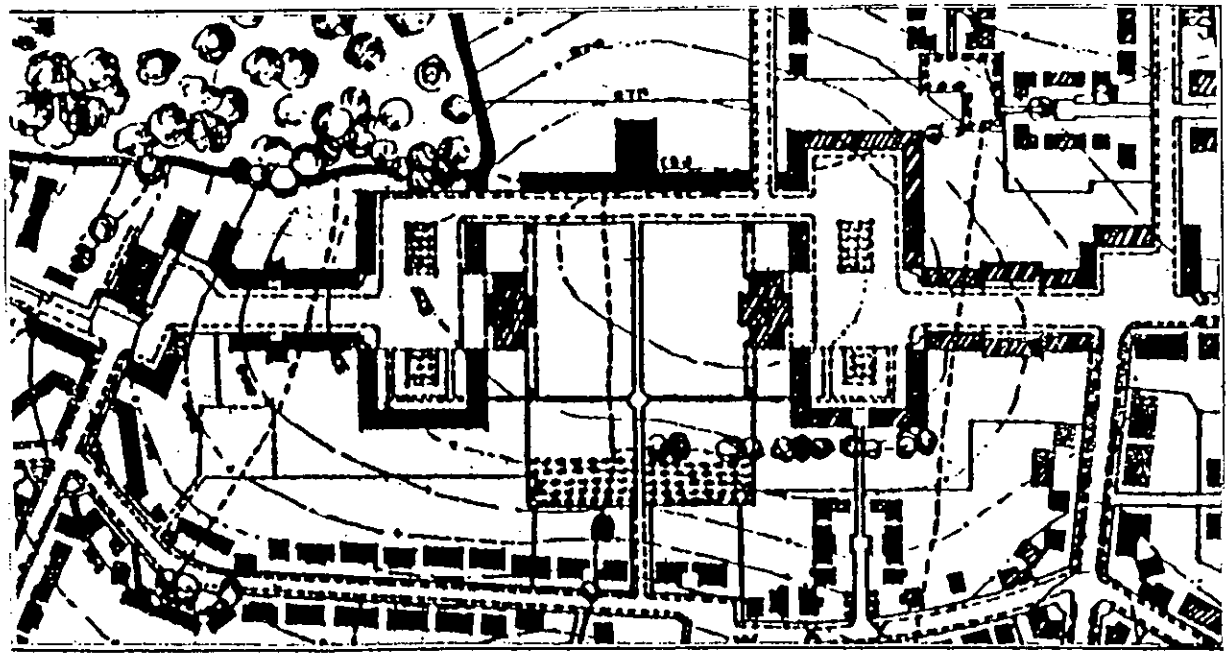
The 'Barnett plan' captures what would become the final form of Central Square, with the Institute and related buildings closing the east end and the churches defining the north and south boundaries. There is no documentary evidence to show what relationship this plan may have had with Lutyens's, whether it was entirely new or merely a refinement.

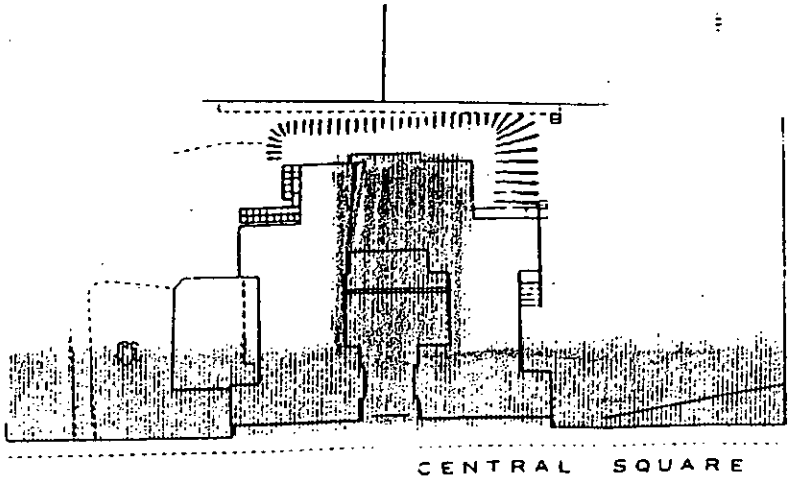


IV. LUTYENS'S SECOND PLAN, APRIL 1908

Lutyens's revisions were ready by April and again are not known to survive. The essence of his solution was incorporated into an overall plan for the Suburb (see below). The east side of the square is closed by a single narrow block with a large rear projection. It is tempting to assume that the Institute was to be confined to this projection, leaving the north and south wings for shops, which are indicated on the 'Barnett plan' of February 1908 (see page 5). No elevations or perspectives for this scheme have been discovered.

A rough idea of this building's dimensions can be formed if its outline plan is laid over the present Institute building (see lower image below, taken from C. W. Ikin, 1990).





V. THE CLUB ROOM, OCTOBER 1908 TO MARCH 1910

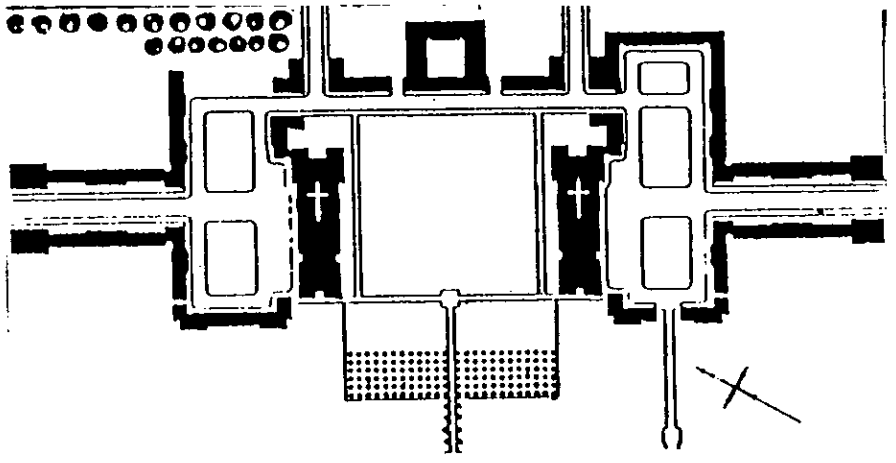
Work on the Institute buildings commenced in October 1908. What is now known as the 'Old Hall' in the north wing of the Institute opened in March 1910. It is the only authentic Lutyens's interior in the Institute. Its original exterior has details quite different to the present elevations. Fragments of this somewhat older exterior can be glimpsed in the corridors and rooms surrounding the Old Hall. This fragment of a much larger scheme is recorded in several early twentieth-century photographs in the Trust archives and other early publications. That given below comes from Henrietta Barnett's own *The Story and Growth of Hampstead Garden Suburb, 1907-1928* (London: Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, 1928, opp. p. 51.)

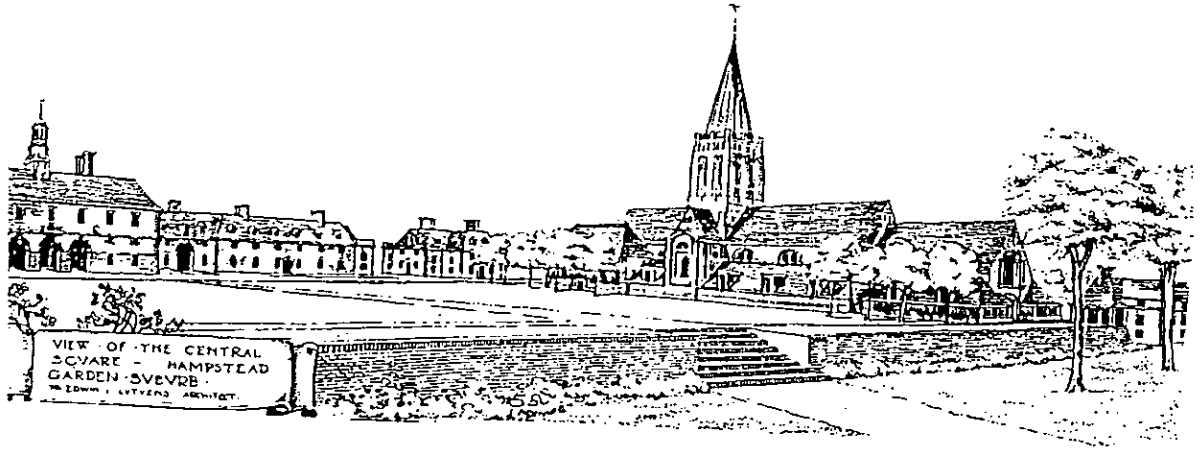
VI. THE 1909 PLAN AND THE RIBA DRAWINGS. THE FIRST SCHEME

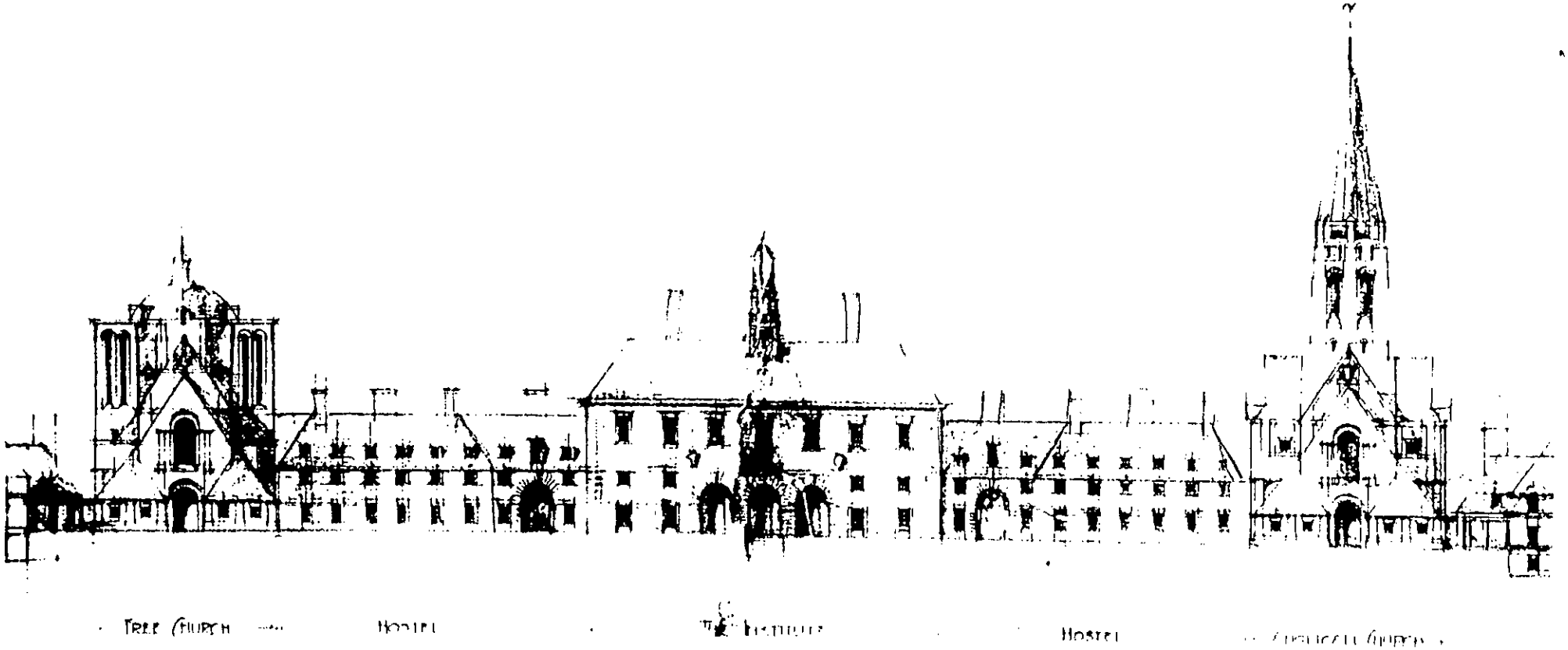
The Club Room was clearly meant as one part of an overall, fully-worked out scheme, or so one might naturally assume. However, even at this point the evidence suggests that Lutyens was tinkering with the details of plan and elevation.

In the first edition of *Town Planning and Practice* (1909), Raymond Unwin published a design for Central Square showing the churches and Institute, the whole seemingly well considered (see below); however, that same books contains a perspective (see lower below) which differs from the plan, most obviously in the treatment of the Institute block as part of a continuous range. The plan shows the Institute as a freestanding quadrangle.

The 1909 perspective does at least relate closely to the suite of Lutyens's drawings now held in the Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Collection (LUT 149.1; see following page). These, then, represent the nearest we have to a *bona fide* 'initial scheme', though, admittedly, they don't correspond exactly to that fragment of exterior we know through photographs of the first Club Room (see page 7).







HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB.
CENTRAL SQUARE.

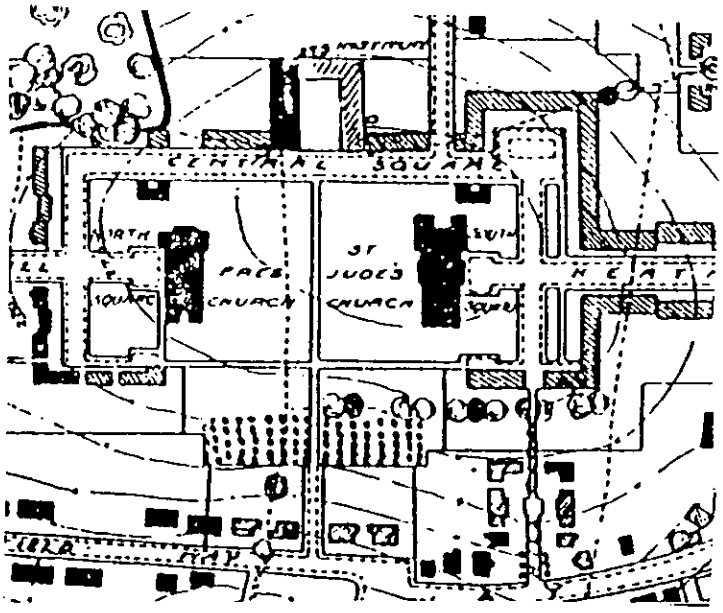
VII. THE 'FINAL PLAN' OF 1911

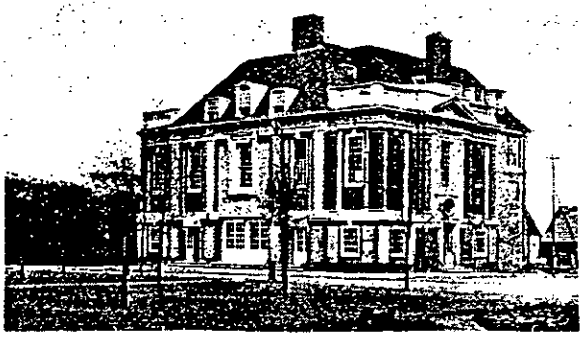
The second edition of Unwin's *Town Planning in Practice* (1911) contains yet another revised plan for the Square (see below). The Institute quadrangle has become an open courtyard with attached wings. With slight refinements this is the proposal published in a long notice in *The Builder* for 30 August 1912 and again in Lutyens's own *House and Gardens* of the following year.

Although no elevation of this *ensemble* is known to survive (indeed one might never have been made), the outline of these smaller wing blocks are comparable the domestic ranges in North and South Squares which suggests that they could well have been meant to be houses.

This scheme is very likely the one which was presented to the Suburb Board in July 1913 and which the Board undertook to build 'if the money could be raised'.[3]

At this point the Club Room (Old Hall) was still stranded on its own, but it had received a new exterior elevation which is shown in a photograph published in the *Hampstead Garden Suburb Record* for September 1912 (vol. I, p. 30; see below).





[3] C. W. Ikin, *Hampstead Garden Suburb. Dreams and Realities* (London: Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, 1990), p. 55.

VIII. THE INSTITUTE WITHOUT WINGS. UNWIN'S PROPOSALS FOR THE GARDEN SUBURB EXTENSION, 1912

The early success of the Co-Partnership Tenants at the Suburb led to plans to extend the original Suburb eastward on land totalling about 300 acres and owned by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

Unwin understood too well that doubling the size of the Suburb had implications for the planning of Central Square, and he set about revising the 1911 plans accordingly. His new plan was ready by August 1912, when it was published in the first number of the *Hampstead Garden Suburb Record* (vol. 1, pp. 6-10). There is nothing in this article to suggest that Lutyens's had been consulted.

The development of the Square and its buildings since 1905 was based on the premise that they would form the eastern boundary of the Suburb, which perhaps partly explains why Unwin and Lutyens had favoured a continuous range of buildings at this point almost from the very beginning. The Extension put the Square at the centre of the Suburb for the first time, and so it was no longer acceptable for a building there simply to turn its back on the land stretching between the Square and East Finchely Station.

Because of the topography, the collection of buildings in the Square was visible from the Extension. The challenge was to open up a view of the Extension from Central Square, thus uniting the two halves of the Suburb.

Unwin's solution was to remove the Institute wings, and on his plan of 1912 the building appears without them. What Lutyens thought about this, if indeed he was aware of what Unwin the planner was doing to his architecture, has gone unrecorded. With his love of courtyards and gradual, stepped massing it is fair to say he would have disapproved. Still, in planning terms, one can see the sense of what Unwin was proposing.

To articulate the Extension, to give it the same visual weight as the Square, Unwin imagined a prominent crown of public buildings surrounded by public spaces near to East Finchley Station, at the apex of the new triangle of land. There would be a market for selling the fruits of the 'co-operative effort' which Unwin was still hoping would flourish in the Suburb. There was to be a theatre as well, in addition to meeting rooms, shops, and buildings for other sorts of businesses, in short a viable town centre.

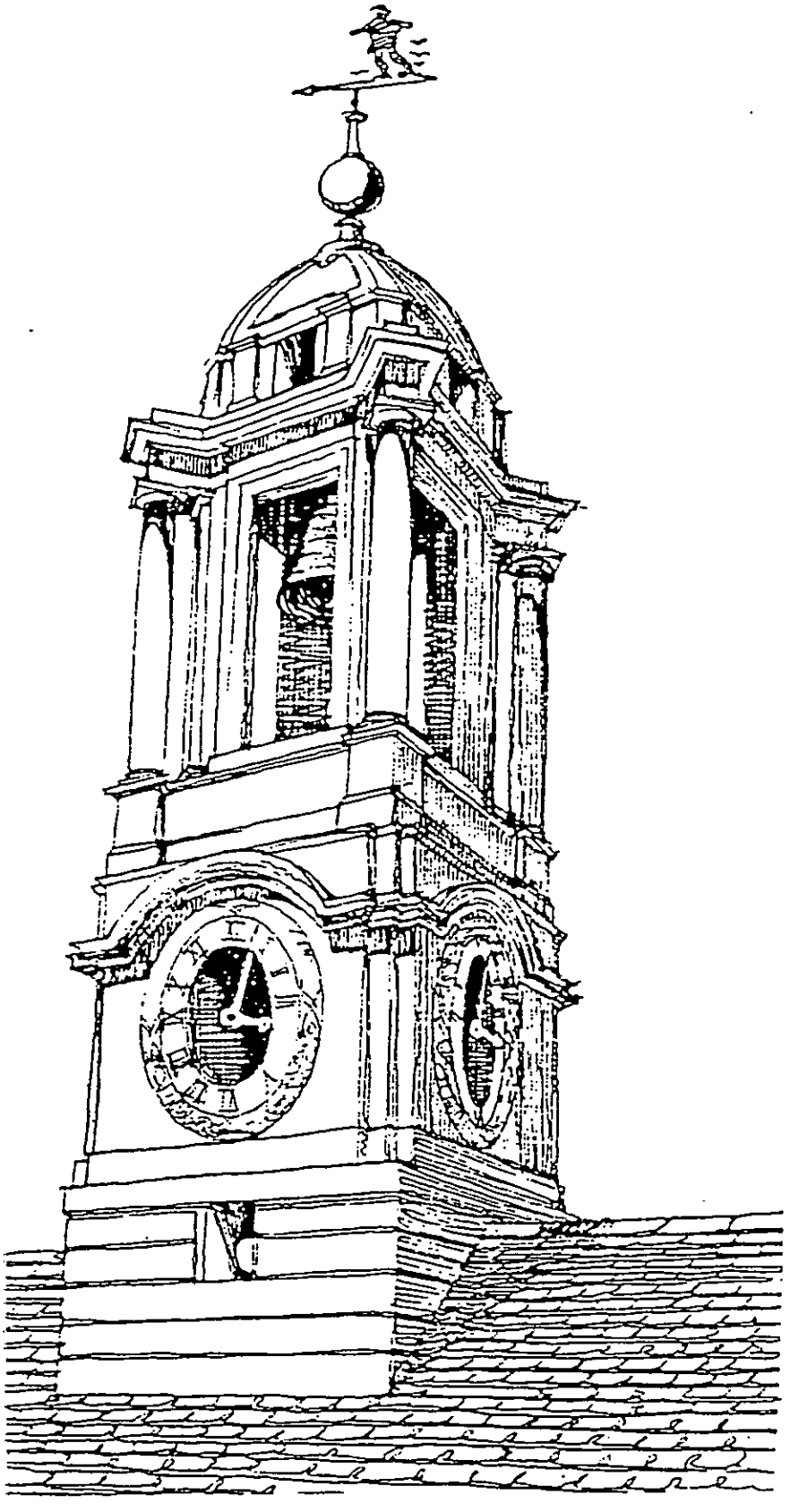
Lutyens would eventually modify his proposals to take the Extension into account, and the high pedimented centre which graces the east elevation of the Institute should be understood as his eventual concession to the Suburb's growth, but it came late and, one senses, grudgingly.

Still, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that as built the Institute was meant to be read in two directions, with one face turned to the Old Suburb and the other to the Extension. Only the details remained to be resolved.

One feature that would find its way into the final building was at least decided at this stage, the Memorial Clock, the joint gift of the Free and Anglican Churches. Lutyens's design for it was published in the *HGS Record* for December 1913 (vol. II, p. 64).

AN EARLY DESIGN FOR THE INSTITUTE'S MEMORIAL CLOCK

HGS RECORD VOL II. DEC 1913, p. 64

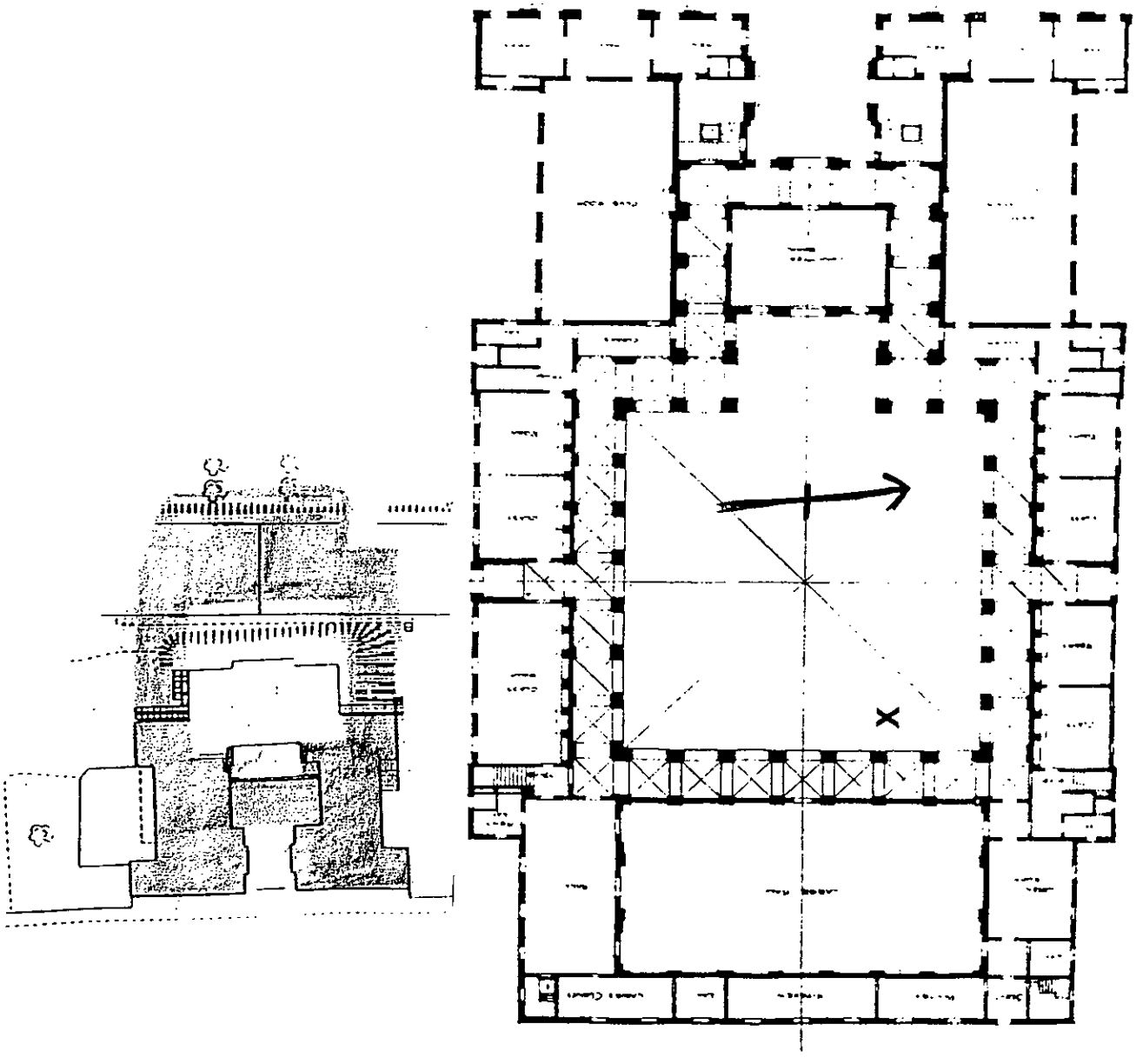


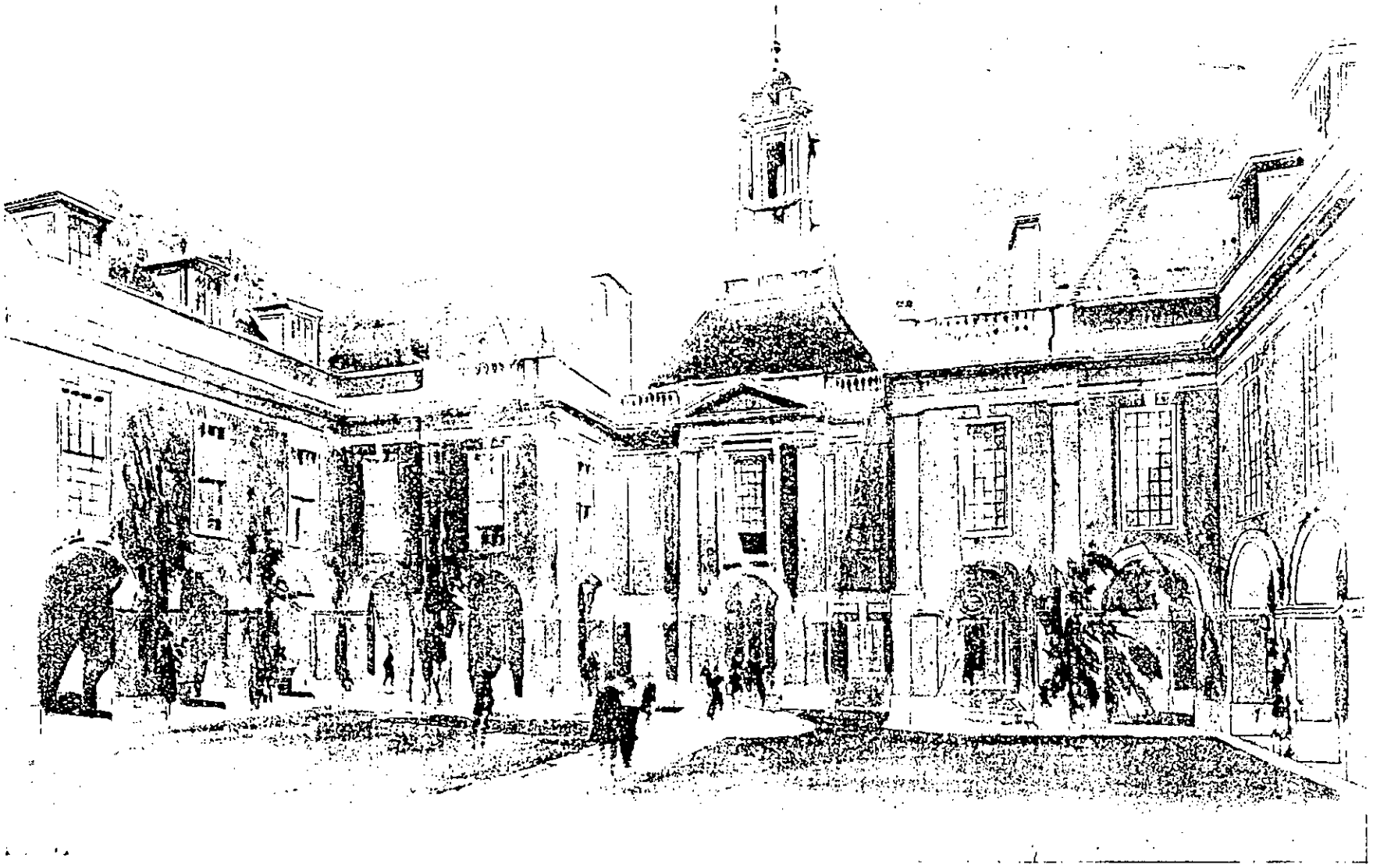
IX. THE 1916 PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE

Lutyens tinkered with his courtyard-plan for the Institute, whether at the behest of the Trust or out of a desire to get it absolutely right is not known. The plan published in *The Architects and Builders Journal* for 23 February 1916 (see below and following page), the most detailed of these early plans, differs in one or two ways from the scheme published between 1911 and 1913 and the Institute as eventually finished off in the second half of the 'twenties.

The courtyard has once more been transformed into a quadrangle, though the principal entrance is reached by a shallow courtyard corresponding to what was later built. The extant Club Room (the Old Hall) is matched by one to the south.

The accompanying perspective (see next page) is altogether grander than the astylar designs c1909 (see above between pages 8 and 9).





Extension of the Institute, Hampstead Garden Suburb.

x. REACTIONS TO THE 1916 SCHEME. POST-WAR CHANGES.

In her memoir of the Suburb (*The Story of the Growth of Hampstead Garden Suburb*, 1928) Henrietta Barnett described Lutyens's 1916 plan for the Institute as a 'beautiful conception', but one which, nevertheless, had 'to remain a sketch ... as the ground levels would not allow for its erection'. It seems scarcely possible that Lutyens, who had been working on the site since 1908, would have erred in this way. Perhaps it was simply that the funds were not available, for Mrs. Barnett herself recalled how often Lutyens had been frustrated in his desires for the Suburb sighing 'at our insistent intrusion of utility ... and [our] stubborn refusal to spend more money than we possibly dared hoped to obtain' (*Story*, pp. 46-7).

Not long after this design, probably by 1918 or so, the Secretary of the Institute, Mrs. How Martyn, came up with a more practical solution. The existing north block and proposed matching south block should simply be linked by a rear extension. As for the money to build on this reduced scale, the Institute Trust Directors took the firm view that no more of their invested funds could be spent. It was decided to apply to the relevant local authorities, City companies and endowed trusts for the money. The Middlesex County Council responded favourable, voting a grant of £20,000 in 1920 to meet the costs of creating a centre of education at the Institute. £6,000 was set aside from this to pay for the south wing. The rest was earmarked for later developments (*Story*, p. 47).

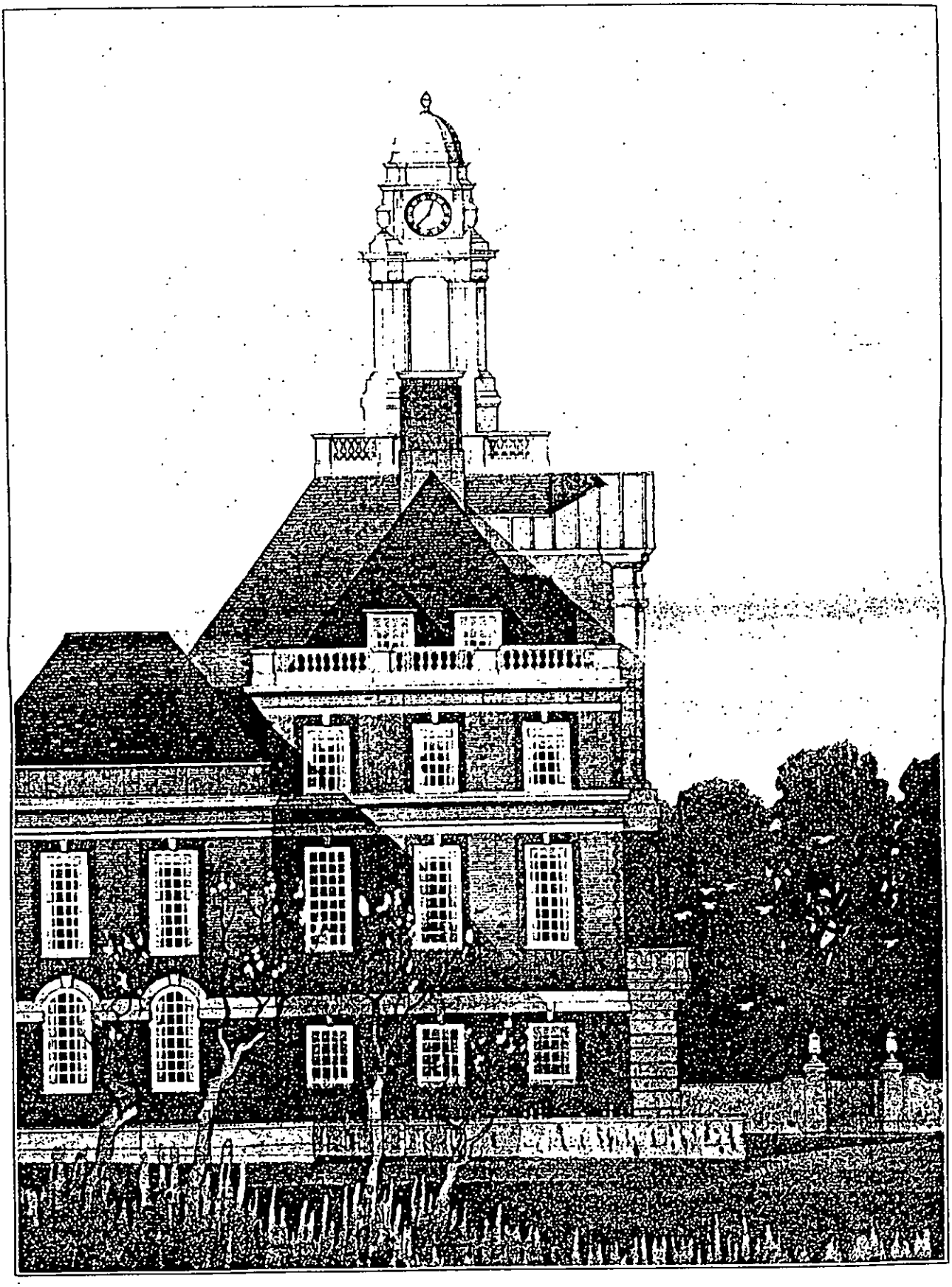
J. C. Soutar was charged with making the necessary 'adjustments' to Lutyens's plans and elevations. His estimate for a south wing matching that to the north was higher than the County Council's grant, some £15,000 in all, so a special Building and Endowments Committee was formed to make up the shortfall. At the same time, April 1918, the Institute was incorporated as a company. The HGS Trust Ltd. sent five people to the Committee, the County Council five, and the voluntary subscribers to the scheme the remaining person.

The foundation stone for what would become Queen Mary Hall (the south wing of the Institute) was laid on 23 October 1918, but works proceeded no further than this hopeful beginning for five whole years, until 1923, when Soutar's final plans were approved. The Hall was dedicated on 31 May 1924. The Institute stage was constructed in 1923 for £3,000 to the plans of architect F. J. Wilson Hart (*Story*, pp. 48-50).

By 1925-26 a new heavily edited version of Lutyens's 1916 scheme was ready (see following pages for illustrations by Cyril Farley), and in these, finally, one recognises the Institute as we know it today. Its great height, far higher than the 1909 scheme, is explained by that need, discerned by Unwin in 1912, to address the inhabitants of the Suburb Extension to the east.

THE HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB INSTITU

(INCORPORATED AS A COMPANY NOT FOR PROFIT UNDER LICENCE OF THE BOARD OF TRADE.)



THE MAIN BLOCK OF THE NEW BUILDINGS, LOOKING NORTH

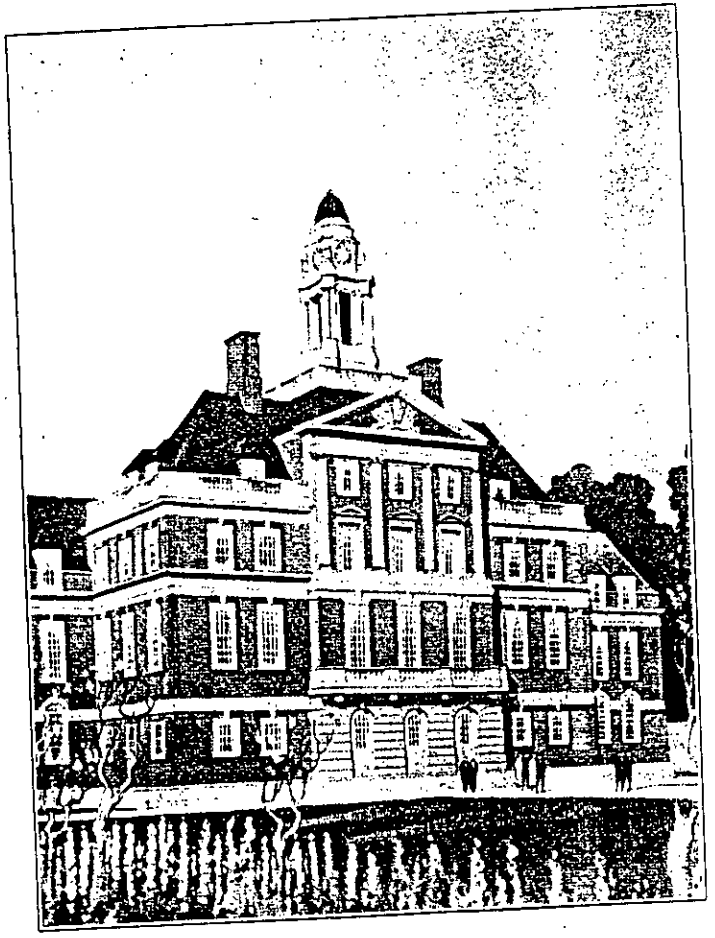
AS DESIGNED BY

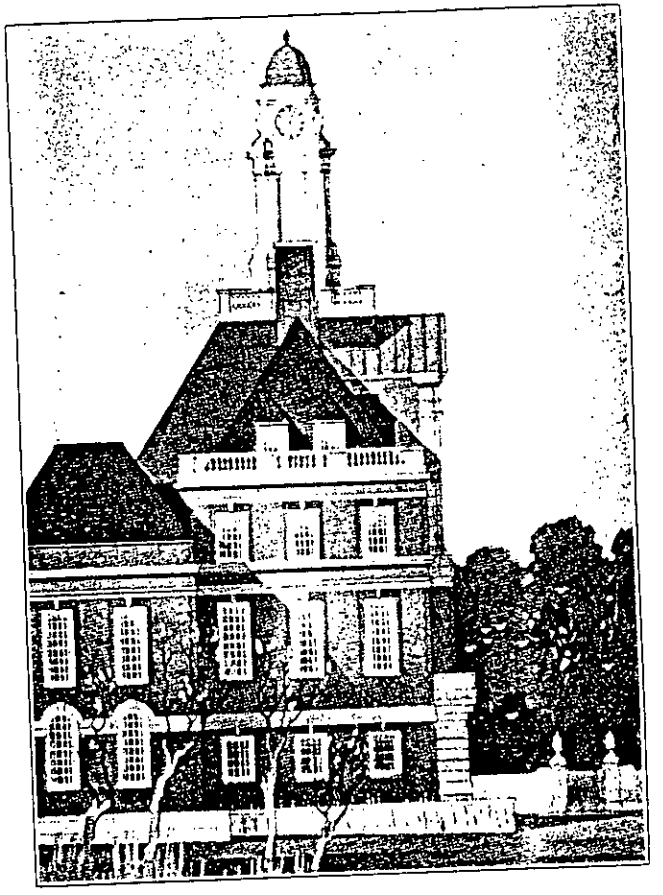
SIR EDWIN LUTYENS, R.A., F.R.I.B.A., AND MR. CHARLES HANSCOMB, F.R.I.B.A. 1926.

THE CLOCK TOWER IS TO BE GIVEN BY THE FRIENDS OF THE LATE CANON BARNETT.

INSTITUTE TRUST REPORT 1925-1926

HGS TRUST ARCHIVES: INSTITUTE FILE





The Institute, showing from Pictures by Mr. Cyril Farey, A.A.R.I.B.A., how the buildings designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, R.A., F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Charles Hanscombe, F.R.I.B.A., will look when they are erected.

The full scheme would come to £42,000 and at the end of the day the bulk of the cost came from Middlesex, although Mrs. Barnett herself gave £5,000 and her friends another £2,500. A further £2,200 came from voluntary subscriptions. The details of this final version were heavily reworked by a third architect, Charles Hanscombe in conjunction with a Mr. Crothall of the Middlesex County Council.

As built, then, the Institute cannot properly be said to be a work of Lutyens. It was a joint effort, Soutar, Hanscombe, Crothall, and Wilson Hart. Only the north wing is 'autograph' Lutyens; the south is a copy by Soutar, and the rear wing (Crewe Hall) based roughly on Lutyens 1916 proposals as reworked in consultation with Hanscombe, though exactly how much cannot be determined since complete drawings for the 1916 scheme do not survive.

Mrs. Barnett put it best in her 1928 memoir of the Suburb writing: 'Sir Edwin Lutyens's designs have been cruelly injured by piecemeal building, but as the activities in and around the Institute grew it was necessary to meet them without waiting until the whole scheme could be faced'.

Perhaps the penultimate word should go to someone who has otherwise been silent in this story, Lutyens himself. In a letter dated 14 August 1930, a full two years after the Institute had been finished, Mrs. Barnett related what the great architect had said about his work as executed on a visit paid to the Suburb on the previous day (this heretofore unnoticed letter is to be found in a folder of papers relating to the Institute in the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Archives).

- the door to Crewe Hall was not to his designs

- the mouldings of the rear wing had been altered from his original drawings; as built their projections were too shallow

- the cupola woodwork should have been painted white not stained

- the clock face was too small

XI. THE LAST VERSION OF THE INSTITUTE. THE WINGS RESTORED

Finally, there is the question of the wings to the revised Institute design. At the time of Lutyens visit in August 1930, they were still being discussed, for he noted that they the 'Art Schools' (the north wing) and the 'Hostel' (the south) should be set back from the line of the pavement to form a pair of forecourts to either side of the main block and, furthermore, that they should be freestanding, linked to the main block by corridors.

Lutyens was here critiquing a scheme which had been published two years earlier in Mrs. Barnett's *Story of the Growth of Hampstead Garden Suburb*, which contains a lovely colour fold-out plate (see following page). C. E. Hanscombe was, according to Mrs. Barnett, responsible for the north extension, the Art Schools, with the help of the Middlesex County Council architect, a Mr. Crothall. The south wing was, in her view, to be devoted to other educational purposes not a hostel as Lutyens described it.

The reproduction of this watercolour shows the Institute as built flanked by two-storey wings. Each has slightly projecting end pavilions and an overall fenestration pattern of 3-4-3. The long inscription gives Lutyens as the architect for the *ensemble*.

This rendering -- which was made, incidentally, by the designer of the large formal gardens and play areas proposed for the rear of the Institute, R. Hardy-Syms -- records an important fact about Lutyens's lost wings. The drawing of the wings is much looser and more tentative than that for the central block, a reflection, perhaps, of the fact that they were proposed, or, as I think more likely, of the fact that the architect himself had done no more than put a little flesh on some preliminary ideas, and who can blame him? Given this commission's chequered history, Lutyens would have been foolish to come up with anything more than an initial concept.

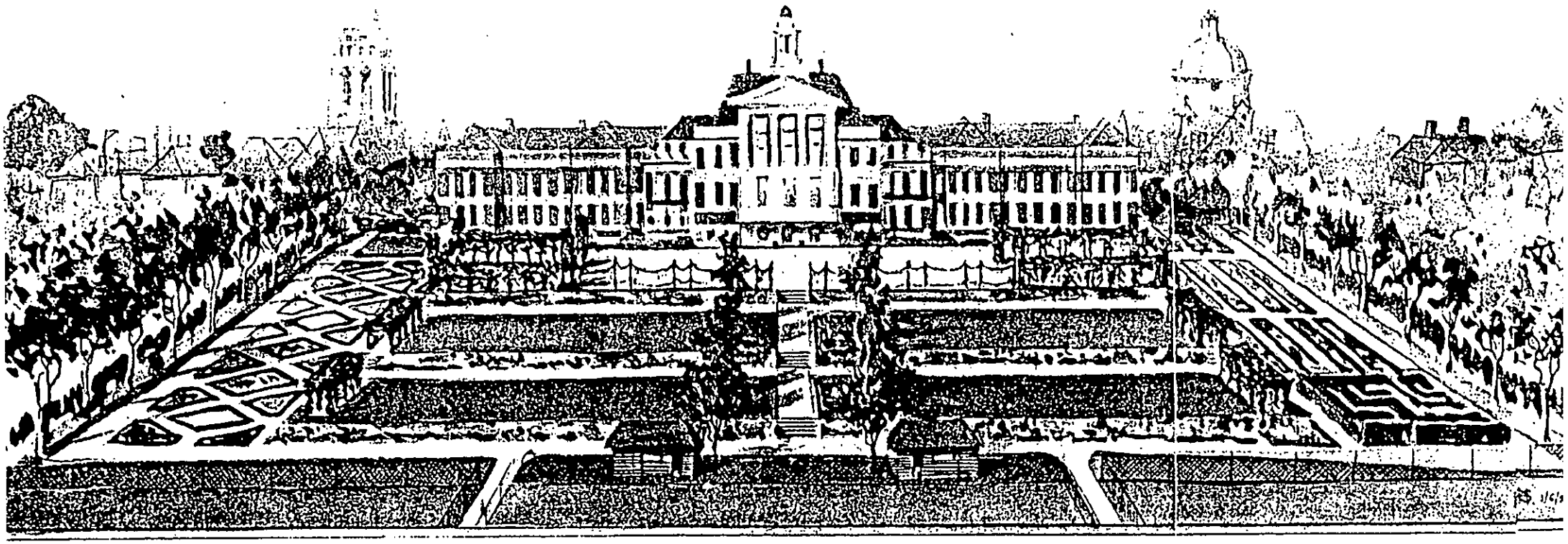
Of equal interest is the design of the garden itself, a romantic evocation of Restoration period gardens which, in planning terms, would indeed have done much to bring the Extension into the ambit of Central Square.

In 1935 the Barnett School was constructed, putting an end to the latter scheme and, at the same time, destroying one half of the setting for Lutyens's wings. Of course it would be possible to build wings today which approximate those in the Hardy-Syms watercolour of 1928, but then one would be left with a difficult problem of historical interpretation, since, according to Mrs. Barnett, just two years after this view was made Lutyens was already thinking of something different. The 1928 scheme for the wings must, therefore, be regarded as a tentative statement. It is not accurate to claim that the Institute as completed in 1926-28 was part of a larger scheme worked out in all its details by a single architectural intelligence.

opp. p 58

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute.

1928



Design for the proposed Gardens and Playgrounds

R. Hardy-Syms, F.S.I., L.R.I.B.A., M.T.I

I the foreground is seen part of six existing hard Tennis Courts, and the proposed two small Garden Shelters which are required in connection with them. The existing Institute, and the extension under construction, form the central block which, in future, will be flanked by additional buildings as designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, R.A., F.R.I.B.A. The site slopes from the Institute to the Ten urts, and the area has to be arranged in a series of three equal terraces, with a central path running between herbaceous borders and flowering trees. The topmost terrace will be equipped as an open mnasium, placed in the middle of two areas designed for open-air Class Rooms surrounded by Rose Pergolas. The second and third terraces will be laid with lawns for play and rest, to be guarded at e remity by Rose Pergolas. The banks of each terrace are to be supported by Rockeries, at the foot of which access paths will be placed. The area on the left is reserved as Shakespearian and H rdens and borders illustrating vegetable and fruit cultivation. A similar area between the terraces and Northway is planned for plots for Children's Gardens, and a Maze to amuse young and mediately surrounding the Institute Buildings is a sunk area with terraced slopes planted with flowering shrubs: this has been specially contrived to bring the base of the beautiful building into view.

FROM H-BARNETT, THE STORY OF THE GROWTH OF HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB, LONDON: HGS. 1928. opp. p 58.

LATER SCHEMES

In spring 1961 Michael Darke, an architect who was also a member of the General Committee of the Residents's Association, completed his design for wings to the Institute. The materials he proposed were metal and glass.[4] Another scheme to extend the Institute by the construction of a wing was put forward in the early 1980s, but the cost -- which had to include the reconstruction of the north wing of the Institute -- was prohibitive and as a result the project abandoned.[5]

CONCLUSIONS

- Lutyens's design for the Institute has gone through so many stages, been chopped and rearranged so many times, that the present building really must be seen as a hybrid, with contributions by Lutyens, Soutar, Hanscombe and the Middlesex County Council's architect. The only authentically Lutyens area of the building is the Old Hall in the north wing and very probably its exterior envelope, completed by 1912. Most of the other exterior details, even their overall arrangement cannot be firmly attributed to him. In short and in the language of connoisseurship, the Institute is not an 'autograph' Lutyens.

- Although Lutyens intended for there to be a screen of buildings closing the east side of Central Square, he never arrived at what might be called a final design fixing the form of the wings. The nearest solution is that illustrated in Hardy-Syms's watercolour of the Institute with its gardens of 1928.

Dr Chris Miele
Historical Analysis and Research Team
English Heritage

16 July 1998 ? 6.

[4] Ikin, p. 100.

[5] Miller and Grey, p. 89.

Hampstead Garden Suburb. A Review of Unlisted Buildings in the Old Suburb.

Introduction

Begun in 1907 Hampstead Garden Suburb is known internationally as the most perfect example of its type. Its designers Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin (aided by Edwin Lutyens and other well regarded early C20 architects) combined sophisticated planning, carefully studied architecture and a mix of cultivated and wild nature to produce an artful environment. The architects and promoters of the Suburb were acting within a well defined tradition stretching back roughly a century to the Romantic Movement, one which sought to reconcile the perceived contradiction between modern industrial society and the natural world. To Henrietta Barnett, the driving force behind the Suburb, it was much more than this; she saw it as an experiment in social reform. In the future imagined by Mrs. Barnett and the political moderates who moved in her circle, good architecture and planning would resolve tensions between rich and poor, who would live happily together in fully integrated, stable communities.

This paper has two aims: first, to set the Suburb in its broader cultural context and in this way to give some sense of its importance; and, second, to discuss the principles which guided our recommendations for addition to the statutory list. In this exercise English Heritage staff were most fortunate to have a detailed list of recommendations prepared by Mervyn Miller, a historian who is widely regarded as an expert on the Suburb. Dr. Miller's primary purpose was to redress the current imbalance in the list for the Suburb, which affords more protection to the upper middle-class dwellings than the humbler blocks in the so-called Artisans' Quarter. Recent research, in particular a special consultation paper prepared for English Heritage by Alan Crawford, has shown that the chief interest of the Suburb and other contemporary experiments in social housing lay precisely in the design and layout of its working-class districts.

Sections 1 and 2 fill in the historical background to the Garden Suburb Movement. **Section 3** discusses the contribution of Ebenezer Howard. **Section 4** treats the charitable and philanthropic ideals of Canon and Mrs. Samuel Barnett. The early history of the Suburb itself is summarized in **Section 5**.

1. Precedents: The Romantic Suburb and Working Class Housing

The desire to bring nature into close proximity with urban dwellings is the product of the Romantic Movement, and the figure who did more than anyone else to define the visual form of this interface was the architect John Nash in his Regent's Park development for the Crown Estates begun in 1817. Although the vocabulary was neo-Classical, Nash, taking his cue from earlier developments in Bath and Edinburgh, twisted his terraces into sweeping curves, throwing picturesque details up against the leafy background of the newly laid out parkland. More influential for later developments were his 1829 designs for Park Village East and West at the north end of the new domestic quarter. Here large single and semi-detached dwellings are set along gently curving, tree-lined streets. The overwhelming sensation is one of privacy and exclusion, with the public way seemingly extruded from a series of private domains. This is the prototype for later Victorian and even modern suburban developments, and the residents of Park Village paid a premium

for this illusion.

The development of reliable public transport, first omnibus services and then commuter railways, enabled more of the countryside around London to be colonized by Romantic villa-scapes spawned by Nash's Park Village: St. John's Wood, the Chalk Farm Estate, De Beauvoir Town, to name only a selection of the better known examples built during the 1840s and 1850s.

An important architectural development of the type came in the last third of the century with the laying out of Bedford Park by Jonathan Carr. Begun in 1877 and filled with houses designed by Norman Shaw and his followers, Carr sought to inject a more self-consciously rural image into the modern suburb with architectural features derived from ordinary country buildings in the south of England, structures now commonly identified by the term 'vernacular architecture'. Tile hanging, timber framing, roughcast surfaces, weatherboarding, steeply pitched and tiled roofs, prominent gables, these basic elements formed the grammar of this vernacular revival. Architectural effect was achieved by the scale and proportion of forms as well as by the colour and texture of traditional materials. Visitors marvelled at the results, comparing what they saw on leaving the overground train with the High Street of some country town or village. It was all an elaborate fantasy, of course, since the resemblance was remote, but it was enough to spark the imagination of middle-class people seeking relief from an increasingly hostile inner-city environment. The very spread of the commuter railway lines that fostered this second generation growth of London suburbs had cast a blight on earlier near suburbs which quickly degenerated into appalling slums.

The second strand of social and architectural thinking that would eventually coalesce in the Garden Suburb ideal developed in response to this impoverishment of inner cities. Interest in working-class housing reform can be traced back at least to 1851, when Prince Albert commissioned a model dwelling for the Great Exhibition. In the same year Sir Titus Salt established an entirely new community for workers at his factory just outside Bradford. Although designed to serve industry Saltaire reproduced the range of building types that one would expect to find in any small town. To provide recreation there was a public park and of course the countryside was near to hand. The architects, Lockwood and Mawson of Bradford, took care to compose the modest houses in groups, giving them an architectural effect and dignity far greater than they would have conveyed singly.

2. Port Sunlight

Across the Pennines and roughly forty years later, Thomas Mawson was hired by W. H. Lever, the famous soap manufacturer, to advise on the laying out of another planned factory community, Port Sunlight, south of Birkenhead on the Wirral. Begun it 1888 it makes an interesting comparision with Hampstead Garden Suburb. The architecture found in both places was similar, vernacular revival executed to a high standard and carried out by a team of architects. And at Port Sunlight one finds a range of compositional and planning devices that would become standard in Parker and Unwin's work, chiefly the use of the U-plan block to form a small green in the middle of a street and the setting of long blocks diagonally across corners to give spatial interest to what would otherwise be a

bland intersection. The differences between the two communities are more instructive, for at Port Sunlight the blocks of working class dwellings are treated as if they were large mansions, with little in the design to indicate that a single structure is in fact a multiple dwelling. The style of these blocks varies greatly not just from street to street but even within the same stretch of housing, and the result is highly eclectic, sometimes jarringly so. By contrast Parker and Unwin took great care to design housing appropriate to the class of the inhabitant, and at the same time to harmonize the design of all the blocks in one section, so that each individual street becomes analagous to one reach in a river winding through a landscape.

In the years between the building of Saltaire and Port Sunlight philanthropists were attempting to solve the problem of substandard working class housing. Although the bare bones design of their experimental blocks was utterly different to the artisans' dwellings in Hampstead Garden, they were inspired by the same desire to raise the standards of housing. A series of short-lived groups were set up in the 1850s, taking their cue from Prince Albert's small block at the Great Exhibition. In the following decade more successful organizations entered the philanthropic housing industry, with the lead being taking by the Peabody Trust founded in 1862 and Sydney Waterlow's Improved Industrial Dwellings Company of 1863.

3. Ebenezer Howard and 'the Peaceful Path to Reform'

The person who combined these two distinct strands of social and architectural thought -- the Romantic suburb and the philanthropic housing movement -- was Ebenezer Howard. In the early 1880s he was deeply influenced by utopian theorists who imagined that a crisis in the capitalist system would produce a sudden and total revolution based on cooperation. Eventually he came to believe that the great changes envisioned by, among others, Edward Bellamy (whose book Looking Backward 2000-1887 of 1888 occupied a central position in Howard's thinking) should be introduced gradually on a small scale in specially constructed new communities that anticipated the shape of a new society. The garden city was the result, and Howard described it in some detail in his 1898 Tomorrow. A Peaceful Path to Reform. Howard hoped to eliminate the evils of urban overcrowding and its complement, rural depopulation, by bridging the gulf separating town and country. City size was to be limited and growth directed to satellite settlements in the countryside. On the strength of this book Howard was able to rally support for a Garden City Assocation which he established in 1899. Four years later the Association formed a company to develop Letchworth in Hertfordshire, and in 1919 Welwyn was similarly established on the fringes of the Metropolis. Parker and Unwin, whose cottages were among the first structures built at Letchworth, exercised an important influence on its plan, elements of which would reappear in the Hampstead Garden Suburb layout of 1907. (Other architects to build at Letchworth included Baillie Scott and Lucas who also worked at Hampstead.)

The planning of Letchworth has been severely criticized down through the years largely because its town centre is cut off from both the railway and the residential groupings. The same criticism might be levelled at Hampstead Garden Suburb but for the fact that it was embedded in an established and growing urban network, which raises a point that must be stressed even at the risk of stating the obvious: Hampstead Garden Suburb is not a

Garden City in the sense that Howard defined it. It was an amalgam of Letchworth, the philanthropic housing reforms of the late nineteenth century, and the Romantic suburb.

4. Henrietta and Samuel Barnett. Culture and Philanthropy

Standing at the heart of the Suburb, in Central Square, gazing at Lutyens magnificent St. Jude's and the vast greensward on which it sits, the last image to come to mind is that of the Victorian slums of Marylebone or Whitechapel, and yet it was in these terribly deprived places that the idea for this particular suburb was born. The Suburb owes its existence to two people, The Rev. Samuel Barnett, and, in particular, his wife, Henrietta. His first charge was St. Mary's Bryanston Square, Marylebone where the Rev. Barnett helped the housing reformer Octavia Hill to organise and distribute charities. Miss Hill convinced him that the solution to poverty lay not in small gifts to people in need but in schemes which improved the moral character of the poor through the personal example of the educated and privileged classes. Barnett carried this idea with him to the East End when he was appointed vicar at St. Jude's Whitechapel in 1873. Here he met Henrietta Octavia Watson, a protege of Miss Hill who served in the latter's corps of rent collectors and housing managers. In the same year they were married. He soon hit on what seems now like a most improbable idea. In April 1881 the Barnetts organized the first of many exhibitions of fine art at the adjacent school rooms. Under the spell of Ruskin, they believed that art evinced certain religious and ethical ideas which had the power to lift those who held them up into a higher realm of behaviour and in this way ultimately to improve their social standing or, failing that, at least to save their souls. Barnett believed that depictions of the natural landscape were particularly suited to this end, since they projected a sense of rest and calm which would, he reckoned, be especially appealing to slum dwellers. Barnett was certainly influenced by the Kyrle Society and the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association which agitated for more public parks and greenspaces in densely built-up areas of cities.

5. The Beginnings of Hampstead Garden Suburb

In the summer of 1880 the Barnetts first rented a cottage on the verge of heathland stretching north from Hampstead Village, and it was their attachment to this weekend retreat that ultimately led to the creation of the Suburb. In 1896 their beloved heath was threatened with speculative development by proposals to build an underground station at North End, a small hamlet known for its inns and bowling greens. In response Henrietta Barnett formed the Heath Protection Society, joining forces in 1903 with a veteran conservation campaigner, Robert Hunter (a solicitor who had been instrumental in setting up the National Trust eight years before). They proposed to purchase 340 acres of land from the Eton College Estate to prevent its being subdivided and filled with speculative housing.

They formed the Heath Extension Council to negotiate the purchase. They proposed to develop the area on enlightened principles, setting aside 80 acres of choice heathland for a public park. The rest would be a 'Garden City for the Working Classes'. The housing would not be of the ordinary type, but designed in a way which harmonized with the landscape. In the following year she asked Raymond Unwin to draw up a plan (his partner Barry Parker would play only a minor role in the Suburb's layout and

architecture), which was published in a prospectus dated 22 February 1905. Although it would be revised several times before attaining something like its final form in 1907, the essence of what Mrs. Barnett and the Steering Trust were trying to do would remain unchanged.

The 1905 prospectus described a community with houses for all classes of people, from simple artisans' flats to detached houses on three-acre plots. The ground rents of the latter would be used to pay road costs and reduce the rents on the former. With each rental payment Artisans contributed to the purchase of shares in the venture, allowing ordinary working people, in theory at any rate, the chance to accumulate capital through thrifty, regular habits. Housing for vulnerable groups (children, the disabled, the aged) was to be provided in quadrangles set back from the street in the midst of ordinary houses.

In March 1907 the Steering Trust was replaced by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Ltd; a separate company called Hampstead Co-Partners Ltd. was set up to build houses. In effect the Trust functioned as the ground landlord and the Co-Partners as developers. To ensure coherence and architectural quality, the Garden Suburb Design Committee was set up in July, with Parker and Unwin taking first place among a list of well known Arts and Crafts architects who would themselves design the houses: Michael Bunney, Courtney Crickmer, Guy Dawber, Geoffrey Lucas, Edwin Lutyens, Baillie Scott, Charles Townsend, and Edgar Wood. Restrictive convenants in the leases gave the supervising architect power of approval over all designs. Unwin retired as 'overseer' in 1914 to be replaced by Sutcliffe, who died the next year. John Soutar took over the position in 1915 serving the Trust as architect and surveyor for many years.

6. The Architectural Quality of the Suburb in relation to Listing

Arguably the most successful architecture in the original Suburb is that to be found in the humble Artisans' Quarter (the core of which is formed by Asmuns Hill, Asmuns Place, a portion of Hampstead Way, Temple Fortune Hill, and Willifield Way). Most of these buildings came from the office of Parker and Unwin, with Unwin assisted by a team of young designers carrying out the work.

Why has it taken so long for these plain, unassuming houses to be fully appreciated? The answer lies in their very subtlety. For a start the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century buildings on which they are based stand outside the conventional categories of high style architecture and architectural history. By comparison, the upper middle class housing, which is adequately listed at Hampstead Garden Suburb, refers to the high style exemplars of earlier architecture rather specifically, and so appear more self-consciously 'architectural'. In a sense the buildings already singled out for listing are those whose style tends to be worn on their sleeves, while the value and interest of the modest dwellings has become clearer as our appreciation and understanding of vernacular architecture itself has grown over the last two decades.

The subtlety and architectural intelligence manifested in the Artisans' housing are not merely the result of submerged formal references to the ordinary building of the English countryside. The positive qualities of Parker and Unwin's designs emerge more fully only when they are read as a sequence of forms, each structure responding not just to those

adjacent but to the entire range of structures in the group, to create a uniform townscape which is so varied in detail as to prevent monotony. It is very much a case of an entire experience taking precedence over the single element, and in this sense the judgment of quality is quite similar to that which listing inspectors and fieldworkers routinely apply to terraced housing, where the effect of the whole is of greater importance than that of an individual unit.

The first **criterion for selection**, and in many ways the most important one, is this sense of formal narrative unfolding across the streetscape. To qualify for selection under this criterion buildings constituting a group have to be the work of a single architect constructed in a relatively short period of time from materials of comparable quality. It must be stressed, however, that not all groups of buildings which fit this description will be listed. As PPG 15 states only the 'best examples' of buildings from the period 1840 to 1914 will be listed.

The best examples of the Suburb style are unquestionably the houses in Asmuns Hill or Temple Fortune Hill, all of which are recommended for listing in grade II. Walking along these streets one is impressed first by the sameness of scale, style and materials, and, then, by the fact that underneath this single effect one can discern great variety in compositional detail. In both streets there are two basic types of houses - what have been called in the appended list descriptions the 'double-ended hall house' and the 'lobby-entry' types for their superficial resemblance to common vernacular plan forms.

Unwin treated each block as a blank sheet on which he disposed of a limited repertoire of architectural features: casements of varying widths, gabled dormers of several kinds, round-arched or segmental-arched through-passages to rear gardens, swept eaves, boxed eaves, weatherings, paired porches, double-height and top-lit stair towers, etc. Double-ended blocks tend to face one another suggesting bilateral symmetry but closer examination shows that the disposition of elements on the paired elevations as well as the internal plans (as deduced from outside arrangements) are different. The lobby-entry blocks tend to relate to one another diagonally across the street, and strike a greater note of variety than the doubled-ended types which provide a base tone for the ensemble. Every design can be related to its exact position in the sequence and, once the overall sequence is understood, to any other building in it. When two or more streets have been studied, several distinct types and countertypes emerge. The Artisans' Quarter of the Suburb outlines what is, effectively, a rudimentary architectural grammar, one sharing with spoken language an interchangeability of parts and functional elements.

The work of Courtney Crickmer in Erskine Hill, Denman Drive and Demnan Drives North and South, while it is distinctive, does not establish the same sequence of formal stresses as Unwin's early works. It also lacks a certain material robustness, having a thin, slightly starved quality that runs counter to the cult of materials so central to the Arts and Crafts Movement. For these reasons, it has not been recommended; the inclusion of these blocks in a Conservation Area with Article 4 directions would be entirely appropriate, however.

A **second criterion** for selection is a variant on the more familiar listing concept of **group value**. It is not enough, in the aesthetic system defined by Unwin in the Artisans'

Quarter, for a building to be well placed. It has to respond to its unique position, both the physical and architectural topography of its setting, in a sensitive and intelligent way. The buildings lining Willifield Green on Willifield Way, for example, are specially designed to articulate that distinctive trapezoidal space and have been recommended for this very quality. Contrast them with the house on the corner of Erskine Hill and Temple Fortune Hill (no. 53 Temple Fortune Hill), which was suggested to English Heritage but which was judged to be not listable. While it occupies an important site in town planning terms, marking the change from the formal Georgian-inspired blocks of the Square to the more informally arranged Artisans' Quarter, the design does not satisfactorily resolve the transition.

Another important criterion for selection is **quality of materials**. There is a clear hierarchy in the Suburb between those earlier houses built from the very good quality materials (again the blocks in Willifield Way illustrate the importance of materials to design) and a second rank, usually of slightly later date, that are made from a grade of materials that might be found in any early C20 suburb. The affect this has on architectural interest is most strikingly illustrated in Corringham Road. Nos. 62-76 are made from substantially better bricks than those used in nos. 58 and 60 or nos. 73-79 and are, as a result, quite definitely better buildings. English Heritage has thought it advisable to recommend only the former for listing even though the latter are built to a similar design. If this seems overly scrupulous or zealous, it should be remembered that 'quality materials' was one of the battle cries of the Arts and Crafts Movement and so can be taken as integral to the architectural quality of any building in that idiom.

Finally, Dr. Miller drew our attention to unlisted buildings with **intrinsic architectural merit**, buildings which would warrant listing in any setting. The work of Matthew Dawson in the Suburb falls into this category. His designs border on the outstanding because they quite self-consciously subvert the neo-vernacular line laid down by the Artisans' blocks. At no. 1 Meadway, for example, he offers the viewer a blockly rectangular house which, if encountered on a village green in Shropshire or Suffolk, would at once signal a seventeenth-century lobby-entry plan, but Dawson alters the proportions of the exemplar and distorts its details to such an extent that the type is superseded and the viewer is presented with an image that is both traditional and original. At nos. 62 and 64 Wildwood Road, a semi-detached dwelling dated 1924, he is even more self-referential and ironic. The design is a welter of features which fail to resolve themselves into an easy, picturesque composition: the corners are oblique, the roofs are of an indeterminate type, the oversailing eaves do not quite align with the polygonal bay below, and so on. It is as if Dawson took Parker and Unwin's by now standardized vocabulary of form and combined the elements in fragmentary or partial fashion to produce a collage of Suburb features mocking what had become, by the 1920s, an architectural cliche. If Parker and Unwin can be said to have created a vernacular prose style then Dawson bent this common language to poetic ends.

The evaluation of **interwar architecture** posed special problems. Dr. Miller drew our attention to an entire street of International Modern style houses in Lytton Close, all in excellent condition. The case for adding these is strong since a collection of well designed Modern Movement houses is rare. More difficult to evaluate were several buildings put forward as exemplifying inter-war Georgian Revival design, particularly groups in The

Bishop's Avenue and Ingram Avenue. According to PPG 15 only 'selected' buildings of such recent vintage are normally listed, and on these grounds buildings which can be said to 'typify' trends between the wars must surely be judged, for the time being at any rate, not listable. Two suggestions in a revived eighteenth-century mode were thought worthy of listing: nos. 1 and 2 Bunkers Hill of 1928-9, designed by C. Cowles Voysey who occupied one half of the long double-ended block, and no. 3 Fairway Close of 1929, home to the architect C. H. James. In both cases, the architects have playfully turned well established Georgian paradigms to new expressive ends, not in the outlandish way that Dawson had a few years earlier, but with a sense of reserve characteristic of some of the best British architecture of the period.

Dr C E Miele
London Division
English Heritage
December 1994

CENTRAL SQUARE, HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB, LB OF BARNET

I. Introduction

The Historians' Branch have been asked to comment on recent proposals to redesign the greensward which lies between the Free Church and St. Jude's. These proposals are based on a Lutyens' scheme which can be firmly dated to July 1911 and which the architect hoped would introduce architectural scale and effect to this area.

The history of the Square is quite complex and it is important to review it in order to understand why Lutyens, frustrated by a tortuous design process, recommended what he did. At the outset it should be said that in the absence of a great deal of new documentary research in the Barnett, Lutyens and Unwin papers it is not yet possible to tell the full story.

The principal sources are C. W. Ikins, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Dreams and Realities (1990) and M. Miller/ A. S. Gray, Hampstead Garden Suburb (1992). I have also consulted the RIBA Drawings Collection and the HGS Archives Collection.

II. History

II. 1. The First Unwin Plan, 22 February 1905

Henrietta Barnett published a prospectus for the Suburb in The Contemporary Review for February, 1905. Raymond Unwin's first plan of the whole (Drawing 3471) is dated 22 February 1905.

Apart from the Artisans' Quarter in Temple Fortune and Asmuns Hill, it bears little relationship to what was eventually built. The site of Central Square had been selected by Mrs. Barnett for its eminence and the splendid views it commanded of the surrounding countryside. In later revisions of this initial plan, the site would be retained and then expanded to the north. Consistent with the gradual elimination of picturesque incident which characterizes the development of the HGS plan, the site's irregular terrain would also be levelled.

Unwin proposed six public or communal buildings for the five acre site, including a church, chapel, hall, library and two blocks of shops (**see attached plan 1**). The arrangement was loose and without order, indeed the relationship among the blocks seems almost fortuitous. The only formal note is sounded in garden running from the south side of the library quadrangle.

II. 2. The Lutyens and Unwin Transitional Plan for Central Square, 1906-07

Lutyens was officially appointed architect on 28 May, 1906, and under his influence Unwin extensively revised the 1905 plan. The extent of this influence is a open to debate. In any case Central Square emerges as Lutyens' work.

There is precious little in the way of hard historical evidence detailing the relationship between the two architects. Mervyn Miller uncovered an Unwin drawing with annotations by Lutyens, suggesting that the latter was given free rein over the former, at least in Central

Square. But this tantalizing document is, like virtually all the Lutyens drawings relating to HGS, undated, making exact chronologies a problem. Lutyens and Unwin had a go at the 1905 plan over the winter of 1906-07. This resulted in what Dr. Miller has dubbed a 'transitional scheme' for Central Square (see attached plan 2), but this bears little relationship to what was finally accepted beyond its having a strong bilateral symmetry and axiality.

In general terms Unwin straightened out the sinuous, picturesque curves that dominate the street layout on the original plan. It is wrong to attribute this change in his thinking solely to Lutyens' influence, however, since the plan that would emerge in 1907 for the Artisans' Quarter of the Suburb has much in common with the LCC's plans for the Millbank Estate of 1903 and, above all, the White Hart Lane Estate laid out and built from 1904-1914, a debt which, incidentally, historians of HGS have refused to recognize.

The form of the Square would be unclear as late June 1907, when the foundation stone of the first cottages in the Artisans' Quarter (140-142 Hampstead Way) was laid. In December of that year the architects appear to have made few advances for the common area and in that month the Board of the Trust was pressing Lutyens and Unwin for details relating to the Square.

II. 3. The Third Plan for Central Square: Lutyens, 18 February 1908

A scheme largely of Lutyens' devising was refered to the General Purposes Committee on 18 February 1908 (The architecture is recorded in a drawing held in the RIBA, LUT [134], 1-3). It featured cloister-like ranges running west to east and framing the church, absorbing its classical front into a long, low mass (presumably the Free Church had similar cloisters opposite). The architectural views, sadly, contain no references to landscaping or planting.

II. 4. The Barnett and Unwin Revision. 24 February 1908

Mrs Barnett made her objections to this proposal clear in a letter written on 24 February 1908. In it she states that she had asked for Unwin's view on the matter and that the two of them thought it better to widen the Square to the north in order to open up a sweeping westward view. She illustrated her words with a small sketch plan in the body of the letter (see attached plan 3). This shows the Churches still closely associated with the subsidiary ranges which continue along the east side. Mrs Barnett approved of a clearly defined and symmetrically disposed Square.

The text of this letter is usually taken to mean that Mrs Barnett and Unwin overruled Lutyens, but a close reading does not support this view. It might simply have been that Unwin, acting as supervising architect and the person responsible for liasing with Lutyens, agreed a compromise with Mrs Barnett. It is well known that Lutyens was much in demand at this time, and he appears not to have given Mrs Barnett his fullest attention. The Barnett/Unwin revision was the fourth version of the Square, and it was not to be the last.

In any case a modified plan the Board of the Suburb approved a plan similar to that one

sketched by Mrs Barnett on 6 March 1908. At the same meeting Lutyens was ordered to proceed with the designs of the buildings in the Square. We should be careful not to place too much faith in this event, since the physical character of the Square was still not fully worked out. Its precise level, for example, was only decided in February of 1909, when the north side was reduced in height by five feet.

All during these revision Lutyens and Mrs Barnett were struggling over the form that the buildings lining the Square should take. Each building went through several versions, and the best account of this 'to-ing' and 'fro-ing' is to be found in Ikins.

II. 5. The Fourth Plan. Parker and Unwin, April 1908

The plan of April 1908 (**See attached plan 4**) is recognizable as that which was eventually built. In it the churches are made even more separate from the surrounding blocks than in the Barnett revision of February 1908; a roadway has been cut across the east side, punctuating the Square still further. The parti of this and all later schemes is essentially one of three distinct squares: that in the centre being open to the west and closed on the other sides by the churches and institute; a largely enclosed rectangular square to the south; and a somewhat reduced square to the north, bordered on the east by the wood. A single path runs west from the Institute to the junction of Willifield and Hampstead Ways.

There is little to suggest how this space was to be planted; all that seems likely is that an orchard of apple trees was planned for the west end, on a terrace below the level of the Square so as not to impede the cherished westward view. Two paths cut across the large greensward, but neither link the transepts of the churches as would be the case in later plans. Still the April 1908 plan contains the germ of the later idea for 'quartering' Central Square.

II. 6. Adjustments to the Fourth Plan, 1909-1911

In each of the next three phases of planning the Central Square, Lutyens experimented with the articulation of the three Squares and their relationships with the surrounding architecture. The plan published in the first edition of Unwin's Town Planning in Practice of 1909 shows the positions of the blocks relative to one another subtlely adjusted (**See attached plan 5**). The area between the two churches in uninterupted. (In October of 1909 a start would be made on St. Jude's, which was completed in May 1911).

In the second edition of Town Planning (1911), Unwin records another stage in Lutyens thinking: the idea of the three Squares seems almost to have been eliminated, leaving St. Jude's and the Free Church stranded and the north Square more of a notion than a fact (**See attached plan 6**).

Neither Lutyens nor Unwin favoured this degree of isolation and quickly mitigated the harsh transitions from North and South Squares to the Churches by moving the rectory and minister's house closer to their respective structures and, importantly, by planning church halls for the west end of the Church (**See attached plan 7**).

Central Square/HGS

This is the plan which was published in The Builder for 30 August 1912, but which, as the accompanying text makes clear, was nowhere near realization. There is an unsigned coloured version of it in the HGS Archives offices (a photographic reproduction has been requested). It is labelled only 'Block Plan of Site', '**A Revised**'. It is not dated.

The HGS Trust Minutes for 1911 contain details about this document. One minute for 31 May 1911 (item 1193) reads: 'Lutyens' suggestions for Central Square adopted, except his suggestion that the central path should be done away with, this it was resolved should be retained for the present.' Item 1220, for 11 July 1911 reads: 'Mr Lutyens' plan for the layout of the open space of the Central Square was submitted and approved, the Management authorises to plant trees, layout the flower beds, make such paths shown thereon as might be necessary, but not to incur the expenditure for the pond and bridge at present' [emphasis added].

This minute provides a 'terminus before which' for the plan. Although it refers to 'flower beds', there is no note of their layout on the 'A Revised' plan. Nor are there any references to the construction/drainage details of the pond and bridge. 'Revised A' makes no reference to plantings; the eastern quarters are simply labelled 'Garden' in pencil; the whole area is washed in green.

III. Assessment of 'Revised A' plan, July 1911
Appraisal of Current Plan

Nothing in the earlier plans prepares one for the complexity of the layout shown in the final Lutyens scheme that forms the basis for the the current proposal. The greensward of earlier plans has been broken up into four clearly articulated spaces, each defined by a double row of trees; the architecture is drawn into the landscape by the pond, laid on the axis of the church transepts and having their width. This is bridged by a narrow path. Not shown on the published version of this plan is a walkway leading from the door of St. Jude's vestry on the north and intersecting the centre path on the perpendicular.

Ikins puts forward the view that Lutyens jotted down his ideas for the planting hastily in Marseilles as he was preparing to depart for Delhi. He ventures the opinion that Lutyens, tired of wrangling over details, did not give the final scheme too much thought.

I think it more likely that Lutyens, realizing that it would take some time to agree a design for the buildings, decided to leave the design of the gardens until the architecture had been approved. As is well known, Lutyens took a great care to harmonize his buildings with the landscape, an attribute of his work that seems to have escaped Dr. Miller who expressed the view that the architect liked to see blocks isolated to concentrate attention on the form. Such was certainly not the case. Lutyens was concerned always to soften the transition from setting to building, and he eschewed sharp transitions between the two.

His July 1911 scheme would have had the effect of extending the architecture into the landscape (the pond) at the same time that the trees would bring nature into conformity with the architecture. Additionally, the trees would articulate the large space between the Free

Church and St. Jude's. It had been Mrs Barnett's idea to widen Central Square to the north, not Lutyens' who would have preferred a cosier arrangement, something like a medieval cloister.

It should be borne in mind that when he completed the July 1911 plan, Lutyens fully expected that halls would be built at the west end of each church, closing off the west corners of the North and South Squares. He also expected the east side of the Square to be closed for most of its length by a range of buildings. The planting would have completed the sensation of interlocking squares.

The great tragedy of Central Square is that the church halls were not built and the east side of the Square was filled with one towering building not a range of closely spaced buildings. It is near to impossible to imagine the halls being completed now after more than eighty years. Carrying Lutyens' proposals for trees and a pond would, however, go a long way to making up for the deficiency of Square, which, as it stands, is a sadly incomplete work of art.

IV. Conclusion

The questions which Ikins asks at the end of his chapter on the Square are indeed relevant. Closely spaced trees should be used to fill in the areas west of the churches which were meant to have been covered by church halls. Both the east-west and north-south avenue of trees as shown in Lutyens 1911 plan should be planted along with the pond; the latter would help to articulate the axis between the churches and the former to break up the windswept green waste lying between them. Ideally the trees should be clipped, as Lutyens would have intended, but this does not strike me as essential. The present flower beds are most unsympathetic. Early twentieth-century photographs of the Square show more substantial arrangements, what appear to be gorse and other flowering shrubs. Growing to a foot or two feet and densely packed, these would act as an intermediary range, providing a subtle transition from the grass, to the trees, to the churches.

As for the plan which has been submitted for comment: the liberty taken to widen the bridge over the pond is commendable. If stone bench-railings were installed it might well create a contemplative private space. There appears to be no good reason for introducing the path from the vestry of St. Jude's.

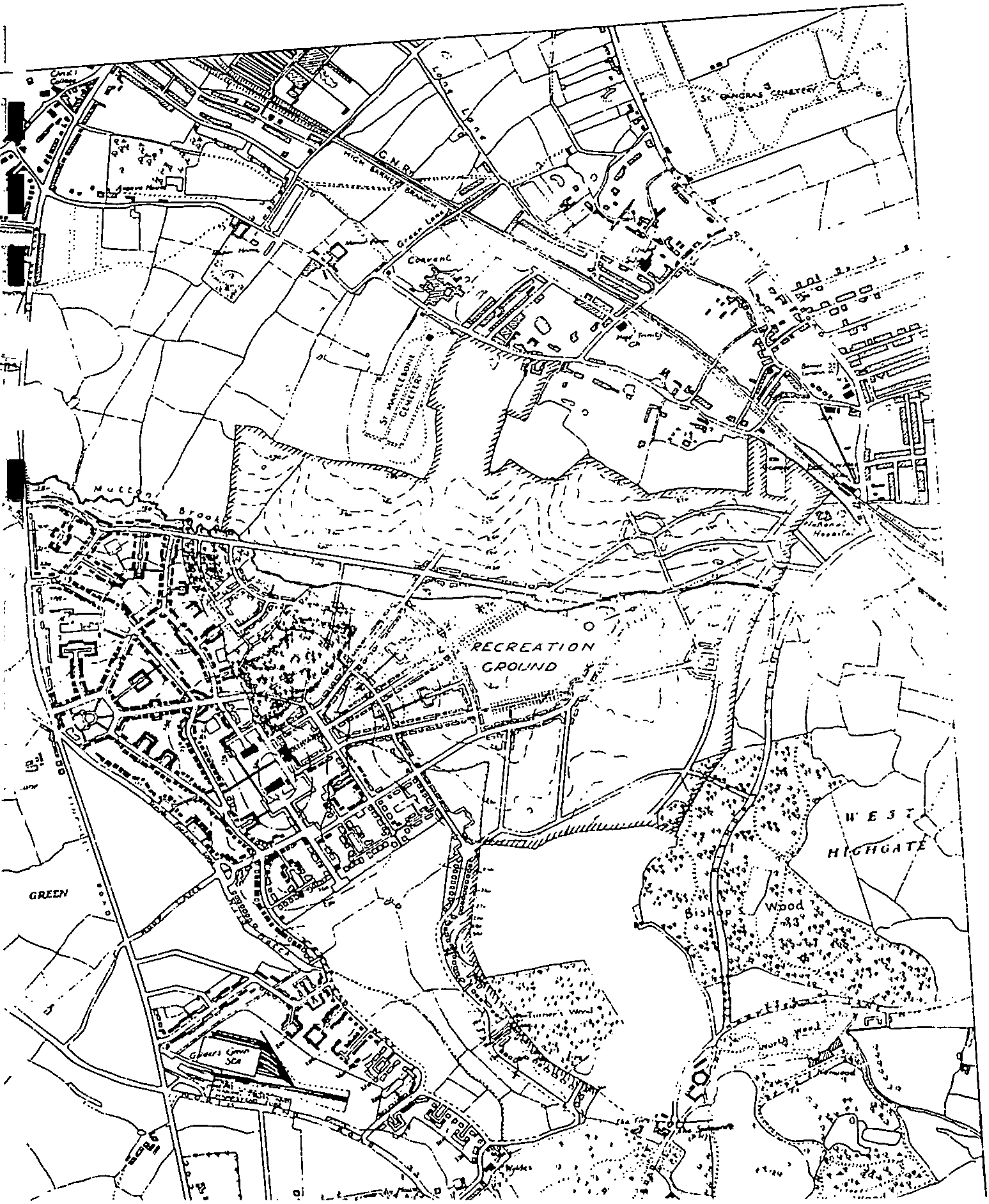
At present Central Square is a most unsatisfactory conclusion to an otherwise outstanding work of architecture and planning. The only realistic hope for improving its appearance lies in an aggressively architectural planting.

Dr C E Miele
London Division, English Heritage
18 February 1994

TO ADD TO NEXT

The Garden Suburb and Extension.

THE RECORD


ST PANCRAS CEMETERY
C.N.Ry
HIGH BARNET BRANCH
Long Lane
Green Lane
Convent
ST MARYLEBONE CEMETERY
Mutton Brook
RECREATION
GROUND
WEST
HIGHGATE
Bishop's Wood
GREEN
North Wood