**Why were the northern cloisters in the University of Sydney’s Main Quadrangle never finished?**

**Why was the RPA Hospital built between two University colleges?**

**Which round University building was inspired by the medieval Abbot’s Kitchen of Glastonbury Abbey?**

These and other questions are answered in a new illustrated guidebook, *University of Sydney Architecture*, a celebration the great architectural past which also provides a glimpse into the architectural renaissance underway at the University at the beginning of the 21st century.

Written by Trevor Howells a senior lecturer in architecture at the University and well-known architectural writer the book treats the University like the city that it is, reflecting a social story of a changing society.

“”The Quadrangle is the greatest collection of Gothic revival educational buildings built in Australia or anywhere in the world. The genius in locating the Quadrangle on the top of the hill downtown from the central city means that even the tallest building is unlikely to ever break its wonderful skyline views.”

But Howells says the great building of the University’s early decades – including the celebrated classical forms of Leslie Wilkinson’s Physics Building and the [another great eg of early building???] – were followed by a relatively uninspired decades of architecture following WW2.

“Massive postwar growth and the urgent need for lecture and office space led to an era of functionalist, often mediocre, even pedestrian buildings in the second half of the twentieth century,” Howells says.

“Over the last five years the University has seen that in order to maintain and build on its position as a premier University it needs to construct outstanding buildings.”

In 2006, the new School of Information Technologies was completed. “Its elegantly detailed steel and glass curtain slides magically and translucently down the slope of Cleveland Street,” Howells writes.

This masterful building by Richard Francis-Jones will soon be followed by two more superb buildings. A new law school on Eastern Avenue (also by Richard Francis Jones) will open up the University to Victoria Park and bring the previously city-based law faculty into the richness of University life.

Central Building, to be built on the site of the old Tin Sheds gallery, will be also feature a layered glass façade and a design that uses extensive natural light and energy efficient heating to achieve five star environment rating. A hub of student services, cafes and office space, it will connect the University’s Darlington and Camperdown campuses via an overpass at City Road.
These projects are part of a larger Campus 2010+ Project that will see the walk from Redfern Station to the Main Quadrangle become a seamless and tree-lined stroll, with Easter Avenue turned into a pedestrian-only space.

“At the turn of the twenty-first century the University is reclaiming its rightful and historic role as one of Sydney’s most important patrons of architecture. We are now building great buildings again,” Howells says.

About the book

The University of Sydney is in many ways like a small city. It has magnificent buildings, parklands, shops, banks, cafes, theatres and more. It has its own local government and takes care of its own security. However, unlike most cities where the buildings have been influenced by surgings of commerce, the University has developed steadily and grandly over time.

Every day, busloads of tourists arrive at the University to view and be photographed in front of the University’s great architectural works. Now, using this book and its brilliant colour photos, archival drawings, floor plans and accompanying text, they will be able to take self-guided tours and answer questions such as:

Why was the grand Great Hall built when the University began life with only three professors and 24 students? Why did the University give the triangle of land between Parramatta and City Roads (now called Victoria Park) to the City of Sydney Council? Which University residential college was built on the grounds of what was once a convict stockade?