Charrette aae

Recorded Experiment in Building: William Lethaby and the teaching of architectural history

Hugh Strange
Hugh Strange Architects / AHO, Oslo School of Architecture and Design

ABSTRACT
The architect William Lethaby was a prolific writer of architectural history and an influential educator, yet the overriding focus he gave to practical, hands-on learning raises questions as to how he considered history might be taught to architects. This essay outlines how history teaching was considered within the establishments that Lethaby either taught in, or those where he had a significant influence over the curricula. It then reflects on his motivations, and finally, suggests how, through this seeming paradox, Lethaby was able to relate his ideas on architectural practice, teaching, and history.

KEYWORDS
Architectural History, Radical Pedagogy, Ruskinian tradition, Division of Labour

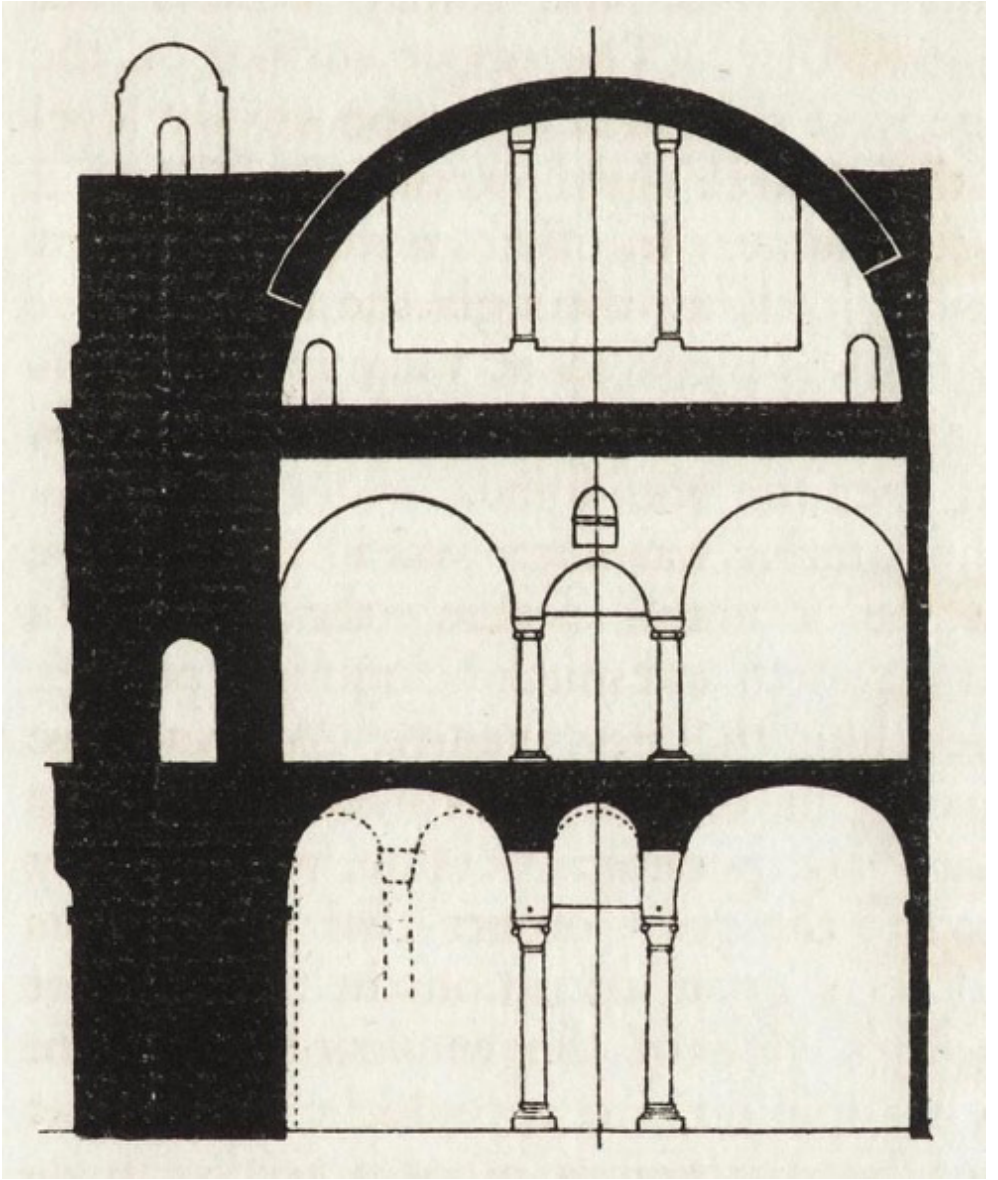

Figure 1:
Section between Great and Secondary Orders, The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building (William Lethaby 1894)

Introduction

The emphasis of William Lethaby's extensive written output and that of his considerable educational influence might, on first consideration at least, appear at odds with each other. While his various texts and essays were at times wide-ranging, covering subjects as diverse as civic care, in 'Town Tidying',[1] to his last published book, a biography of architect Philip Webb,[2] the near constant focus was architectural history. Lethaby himself later recognised the manner of his first book, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*[3] (1891) as historically imprecise, noting,

> My little book was very insufficient and in many ways feeble; second rate and second-hand authorities were mixed up with true sources, and the whole was uncritical and inexpert....My little volume went out of print and I was pleased that it should be unobtainable.[4]

Following this, his texts increasingly adopted a tone of rigorous scholarship, and the titles of his key books from subsequent years certainly evidence a practitioner's earnest dedication to the study of the past, among them, *Leadwork Old and Ornamental and for the Most Part English*[5] (1893), *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building*[6] (1894), co-authored with Harold Swainson, and *Medieval Art from the Peace of the Church to the Eve of the Renaissance, 312-1350*[7] (1904). (Fig.1)

In sharp contrast with this historical focus, Lethaby's various roles in education, at the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Royal College of Art, and the School of Building in Brixton, were all characterised by a commitment to addressing the everyday practicalities encountered on the contemporary building site. Eschewing a perceived bookishness of the architectural education establishment, the various curricula he proposed followed in the Ruskinian tradition, very much via the influence of William Morris, and promoted a focus on training in the workshop, such that design and production might be closely integrated. Where, one might ask, did Lethaby's extensive historical research fit into a vision of education so orientated towards practical building and useful application, so focussed on the here and now?

Early Career

Lethaby was born in Barnstaple, in 1857, and from the age of fourteen served a series of architectural apprenticeships, moving from Devon to the Midlands. During these years he developed an aptitude for draughting, and in 1879 won the Royal Institute of Architects' Soane Medallion, the highest award at the time for student work. At the age of 22, and seemingly on the basis of this prize, Lethaby was employed as chief assistant at the London offices of Norman Shaw. He held this post for ten years, working on numerous significant projects, including the house at Cragside, Northumberland, and during this time formed a number of important friendships with his co-workers, that included Reginald Blomfield, Ernest Gimson, Sidney Cockerell and Detmar Blow. Shaw expected his employees to continue their education whilst employed, and accordingly, Lethaby was enrolled at the Royal Academy Architectural School, although reportedly, the greatest lesson Lethaby took from the experience was of the inadequacy of the contemporary architectural education system.[8]

The years 1889-91 were transitional for his career, Lethaby reducing his time at Shaw's office to three days a week, researching his first book at the British Library, writing various articles, designing and making furniture through Kenton and Company, the design and manufacturing firm established together with colleagues, and producing his first independent architectural designs. Shaw had generously passed on a large commission that assisted Lethaby in establishing his practice: Avon Tyrell, a new country house for Lord Manners, located on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire. The house was the first completed work of what proved to be a relatively short-lived private

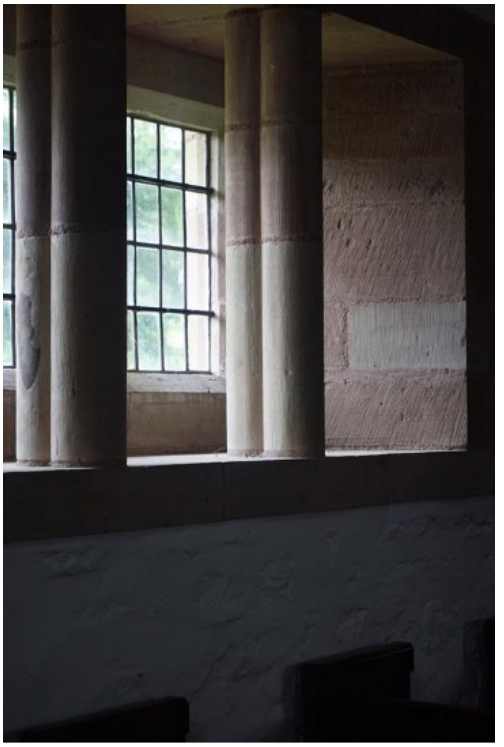

Figure 2:
Interior, All Saints' Church, Brockhampton, (Hugh Strange, 2019)

practice that lasted just over ten years, and produced a very few built works, the most notable being Melsetter House in Hoy, Orkney, completed in 1898, Eagle Insurance Building in Birmingham completed in 1900, and All Saints' Church in Brockhampton, near Ross-on-Wye completed in 1902. (Fig.2)

He eventually left Shaw's practice altogether in 1891, and during this pivotal year also moved to Gray's Inn Square, in central London, where his neighbours included Ernest Gimson, Sidney Barnsley, and Philip Webb. Though the influence of the years at Shaw's office on Lethaby's subsequent architecture can, with care, be detected, Webb became a critical influence, indeed the key reference point for the remainder of his life. There were certainly formal elements to this influence, and at first also an impact on Lethaby's practice methodology: an adoption of Webb's meticulous detailing of every aspect of a project.[9] However, the influence was greatest in the inherited sense of what architecture should aspire to, and from Webb he grew to believe that, stripped of pretence and artifice, architecture was an art of construction, it was building well. Through this conviction he grew to believe that defining architecture and building apart from each other was counterproductive , and detrimental to both. This conviction was both informed by, and made apparent through, the various historical texts that Lethaby produced following the publication of *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*. The preface to his book, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building* (1894), co-authored with Harold Swainson, for instance suggested,

> A conviction of the necessity for finding the root of architecture once again in sound common-sense building and pleasurable craftmanship remains as the final result of our study of S.Sophia.[10]

From this point onwards, he was in regular contact with Webb, and the two men become closer still when Lethaby joined the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1892, co-founded by Webb and Morris in 1877. While Lethaby had attended various socialist lectures given by William Morris during the 1880s, it was through SPAB that he first came into personal contact with him. Indeed it was Morris who proposed Lethaby's membership, seconded by Gimson, and the regular SPAB meetings, followed by group suppers, cemented the friendship.

The same circle of colleagues was also integral to Lethaby's first formal involvement in teaching and education that began when he was employed as Art Inspector to the Technical Education Board of the London County Council in 1894. The Board had been formed the year before and, under the direction of Sidney Webb, the politically active Fabian, was oriented towards industry, with a view that education should nurture relevant and practical skills. The numerous supporters in Lethaby's application included Webb and Burne-Jones, together with Morris, who provided a reference that prefigures Lethaby's radical pedagogical approach, noting,

> I have found him a man of great enthusiasm for the best side of art and much power into seeing into the essentials of art, without being too bothered by conventional views of the subject matter.[11]

Workshop Teaching

Architectural education in Britain, from the late Eighteenth Century, through much of the Nineteenth, was based on the pupillage model, where students were apprenticed to an architectural practice. This education was often supplemented by evening classes, from 1769 available at the Schools of the Royal Academy of Arts, in part founded by William Chambers. Part-time university courses were only established at Kings' College, London, and University College, London, many years later, in 1840 and 1841, respectively. These were followed in 1847 by the creation of the Architectural Association in 1847, an independent school that offered evening classes, with Liverpool University only providing the first full-time course much later, in 1894.

Pressure in the late nineteenth century to professionalise the training of architects led in 1888-89 to a Parliamentary Bill proposing registration. This would require any practicing architect to have trained through agreed forms of professional examinations, in turn protecting and codifying the status of the architect. The Bill was deeply divisive, on one side those supporting the Bill viewed architecture as a profession, and on the other, those opposing, who viewed architecture primarily as an art. The split revealed by the Bill was clearly evidenced in differing attitudes to education in the decades before and after the turn of the century, and in the role of history within that education.

The opponents to the Bill were largely, but not wholly, aligned with the contemporary Arts and Crafts movement, as embodied by the Art Workers

Guild.[12] Known as the Memorialists, following the publication of a jointly authored Memorial piece in the Times newspaper,[13] a number of their group, including Lethaby, contributed to a significant collection of essays, edited by Shaw and Jackson, and titled, *Architecture: A Profession or an Art?*, that was published in 1892 in opposition to the Bill. Significantly, much of their argument, and particularly that of Lethaby's contribution to the collection, was predicated on the belief that the contribution of craft was critical to the good health of architecture, and that professionalizing the architect's status created yet more distance between architect and craftsmen. Lethaby's text also made evident his disdain for what he considered the mis-use of history in education,

> The so-called training of architects at the present time consists not in being taught their art, but in learning more or less by rote out of books some facts about it, *when their art was an art*. The study of 'architecture' now is the study of lists of old buildings and their parts, classified and tabulated under every conceivable cross-indexing of features, style, place and date. 'Design' is now taught as being the 'scholarly' rearrangement of drawn representations of the 'features' in a new *drawing*.[14]

The approach Lethaby positioned himself against in this text was perhaps best represented some years later by Reginald Blomfield, himself one of the original Memorialist authors, as well as one of the founding members of both the Art Workers' Guild and Kenton & Co. In sucsequent years, when appointed as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy in 1906, Blomfield promoted a Beaux Arts approach, mirrored by the later classicism of his own practice, that placed history at the centre of his pedagogic project. The history taught was oriented towards learning from a canon of historical masterpieces, and, in turn, the focus of the lessons to be gained from these great buildings was largely compositional and stylistic.[15]

In contrast to this approach, Lethaby's contribution to the collected essays suggested,

> If you want to learn architecture, you must study architecture – that is, architectural construction, not the gymnastics which will overleap the building act. You must pry into materials. You must learn the actual 'I know' of the workman.[16]

When the Central School of Arts and Crafts was established in 1896, Lethaby was appointed one of its founding co-heads, and was now able to implement his ideas. The school was initially based in Regent Street, in central London, with new premises opened in Holborn in 1908. Lethaby become sole principal from 1902, remaining in this role until 1911. He was supported in his position by a like-minded team of tutors of his own choosing, including Henry Wilson who taught metalworks, Douglas Cockerell who taught bookbinding, and Edward Johnston, who taught calligraphy, and was notable as designer of the famous London Underground bullseye symbol and the Johnston typeface, that was used throughout the underground network. A number of these

Figure 3:
Silversmiths room, Central School of Arts and Crafts , (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, 1911)

colleagues became authors of 'text-books of workshop practice' under Lethaby's editorship of *The Artistic Series of Technical Handbooks,*[17] published from 1901 onwards . Some, such as George Jack who taught wood carving and furniture design at the school, and who wrote the book *Wood Carving*[18] within the series, also became collaborators; Jack producing the joinery work to the interior of Lethaby's last completed building, All Saints' Church at Brockhampton.[19]

New forms of teaching pioneered at the school by Lethaby and his staff were radical and experimental, training both architects and craftsmen, and embracing hands-on experience within a workshop environment. Classes emphasised the direct handling of tools and closeness to materials, and students were encouraged to work alongside those from other crafts. To counter the separation of design and production, students throughout the school were encouraged to develop projects from conception through to completion. Significantly, all teaching classes occurred during the evenings to accommodate the working lives of staff and students and, despite the general fees applicable, admission to the school was free for apprentices.

The syllabus sought to nurture handcrafts in particular, and by 1902 there were 31 classes, including leadwork, textiles, gilding, calligraphy and jewellery. (Fig.3) Alongside these, architecture classes were led by Halsey Ricardo, and, with some irony, were apparently held beneath a leaky glass roof, such that students had to use umbrellas inside to stay dry when it rained. The work developed by Lethaby at the Central School of Arts and Crafts was highly influential, and among the admirers was Hermann Muthesius, author of the,

Figure 4:
Masonry Students, School of Building, Brixton ,
(London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, 1911)

The English House,[20] and resident between 1896 and 1903 at the German Embassy in London. Muthesius, on returning to Germany, went on to become a key figure in the establishment and development of the Deutscher Werkbund of 1907, channelling the workshop ethic he had admired in Lethaby's curricula. Reflecting on his time in London, he described the Central School of Art and Crafts as, 'Probably the best organised contemporary art school'.[21]

However, while the craft students were closely integrated with the architecture students at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the various building trades were still taught elsewhere. This separation was addressed more directly at the London County Council School of Building, established in 1904, and based in Brixton, South London. Once again Lethaby was instrumental in establishing the goals of the school's syllabus. Some years earlier, in the second of a series of two lectures given at the Architectural Association in 1895, Lethaby had set out his proposals for architects to be educated together with the various trades and crafts, suggesting,

> It was imperative that architecture, which was the proportionate association of crafts, should take its place in this comprehensive scheme of craft education…A young architect who had spent a year in a school of masonry and a second year in the plastering and plumbing and wood-carving classes would thereafter stand in quite a different relation to material and so-called design.[22]

The various polytechnics set up at the time, and the contemporary Building Crafts College, run by the Carpenters' Company, were established to provide

practical training to the working classes and solely taught trade skills,[23] while the few universities where architecture was gradually being established taught it as an academic subject. In contrast to each of these, at the School of Building, Lethaby was able to realise his vision of a shared education, and architects were here to be taught alongside the workmen of the building trades.

The School of Building was located within an existing building, a brick-built disused swimming baths, and individual classes, including masonry, bricklaying, plastering and carpentry, were housed within workshops that surrounded the main pool space. Here, in the large Central Hall, students could work on full-scale mock-ups of construction works. (Fig.4) As well as providing the opportunity for collaborative work, this setting allowed practical learning to be aligned to Lethaby's idea of architecture: experimental building research in materials and structures. Lethaby's historical studies had closely examined the medieval building workshops of the guilds, and these were certainly in the forefront of his mind in the opportunities provided for architects, trades and foremen to study alongside each other, participating in their own courses in view of each other, and in close enough proximity to work together on shared projects.

Teaching History

While the collaborative and construction-oriented manner of teaching at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and at the London County Council School of Building were both well-documented by Lethaby's writings of the period, his views on how he considered architectural history should be taught were less apparent. Perhaps the most significant indication lies within the text he wrote in 1904 for the *Architectural Review* as part of a series from a range of authors, titled, 'Architectural Education'. Here he re-stated his commitment to construction, suggesting, 'the function of the architect is to build, and the purpose of architectural education is to teach him to build well.'[24] He goes on to list those course components he believed to be most important, including practical knowledge of materials and building elements, geometry and mechanics, and planning. Finally, and it seems almost grudgingly, he acknowledged a place for architectural history, stating, 'The reference to historical architecture might now come in, but it should not be studied as history but as *recorded experiment in building*.'[25] The implication is certainly not that architectural history had no place in an architect's education; however, it would be fair to suggest Lethaby clearly had reservations as to how it was to be taught.

Reviewing the prospectuses and timetables of The Central School of Arts and Crafts, and of the London County Council School of Building from their early years seems to support this hypothesis; it is evident in each that the formal teaching of history as academic subject was very much peripheral. The prospectus for The Central School, in its first academic year of 1896, describes the content of the Architectural Design course, focussing on design,

the mechanics of construction and drawing, and recommending architecture students participate in practical masonry and leadwork classes. No mention throughout the document is made of architectural history. The reasons for this omission were surely diverse, and certainly among them was a sense that a greater focus on history might distract from the Central School's clearly stated orientation towards contemporary issues, the same prospectus noting in its opening paragraphs, 'The subject is treated – by lecture and otherwise as circumstances may determine – from the point of view that architecture should respond to the facts of modern life'.[26]

In a similar way, Lethaby was strongly opposed to teaching the 'Styles', remarking wryly elsewhere that they might be 'exhumed' rather than 'revived'.[27] In his monograph of Lethaby, Godfrey Rubens summarises well this antipathy, suggesting, 'Buildings could never be for Lethaby, as they were so frequently for other historians, mere examples of style, elements in a tree of architectural genealogy'.[28] In this context, not anti-historical, yet avowedly anti-historicist, the formal teaching of history might conceivably also be perceived as impediment, or at the very least, a risk.

But there were also seemingly contradictory reasons for the apparent marginalisation of history teaching at the two schools. Both schools were clearly aligned with the needs of industry, and subsequently, with providing students trained with skills relevant to the roles they would shortly play in industry jobs. On the one hand it was presumably considered necessary to make explicit to the outside world this primary focus on practical skills . However, on the other hand, and in opposition to this seeming alignment with the prevalent economic model, the strongest reason for the apparent absence of architectural history teaching was perhaps rooted in Lethaby's antipathy towards the very operation of the capital-directed industrial economy that the school was committed to delivering a skilled workforce to.

During the early years of his career, while assisting Shaw, Lethaby had become increasingly influenced by John Ruskin, firstly it appears through attendance at a lecture in 1884 at the London Institute, titled, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*.[29] The following year he read and absorbed all Ruskin's key texts.[30] Ruskin's work, in particular his text, *The Nature of Gothic*, had presented a convincing critique of the Industrial Revolution, illuminating the detrimental effects to architecture of the division of labour integral to the factory system,

> We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two, we want one man to be always thinking and another always working. Now it is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy; the two cannot be separated with impunity.[31]

But while Ruskin's views were permeated by his Christian values and aesthetic concerns, William Morris later shifted the emphasis of this argument to the social and political, becoming in the process, for Lethaby and his generation,

a call to arms. Inspired and informed by Ruskin generally, but in this aspect yet more so by Morris, the central focus of Lethaby's subsequent critique of contemporary architectural culture was associated with the division of labour, by then normalised within building practice, that had separated creative design from execution. He saw that the cohesive sense of building culture, vernacular and Medieval, was ruptured; the making of buildings no longer achievable through socially owned knowledge. The task at hand Lethaby felt, made explicit by this stage in his career in numerous texts on the subject, was for education to directly address this division of labour, providing opportunities for designers and makers to study together, but more importantly, to break down such a division in the first place by encouraging the student who would both design and execute works. From this perspective, an obvious danger associated with the teaching of architectural history, as it was broadly understood and practiced at the time, was the risk of reinforcing and contributing to this split: simply put, that the teaching of history would appeal solely to the mind and not to the hand.

Teaching Methods

Examining how architectural history was addressed in the two schools does however go some way towards illuminating Lethaby's thinking, and towards understanding the apparent contradictory directions of his historical writing and his teaching. It also reveals how Lethaby considered history might engage with the hand as well as the mind. In the first instance, historical knowledge in both schools was perhaps more broadly considered as *knowledge of craft tradition*. This suggests an understanding of how the crafts were practiced in the past and, as such, this idea of historical knowledge appears to a greater extent to have been taught within the various craft classes than in dedicated history lessons. In these craft classes, technical lessons were learnt from past use of materials and tools, and there was a sense of history considered as the ongoing participation by the students in a practical craft tradition, with Lethaby declaring, 'Out of a critical use of past tradition, they must build up a tradition of their own'.[32]

An excellent example of this at the Central School was the class, 'Lead Casting and Ornamental Lead Work', that was held in the first year on Wednesday evenings from 7-9.30pm. This was taught by the architect Francis Troup,[33] who Lethaby had previously encouraged to take up the craft of leadwork, and who had subsequently become an accomplished practical lead worker, and significantly Troup was teaching alongside William Dodds, a registered plumber. The various techniques of lead-working, including sheet-lead casting, simple casting in sand, and incising, stamping, punching, and inlaying, were all studied and practiced within the school's workshop environment, with students required to learn from existing designs, but also producing their own designs. Significantly, the 1896 prospectus notes of this class, 'The laying of lead on roofs as practised now and in former times will be compared and discussed, having regard both to material and workmanship'.[34]

This ethos within the Central School, that considered architecture as the sum of the crafts, and in turn understood the history of the crafts as an evolving tradition, seems crucial to an appreciation of Lethaby's relationship to the teaching of history. Following on from this, his understanding of the pedagogic role of tradition is equally critical. While warning in his essay, 'Art and Workmanship', against, 'excessive regard for old things', Lethaby nevertheless suggests that,

> Usually the best method of designing has been to improve on an existing model by bettering it a point at a time; a perfect table or chair or book has to be very well bred.[35]

Significantly, rather than focussing study of these existing models on books or lectures, greater emphasis appears to have been given to experience of physical examples. Considering the broader focus on direct contact with materials, this approach seems a logical extension of the two Schools' ethos. At the Central School, Lethaby oversaw both the school's own Special Collection, developed from the Technical Education Board's Art Examples Collection, and a wider resource, the Schools Examples Collection, that was a shared archive for art school libraries, and was housed at the Central School. Lethaby was responsible for purchases for both collections and ensured there was a wide range available to students, naturally including casts, reproductions and sculptures, but also featuring diverse examples of Japanese prints, embroidery, pottery, bookbinding and wood carvings, the majority of these now housed in the Central Saint Martins' Art and Design Archive.[36] Examples were accessible to students for reference within each of the craft studios, while a selection was also presented within a display in the School's Entrance Hall.

What might be considered the prevalent manner of teaching architectural history, through lectures and books, while limited in both the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and the School of Building in Brixton, nevertheless had a place in each. Halsey Ricardo, Head of Architectural Design at Central School of Arts and Crafts summarised the lecture-based teaching of the subject at the school in an article for the Architectural Review in 1904. Having outlined the main elements of the course he noted,

> Besides this instruction at the drawing board, lectures are given upon past examples of architecture, or Roman and Gothic times, mainly based upon Choisy's analysis of Roman construction and Viollet-le-Duc's of mediaeval buildings, with black-board illustrations; and the history of the conditions under which these examples were raised is dwelt upon.[37]

Two key points are made apparent through this quote. The first is the idea that history teaching should be construction-oriented, and following from this, that the key writers to learn from were those that approached the subject as such: at the time, principally Auguste Choisy and Viollet le-Duc. The second is that the quote also reveals the aspiration to examine and

understand buildings not as objects of autonomous design, but resultant of their social and economic contexts, dependent upon the 'conditions' under which they were raised. This reflects the manner in which Lethaby's various historic studies had consistently sought this aim, providing precise spatial and constructional descriptions of architectural form and space, while always seeking to contextualise buildings within a broader socio-political understanding. Exemplar in this regard, the tenth chapter of The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building follows a detailed examination of the church and its precincts and is titled 'Building Forms and the Builders'. Beginning the chapter with a quote by Morris describing the church's Byzantine architecture, 'the style leaps into sudden completeness in this most lovely building',[38] Lethaby continues to describe the master builders responsible for the building and the various crafts and methods of workmanship, relating all these to the apparent contemporary 'absence of division of labour.' Similarly, in Medieval Art from the Peace of the Church to the Eve of the Renaissance, 312-1350, Lethaby places the development of Gothic architecture within the context of the culture of craftmanship associated with the French masons of the time, pointedly highlighting the omission in English histories,

> In France much attention has been devoted to the study of the medieval masters of masonry, the memory of whom has nowhere been so completely lost as here in England.[39]

The first prospectus of the School of Building from 1904 suggests a similar focus to that at the Central School. Setting out the times for the evening classes, the names of the staff to teach each class, and the classes' broad contents, the History of Architecture was noted to include 'the early development of building – Egyptian, Assyrian and other Eastern Architecture; Greek, Roman, Gothic, Renaissance and modern architecture'.[40] However, and perhaps tellingly, the course outline, allocated a two-hour slot on Tuesday evenings, but left the name of the lecturer as blank, and it appears the post was not filled during this first year. The following year the architect Beresford Pite joined the school and led the course. While Pite appears to have run the history course in a similarly lean manner in his first year in charge, the prospectus of 1906-7 suggests that in the next year, under his teaching, the course was significantly expanded in scope; it would appear that Pite was perhaps not altogether aligned with the direction established by Lethaby when the school was first set up.[41]

Building History

Returning to Lethaby's 'Architectural Education' article from the Architectural Review, the previously highlighted quote is clear in qualifying how he thought history should be studied, 'The reference to historical architecture might now come in, but it should not be studied as history but as recorded experiment in building'.[42] His choice of words here is compelling and suggests a set of related ideas within Lethaby's thinking on architectural education, on architectural practice, and on architectural history.

Figure 5:
Building construction, School of Building, Brixton
(London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, 1911)

The phrase certainly recalls the opportunities provided to students for building experiments in the former swimming baths of the main hall at the School of Building. (Fig.5) It also reflects Lethaby's view of architectural practice as, 'the easy and expressive handling of materials in masterly experimental building'.[43] For, together with his avowed interest in the past, and his passionate advocacy for traditional crafts, Lethaby was always forward-looking. Indeed, his was a bold and exciting view of architectural practice, claiming in the same text, 'Building at the best is an experimental, even an adventurous, art'.[44] Lethaby's early adoption of concrete as an exposed construction material within his practice clearly demonstrates this sensibility. At All Saints' Church in Brockhampton, the roof was initially detailed with a timber structure, but during design development this was replaced with a structure of site cast concrete slabs that, in turn, support a traditional thatched roof. Similarly in Lethaby's last design in practice, the competition entry for the new Cathedral in Liverpool, produced in 1902, undertaken together with colleagues including Schulz Weir, Ricardo Halsey, and Francis Troup, their entry was richly symbolic but also daringly proposed an exposed construction throughout of mass concrete.[45] (Fig.6)

But the phrase, recorded experiment in building, also reveals something of Lethaby's ideas regarding architectural history. Indeed, his reflections on how architecture might be taught on the one hand, and how practice should be practiced on the other, appear to influence his consideration of how one might write about the history of architecture. It feels important here to return to Lethaby's conviction that architecture and building were one and the same thing. As previously noted, his published texts, while examining architecture as

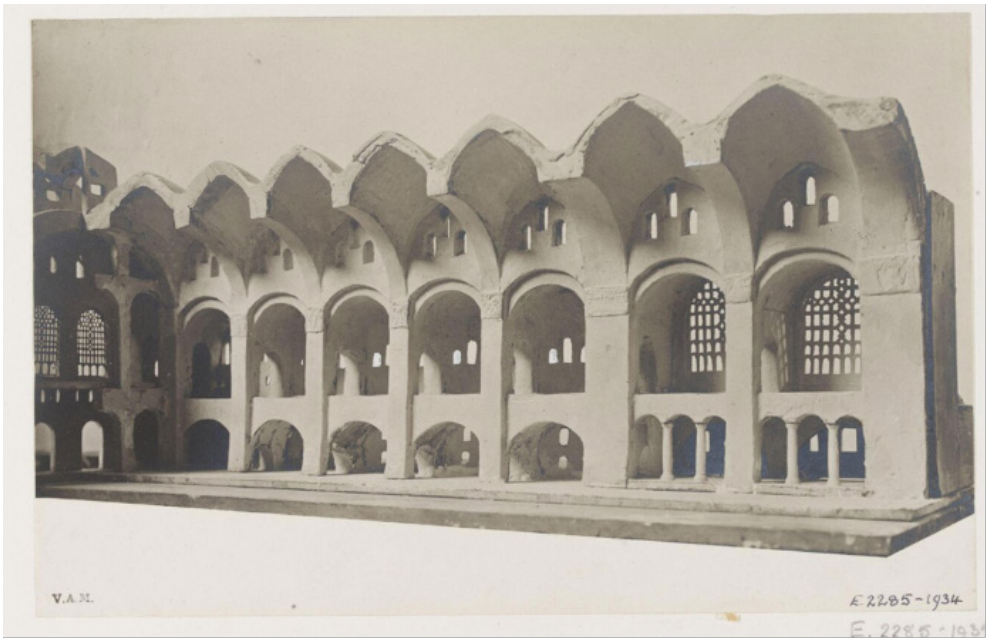

Figure 6:
Model, Liverpool Cathedral Competition
(Given by Mr. R. Schultz Weir and Mr. F. W. Troup, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. 1902)

the rational resolution of spatial and structural problems,[46] also consistently sought to study buildings within the 'history of the conditions', understanding the process and social context of their realisation. And this always included the role of those who actually produced the architecture: the builders. As such, his approach suggested there might be alternative ways of writing about architectural history to those prevalent at the time: ways that, as in his pedagogical approach, were construction-oriented and engaged with a broad building culture, and significantly, ways that addressed those excluded from most forms of architectural history.

It is noteworthy that 1896, the year that Lethaby was appointed to the Central School of Arts and Crafts, was also the year that the first edition of Bannister Fletcher's A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method was published.[47] Fletcher's book attempted to provide a comprehensive survey of the history of architecture. In the manner it did this, the book presented an idea of architecture as the evolution of historical styles, of a canon, and of buildings as objects, their production unconsidered. In contrast, Lethaby's approach appears always to be concerned with redressing the perspective from which these histories were viewed.

Here his texts can be seen to sit within a distinctive historical tradition: addressing the primary narrative of Ruskin's The Nature of Gothic, from half a century before, that revealed and challenged the division of labour within construction , embodied within the Industrial Revolution, while also anticipating some of the characteristics of *history from below*, exemplified by historians of the New Left, that developed half a century later. Writers like E.P. Thompson, in his work of social history, The Making of the English Working Class,[48] sought to rescue the voices of those previously excluded from what he famously described as, the 'enormous condescension of posterity'. By the act of recognition, Thompson ascribed agency to the ordinary lives he

wrote about. Somewhere between Ruskin and Thompson, the democratising element that ties Lethaby's practice, teaching and historic writing is seen to be made apparent in each case by adopting the perspective of the craftsman or builder; history in the various strands of Lethaby's architectural teaching always concerned with ascribing agency.

REFERENCES

1 William Lethaby, 'Town Tidying', in *Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art and Labour* (2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp.14-17.

2 William Lethaby, *Philip Webb and his Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935).

3 William Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (London: Architectural Press, 1891).

4 William Lethaby, *Architecture, Nature & Magic* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1928), p. 15.

5 William Lethaby, *Leadwork Old and Ornamental and for the Most Part English*, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1893).

6 William Lethaby and Harold Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building*, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1894).

7 William Lethaby and David Talbot Rice. *Medieval Art from the Peace of the Church to the Eve of the Renaissance*, 312-1350, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1904).

8 Godfrey Rubens, *William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work 1857–1931* (London: The Architectural Press, 1986).

9 Hugh Strange, 'The Craftsmen's Drama', AA files, 77 (2020), pp.152-68.

10 Lethaby and Swainson, p. vi.

11 Lionel Lambourne, *Utopian Craftsmen: The Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago* (Salt Lake City: Utah Peregrine Smith, 1980), p. 94.

12 Alan Powers, 'Arts and Crafts to Monumental Classic: the institutionalisation of architectural education', 1900 to 1914, in Neil Bingham, ed., *The Education of the Architect: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* (1993), p. 34.

13 Mark Crinson, Architecture - Art or Profession?: Three Hundred Years of Architectural Education in Britain. Edited by Jules Lubbock and Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 62.

14 William Lethaby, 'The Builder's Art and the Craftsman', in *Architecture, a Profession or an Art: Thirteen short essays on the qualifications and training of architects*, ed. by R. Norman Shaw and T.G. Jackson (London: John Murray, 1892), p. 151.

15 Mark Swenarton, 'The Role of History in Architectural Education'. Architectural History, 30 (1987), p. 204.

16 Lethaby, 'The Builder's Art and the Craftsman', p. 165.

17 The Artistic Crafts Series of Technical Handbooks, ed. by William Lethaby, (London: Pitman Publishing Limited, 1901-).

18 George Jack, *Wood-Carving: Design and Workmanship* (London: Pitman Publishing Limited, 1903).

19 Amy Clark, 'George Jack, Master Woodcarver of the Arts & Crafts Movement', Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present, no. 28 (2004), pp.95-96

20 Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (London: Granada, 1979).

21 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art: Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 265.

22 William Lethaby, 'Modern Building Design', a series of two lectures at the AA, reported in, The Builder, (1895).

23 Matthew Wells, *Modelling the Metropolis: The Architectural Model in Victorian London* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2023), p. 136.

24 William Lethaby, 'Architectural Education. A discussion. 1. Aims and Principles', Architectural Review, 16 (1904), p. 158.

25 William Lethaby, 'Architectural Education. A discussion. 1. Aims and Principles', p. 161.

26 The Central School of Arts and Crafts, Prospectus and Timetable, (1896), p. 3.

27 Lethaby, 'Modern Building Design', p. 334.

28 Rubens, p. 249.

29 John Ruskin, 'The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century', in The Works of Ruskin, Volume 34 (London: George Allen, 1908).

30 Mark Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 99.

31 John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of the Stones of Venice* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011) p. 29.

32 Rubens, p. 207.

33 Neil Jackson, *F.W. Troup: Architect, 1859–1941* (London: The Building Centre Trust, 1985).

34 The Central School of Arts and Crafts, Prospectus and Timetable, (1896), p. 4.

35 William Lethaby, 'Art and Workmanship', in Form in Civilization: Collected Papers on Art and Labour (2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp.166-170, p. 169.

36 Sylvia Beckemeyer, 'Archives and Collections: Central Saint Martins' Art and Design Archive', Journal of Design History, 5, no. 4 (1992), pp.295-300.

37 Halsey Ricardo, 'Architectural Education. Architecture as taught at the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts', Architectural Review, 15 (1904), p. 113.

38 Lethaby and Swainson, p. 198.

39 William Lethaby, Mediæval Art: From the Peace of the Church to the Eve of the Renaissance: 312-1350 (London, The Library of Art, 1912), p. 178.

40 London County Council School of Building, Prospectus and Timetable of Evening Classes for the First Session (1904), p. 9.

41 London County Council School of Building, Prospectus and Timetable of Evening Classes for the First Session (1906-7), pp.24-25.

42 Lethaby, 'Architectural Education. A discussion. 1. Aims and Principles', p. 161.

43 Lethaby, 'The Builder's Art and the Craftsman', p. 151.

44 Lethaby, 'Architectural Education. A discussion. 1. Aims and Principles', p. 159.

45 Trevor Garnham, 'William Lethaby and the Two Ways of Building', AA Files, 10 (1985), pp. 27–43.

46 Swenarton, pp.201-15.

47 Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method: For Students, Craftsmen, and Amateurs*, ed. by Banister F. Fletcher (London: B.T.Batsford,1896)

48 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1991)