



M341 Scheme for a building containing studios for Francis Derwent Wood

Introduction

This is one of three schemes for studios on neighbouring sites in Glebe Place, Chelsea, all designed by Mackintosh in 1920.

Authorship: There are signed and unsigned drawings by Mackintosh, and his diary for 1920 provides a detailed record of his involvement.

Status: Unbuilt

Grid reference: TQ 27189 77845

Chronology

1920

24 February: First mention of Francis Derwent Wood's studio in Mackintosh's diary: 'Mrs Derwent Wood called & sketched plan of her husband's proposed studio – To go to their house Thursday night'. ¹

12 April: Wood wants Mackintosh to proceed with plans for studio. ²

17 April: Mackintosh delivers plans to Wood's house. ³

15 June: Wood asks Mackintosh to proceed with plans 'to cost about £5000'. ⁴

17 June: Mackintosh shows plans to Mr Clifton, surveyor to the Glebe of Chelsea. Clifton approves them, 'as in sketch state', but 'insists on more architectural qualities in elevation'. ⁵

23 June: Mackintosh notes in his diary that Wood 'does not want cottage in Glebe Place touched'. ⁶

9 December: Photo-reproduction of plans and section stamped by Holloway Brothers, builders, suggesting that building is likely to go ahead. ⁷

Description

Site

This proposed building for the sculptor Francis Derwent Wood is closely associated with several other schemes: a block of studios and studio-flats for the Arts League of Service, a second studio block for the League in Glebe Place, a studio-house for Harold Squire and a studio-house for Arthur Cadogan Blunt. Mostly unrealised, all these buildings were intended to stand on a site in Chelsea bounded by Glebe Place, Oakley Street and Upper Cheyne Row.

The site had been owned until his death in 1912 by the architect and collector Dr John Samuel Phené. ¹ It had been the garden of Old Cheyne House, a dilapidated 18th-century dwelling that still stood at its W. end. At the opposite end, on the corner of Oakley Street and Upper Cheyne Row, was the eccentric Mystery House, an elaborately decorated building erected by Dr Phené, supposedly in the style of a Loire chateau. Along the N. edge, facing Glebe Place, were some cottages. The site was offered for sale in July 1914, divided into 17 lots, but some or all of it was on the market again in October 1919. ² It was shortly after this that Mackintosh became involved.

Commission

Derwent Wood had had a studio at 27 Glebe Place since 1900, and a house at 18 Carlyle Square, Chelsea, since 1911. He almost certainly knew Mackintosh because he had been visiting director of modelling at the Glasgow School of Art between 1897 and 1900. On 24 February 1920, Mrs Derwent Wood called on Mackintosh and 'sketched a plan of her husband's proposed studio', inviting the architect to come and see them at Carlyle Square, which he did two days later. ³ On 12 April, Derwent Wood asked Mackintosh to go ahead with the design, and within a week Mackintosh had delivered some plans. ⁴ On 15 June, he recorded in his diary that Derwent Wood had asked him to 'proceed with plans to cost about £5000'. ⁵ This may indicate a scaling back of the project, or it may simply be a restatement of a previously agreed budget.

Design

Although most of the surviving drawings are inscribed 'Studio ... for F. Derwent Wood', the design in fact provides accommodation for three artists. The ground floor has two linked studios and a workshop, plus a rear yard, with a lavatory and other small rooms on a mezzanine. Sliding doors to the street make this floor suitable for a sculptor of large-scale works, and it was presumably intended for Derwent Wood's own use. On each of the two upper floors is a self-contained studio with kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. These would no doubt have been let to other artists.

The gabled street elevation is glazed right across the ground floor, and there is another very large horizontal window on the floor above. These bands of glazing recall such Glasgow projects as the Willow Tea Rooms, the first, unexecuted design for Scotland Street School, and the attic storey of the Glasgow School of Art. The plainness of the facade, with only the pattern of the glazing to give interest, did not please Mr Clifton, the surveyor to the Glebe of Chelsea.⁶ On 17 June he approved Mackintosh's sketch plans, but asked for 'more architectural qualities' in the elevation.⁷

The only drawing that shows the S. elevation is one of Mackintosh's *Three Chelsea Studios* drawings, exhibited at the Royal Institute of British Architects in December 1922.⁸ This differs from the surviving plans, which suggests that the design must have evolved through more than one stage, possibly in response to Derwent Wood's changing budget.

One of Mackintosh's drawings includes a careful sketch of an old cottage with a mansard roof, just E. of the proposed studio building.⁹ A note Mackintosh made in his diary following a meeting with Derwent Wood on 23 June – 'does not want cottage in Glebe Place touched' – may refer to this picturesque survivor.¹⁰

Outcome

There are two photo-reproductions of drawings for Derwent Wood's building dated December 1920, one of which bears the stamp of the builders Holloway Brothers, suggesting that construction was to go ahead.¹¹ In the end, however, nothing came of Mackintosh's design. It is not known why the project was abandoned, but it may have proved too expensive: some years later – possibly in 1923 – Derwent Wood did erect a studio on the site, but it was a much less ambitious building of just one storey, and not designed by Mackintosh.¹²



Critical reception

Mackintosh's contributions to the December 1922 exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects were described briefly and unfavourably by the architect and critic H. S. Goodhart-Rendel in the *Architectural Review*: "Two exhibits sent by Mr C. R. Mackintosh looked curiously old-fashioned, and recalled to mind the illustrations which one finds in turning over the pages of early volumes of "The Studio".¹³ Other reviews of the exhibition in the *Architect*, *Architect's Journal* and *Builder* did not mention Mackintosh at all.¹⁴

People

Clients:

- Francis Derwent Wood

Contractors:

- Holloway Brothers

Job Book

The job books of Honeyman & Keppie (later Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh) are now held by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow and include four volumes related to the Mackintosh period. The books were used by the firm to keep a project-by-project, day-by-day record of contractors, suppliers and expenditure. The name of a project and/or client is usually at the top of the left-hand page, followed by information about tradesmen who tendered. The name of the measurer (quantity surveyor) is usually at the top of the right-hand page, followed by information about payments to contractors and suppliers. All of the data for M341 is entered in the tables below.

Page numbering is not consistent in the job books. Sometimes a single number refers to a double-page spread and sometimes each page is individually numbered. Here, each image of a double-page spread is identified by the number given at the top of the left-hand page. (Images of all of the pages from the four job books can be found at [Browse Job Books](#), [Visit Book and Cash Book](#).)

The following information about M341 has been extracted from the job books:

Documents

Images

Bibliography

Published

- Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 10–11
- Alan Crawford, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1995, pp. 179–80, 184
- *Architectural Review*, January 1923, p. 31

Unpublished

- Hiroaki Kimura, 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architectural Drawings', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1982, pp. 62–3
- The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408

Notes:

- 1: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 3: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 4: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 5: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 6: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 7: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41658 (M341-005).
- 8: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 8–9.
- 9: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 8–9.
- 10: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 11: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 12: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 13: A glebe is church property. The ground landlord of the site in Glebe Place was effectively the Rector of Chelsea.
- 14: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 15: London, British Museum: Department of Prints and Drawings, 1981,1212.23 (M338-005).
- 16: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41073 (M341-003).
- 17: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 18: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41657 (M341-006)and 41658 (M341-005).
- 19: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, p. 11 and n. 34.
- 20: *Architectural Review*, 53, January 1923, p. 31.
- 21: *Architect*, 8 December 1922, pp. 407–8; *Architect's Journal*, 56, 13 December 1922, pp. 821–9; and *Builder*, 123, 8 December 1922, p. 863.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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