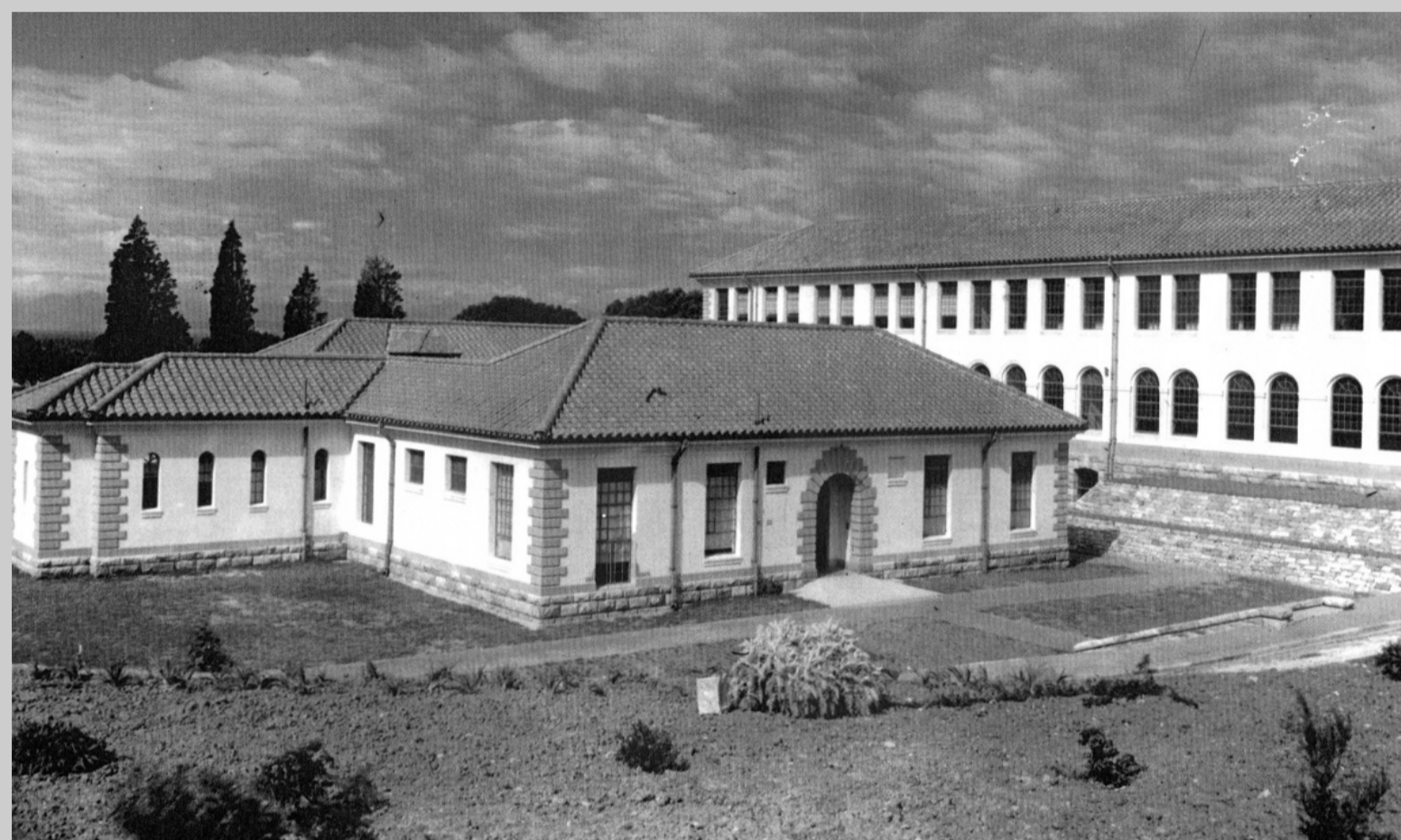
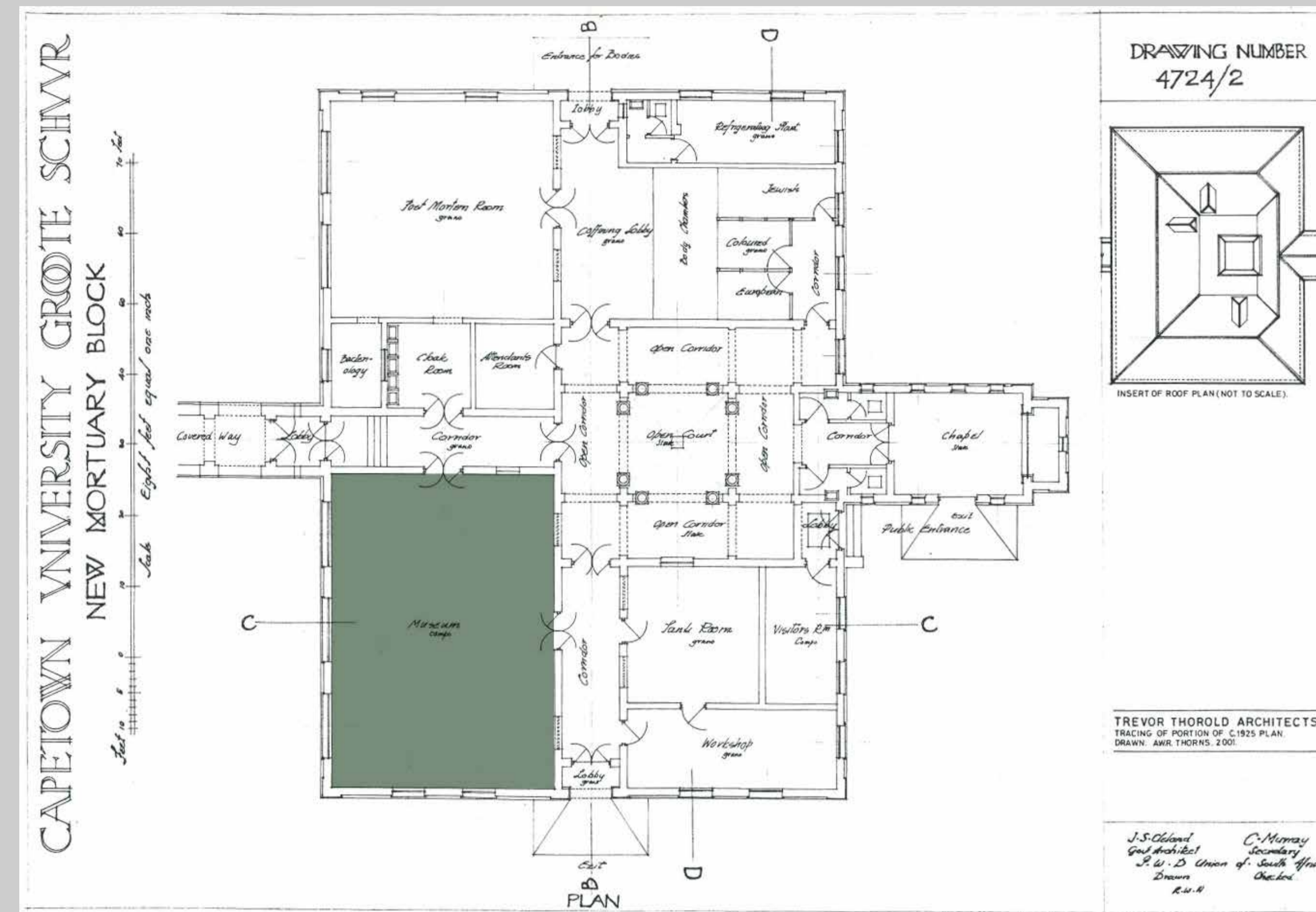


THE EVOLUTION OF THE UCT PATHOLOGY LEARNING CENTRE



The new mortuary block circa 1927, without any of the surrounding buildings that dwarf it today.
Arthur Elliott photographs, Cape Archives

In 1927 the young University of Cape Town Department of Pathology (under Professor Benjamin Ryrie) and other preclinical disciplines moved from the Orange street campus in Gardens to the new medical school in Observatory. The brand new mortuary block was put into service and the pathology museum took up occupation here.



The museum was designed as part of the mortuary building by architect John Cleland, and it played an important role in pathology teaching.

The pathology course covered general and special pathology, chemical pathology, helminthology, morbid histology and clinical pathology. The regulations required students to attend autopsies and "to study illustrative specimens in the pathology museum, which had grown to a considerable size" by 1936.



Interior of the original pathology museum.
Arthur Elliott photographs, Cape Archives

In 1937 Dr Golda Selzer was appointed as the first curator of the pathology museum. Dr Selzer was an excellent scientist who taught pathology with verve and flair and with an approach ahead of her time. She believed that pathology should be taught in tandem with clinical medicine, an integrated approach which is the preferred method of teaching basic sciences and pathology in medical curricula around the world today. A student circa 1947 wrote "... in pathology an unbeatable triumvirate - Rikus van der Ende, Arthur Kipps and Golda Selzer entranced us with the unfolding drama of pathology that made it virtually unnecessary for me to restudy the subject when it confronted me a decade later in the primary fellowship examination".



Dr Golda Selzer, the first curator of the UCT pathology Museum; scientist, teacher and mentor of many.

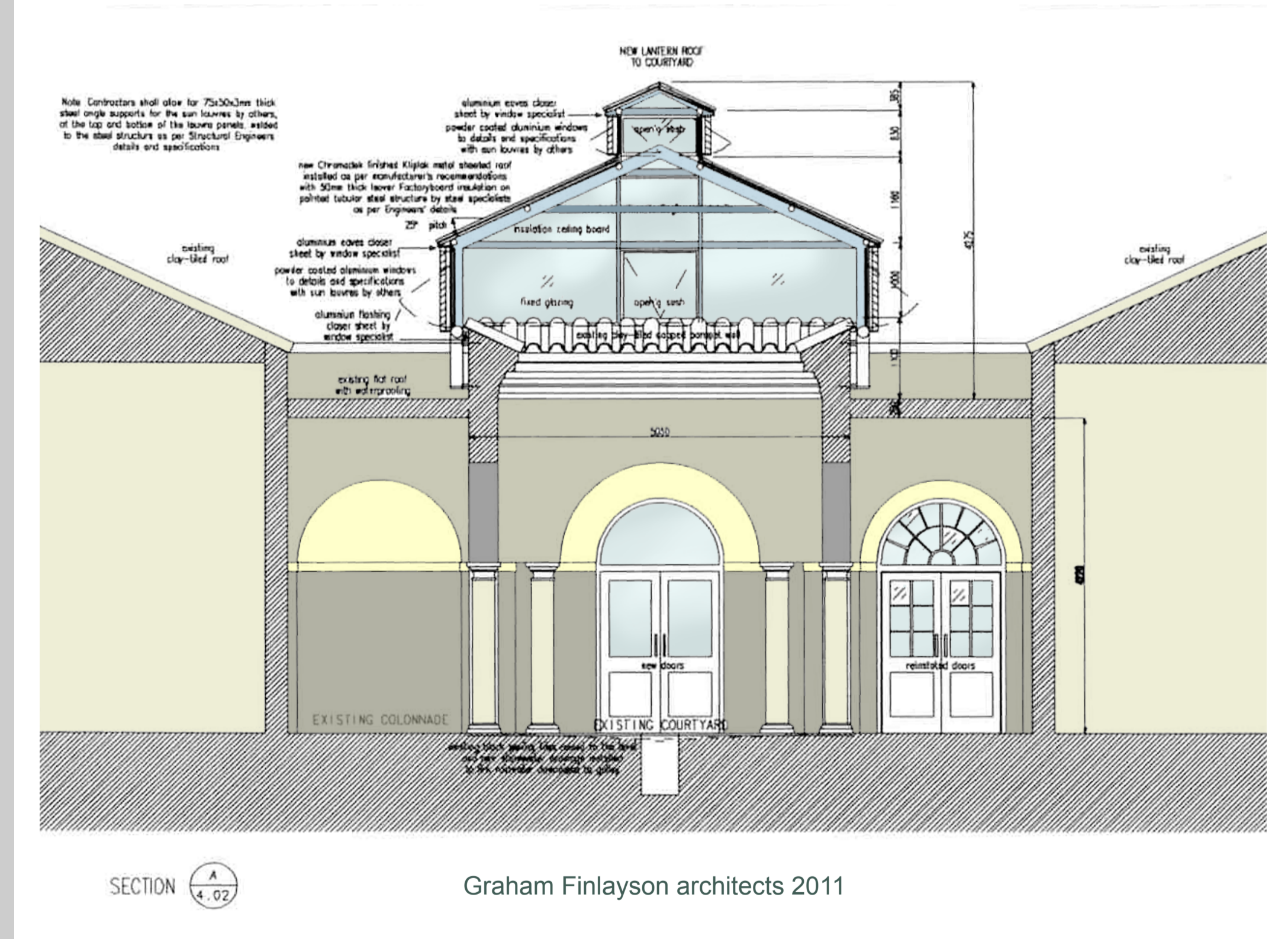
In 1954 the Pathology Department and the museum moved to custom new facilities in Falmouth planned under the direction of Professor James Thompson. The museum remained in Falmouth for fifty years, and was extensively added to during the tenure of Professor Thomson and his successors Professors Dirk Uys, Alan Rose, Peter Cruse and Dharendra Govender.



The 1950's style pathology museum in the Falmouth building.
Photographs courtesy of Dr Robert Bowen.

In the new millennium, spatial rearrangements of the campus led to the return of the museum collection to its original location alongside the mortuary, and in 2008 a revival project was initiated. The **Pathology Learning Centre (PLC)** came about to restore, re-catalogue, display and digitise the huge anatomical pathology teaching collection as well as the Saint surgical pathology and Red Cross Children's Hospital paediatric pathology collections. These collections are now accessible to all health science students both physically and virtually via the PLC website:

<http://www.digitalpathology.uct.ac.za/>



In 2011 the central courtyard of the mortuary block was covered with a lantern roof as part of the renovations to increase the display area for the approximately 5000 specimens now housed here.

Between 1958 and 2007 the site of the old pathology museum was occupied by the **JS Marais* Surgical Research Laboratories** that were set up for experimental work in large animals by renowned vascular surgeon Dr Robert Goetz. He was followed in the 1960's by Dr Chris Barnard who used the facility in preparation for his now famous cardiac transplantation, and by Professors John Terblanche, Stuart Saunders and Rosemary Hickman and others doing the groundwork for human liver transplantation (in pigs). (*Jacobus Stephanus Marais was reputedly a grateful patient of Professor Saint's who left a bequest for 'research work in surgery'.) The mortuary remained, and in 1966 a semi-circular auditorium was attached to the post mortem room, allowing for autopsy demonstrations to larger groups of students - it is in use to this day.



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