

# COAXING BACK TO FORM

Lilleshall last week became the home of British soccer training. *Martin Spring* found the country house evolved for a multitude of sports purposes.

Built in 1831 as a country retreat for the Duke of Sutherland, Lilleshall Hall in the rolling hills of Shropshire lends itself well to its new life as one of Britain's national sports training centres. Since 1951, when it was taken over by the precursor to the Sports Council, the house has been gradually extended and adapted to provide indoor and outdoor sports facilities and accommodation for groups of players and coaches.

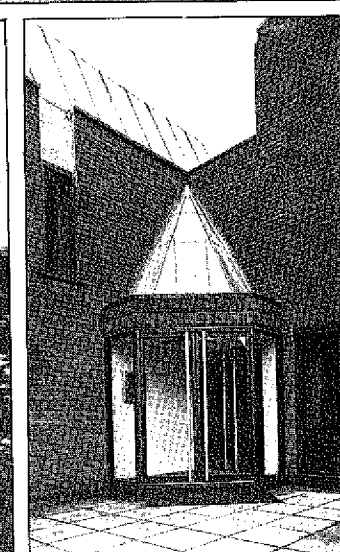
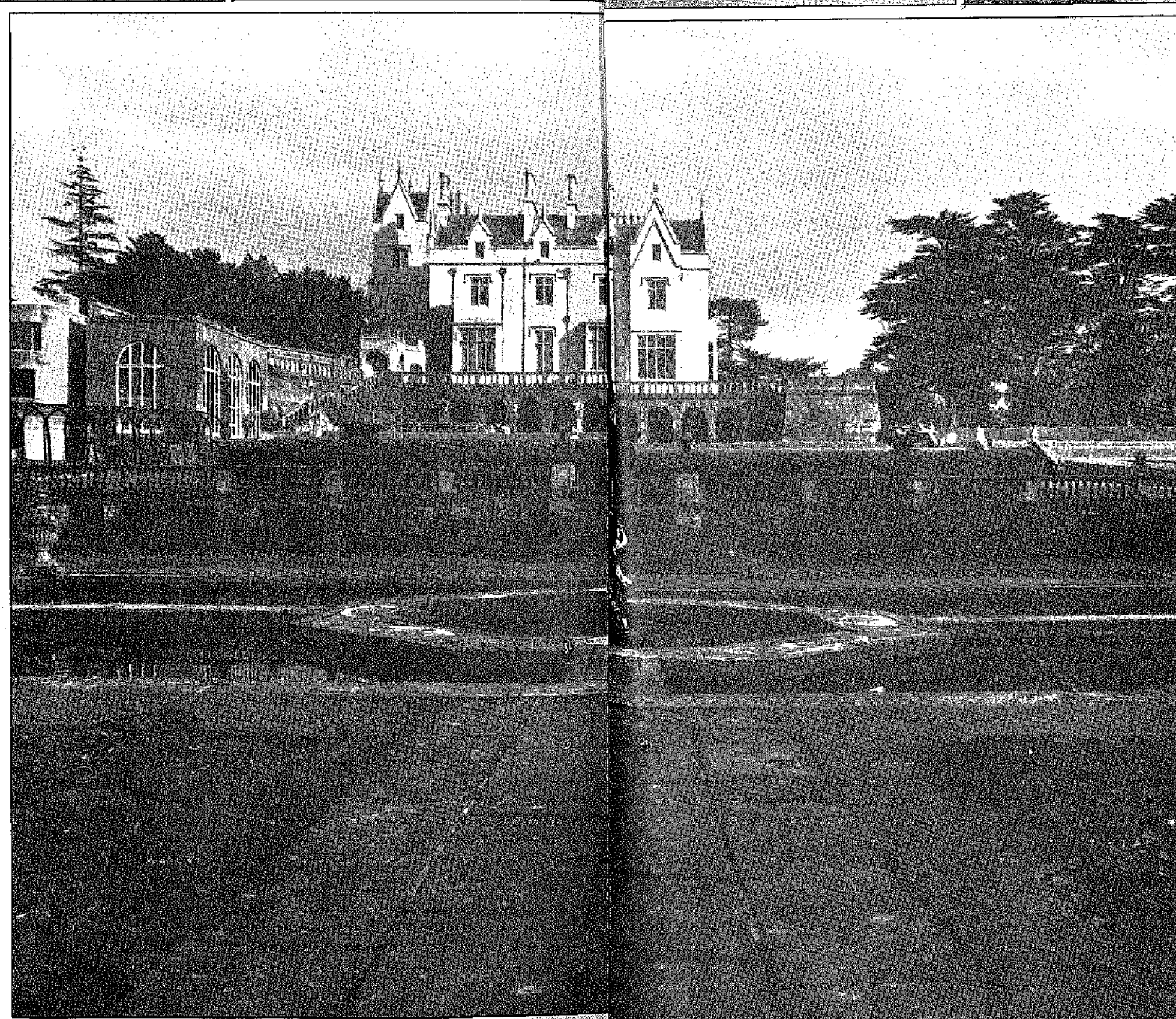
In the 1950s and 1960s, development at Lilleshall was fitful and the earlier buildings were understandably utilitarian in style. But in the 1970s, as the training centre increased in importance at the pinnacle of a burgeoning network of sports facilities around the country, it became desirable not only to increase the number of facilities but also to upgrade the existing ones. In 1976 this desire culminated in Lilleshall being designated the national training centre of the Football Association in addition to its other functions. The honour brought with it a considerable grant from the FA and the need for two more external football pitches plus the expansion of most other facilities by 50 per cent to cater for a total of 180 resident visitors.

In 1977 the Sports Council's

architectural arm, the Technical Unit for Sport, set about drawing up a development plan. Government stringency and the existence of so many facilities ruled out the option carried out to great effect a decade earlier at one of the country's other national sports training centres at Bisham Abbey on the Thames near Marlow, where a lavish, new, multi-purpose building was erected.

At Lilleshall the neo-Elizabethan hall, and even more so the expansive landscaped gardens with magnificent rare trees, make up a fine if not outstanding specimen of a pre-Victorian country house, though this effect has been sadly blemished by the piecemeal and utilitarian sports facilities added since 1951. So the policy there has been to continue the gradualist approach of conserving existing facilities and extending and upgrading them in increments as needs arise and money becomes available.

The accent is on general improvement of the standards of accommodation. Explains TUS chief architect Geraint John: "The centre had been originally developed with something of the image of a youth hostel, and we wanted to upgrade it to one of a university campus." A major strategy in achieving this was to



use the new extensions and improvements so as to bind together the whole complex into a new architectural harmony.

The complex's two major elements of expansion are the hostel block, and the rebuilding of the Queen Elizabeth Hall containing a large gymnasium, squash courts, lecture and seminar rooms and a large bar.

Attracting a £500 000 grant from the Football Association, the hostel block was given pride of place flanking the hall and overlooking the formal gardens. It was designed to University Grants Committee standards by the Newcastle architects with a national reputation for designing sports buildings, Faulkner-Brown Hendy Watkinson Stonor, in a crescent shape of three step-backed storeys of individual rooms with views over the gardens.

Improvements to the Queen Elizabeth Hall and smaller scale works were designed by local architects the Hawkins Roberts Partnership, who had been associated with the training centre over a number of years. The policy has been to extend the earlier blocks incrementally on all sides so as to eventually finish up with what appears to be a new and higher quality building.

As extensions were being carried out to the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the site crane collapsed straight across the building, destroying most of the superstructure. Paradoxically this stroke of bad luck turned out to be a piece of good fortune, as it meant that the entire hall could be rebuilt to improved and more appropriate specifications on the insurance claim of the disaster. Rebuilding

*Left:* built as a country retreat in 1831, Lilleshall Hall is now blossoming in its second life as a national sports centre. Recent upgrading has included refurbishing the original hall and tending the richly landscaped gardens.

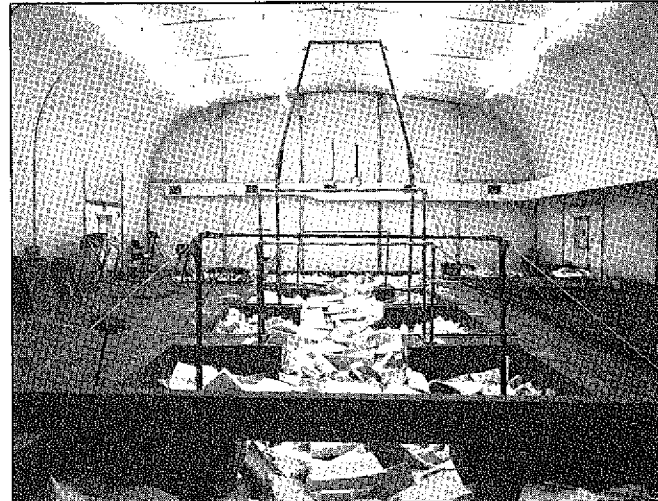
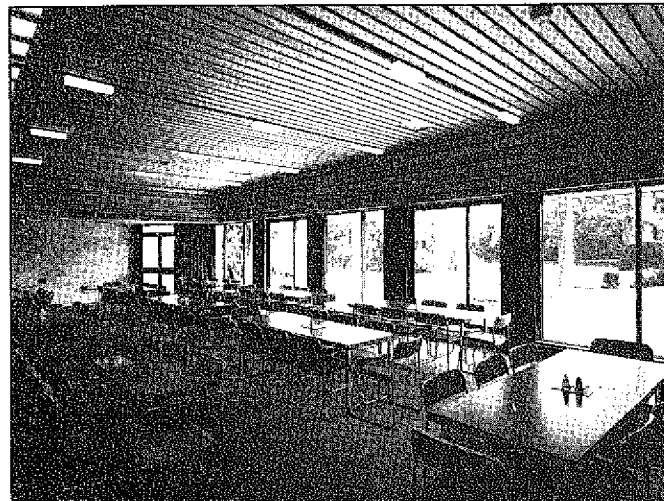
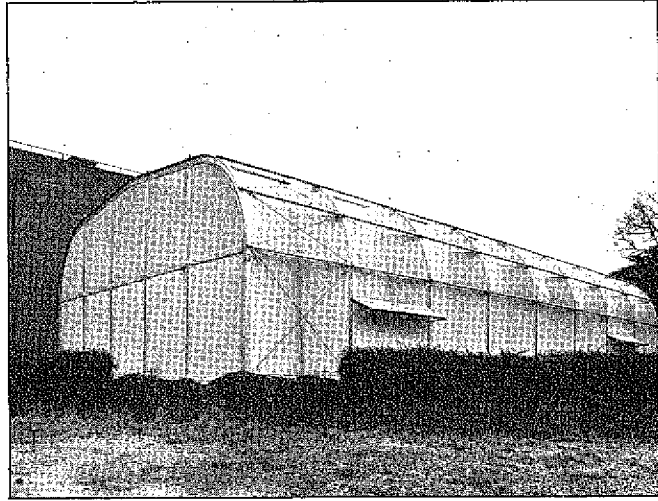
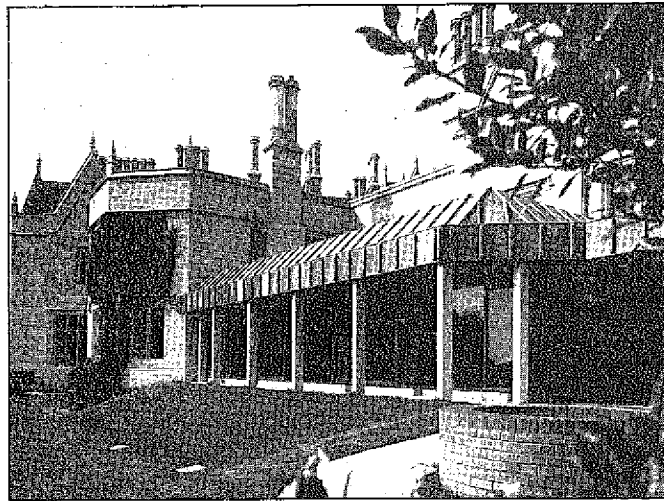
*Top left:* the new hostel block has been built to university standards and has pride of place overlooking the sunken formal gardens of the hall.

*Top centre:* the Queen Elizabeth Hall was rebuilt to modern requirements and higher standards after the previous hall had been destroyed by a falling crane.

*Top right:* the first multi-activity indoor sports hall in Britain, the King George VI Hall has recently been upgraded in line with newer facilities. The new changing room extension (foreground) in facing brick walls and lead mansard roof reflects the Queen Elizabeth Hall opposite.

*Above:* detail of the Queen Elizabeth Hall shows robust construction in brick and lead.



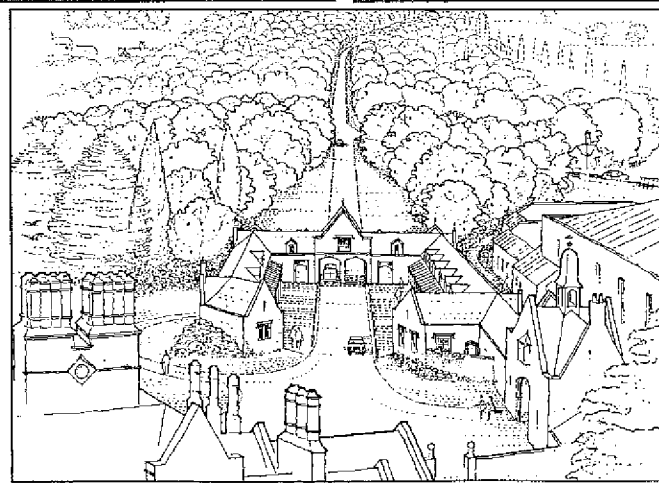


of the hall has recently been completed: it is a chunky red-brick building with lead mansard roof and robust detailing.

Other smaller scale improvements have similarly been carried out in Hawkins-Roberts' established house style. The austere George VI Hall - built in 1953 as the first indoor sports centre in Britain - has been improved by adding a new extension containing changing rooms and toilets in the brick and lead mansard roof style to match the Queen Elizabeth Hall opposite. The interior of the George VI Hall has also been refurbished including the overhaul of the large glazed roof.

The pre-Victorian hall itself has been refurbished by replacing the chimneys, cleaning the stonework and inserting new changing rooms, bathrooms and kitchens. The hall has also been extended in the form of an extra dining room which sits under a leaded roof next to the existing dining room.

One anomalous addition to the centre is the temporary gymnasium, which takes the form of a metal-framed fabric structure manufactured by Shelter-Span. Although this was erected in no more than a few weeks in response to the boom in gymnastics, it contains a



foam-filled landing pit which is reputedly the most advanced facility in the country. The fabric structure has a projected life of about 15 years, and the plan is eventually to extend the permanent structure of the George VI Hall, which lies adjacent, to incorporate the foam-filled pit.

Plans for later phases of the improvements include the conversion of the old coaching stables, which had been roofed over in the 1930s, into the main entrance courtyard for the complex.

The recent building extensions and improvements have been accompanied by

*Left top and above:* new dining room extension to the original hall.  
*Right top and above:* a steel-framed fabric structure was put up in a matter of weeks to cater for the gymnastics boom. It is Britain's most advanced gymnasium.  
*Above:* a later phase of the development plan proposes the conversion of the old coach house into the main entrance courtyard.

intensive work on the surrounding gardens and grounds, in particular the provision of two innovative outdoor football pitches, the one artificially surfaced in porous polyester, the other in well-drained real turf.

With all these improvements, Lilleshall is blossoming into a pleasant and comprehensive campus for training Britain's players and coaches

#### Lilleshall Hall National Sports Centre

Development plan: Technical Unit for Sport of the Sports Council

Hostel block  
*architects*  
Faulkner-Brown Hendy Watkinson  
Stonor  
*quantity surveyors*  
Gleeds  
*main contractor*  
Costain

Gymnasium  
*architects*  
Technical Unit for Sport in association with Shelter-Span  
*quantity surveyors*  
Wills & Hingley  
*superstructure supplier*  
Shelter-Span

All other building work  
*architects*  
The Hawkins Roberts Partnership  
*quantity surveyors*  
Wills & Hingley  
*main contractors*  
Bovis  
Droitwich Construction  
CHS Contractors  
Derek Smith

## NEW PRODUCT REVIEW

# NOW INSULATION GETS TOUGH!

## High Strength Insulation Launched

Sheffield Insulations Systems, the leading manufacturers of laminated products for the Construction Industry, have announced the most recent addition to their product range - Styroclad. A tough, durable lining board, Styroclad is equally suitable for external cladding or for internal linings in those situations where damage is likely to occur.

The new board is a laminate of closed cell extruded polystyrene and Masterclad a rugged asbestos-free board manufactured by Cape Boards and Panels Limited.

Specifiers will find that the reduction of time spent at site in fixing and the ease of decoration combined with the elimination of wet trades, will make Styroclad a cost-effective material for a variety of uses in both new building and upgrading projects.

Styroclad joins the range of laminated products already available from Sheffield Insulations Systems. This includes Styroliner, the company's original laminated product which is a laminate of extruded polystyrene and plasterboard which provides a dry internal lining with effective insulation and moisture resistance. Styrofloor combines flooring grade tongued and grooved chipboard with extruded polystyrene to create a labour saving method of laying floors in new or existing buildings with improved acoustic insulation.

Styroclad is available in a range of sizes: 1000x1200mm and 1200x1220mm can be used with a variety of fixings.

## "First class product"



"First Class!" was the satisfied comment of architect Herbert C Myer, B.Arch (USA) RIBA, after he had specified Sheffield Insulations Systems' Styroclad in a recently completed block of flats designed for the Columbus First Housing Association at Brook Street, Luton.

### Maintenance free life

The need was for an effective insulation material which would have a long, maintenance free life to provide an external lining to the underside of soffits.

Styroclad's ease of fixing and decoration, the elimination of wet trades were factors in the architect's decision to use this new material. Mr Myer has been involved in the design of several developments including the Columbus First Housing Association in the Luton area. The development of Styroclad was described as "An excellent product for fixing."

## EXCLUSIVE

From Sheffield Insulations Depots and selected merchants throughout the country.

## New board for high traffic areas

Linings in high traffic areas are frequently damaged by impact or permanently defaced by the attention of children or vandals. Styroclad, the latest product from Sheffield Insulations Systems, provides an ideal solution to this "problem area". The Masterclad facing has excellent impact resistance and facings of up to 12mm are available for particularly vulnerable areas. Also Styroclad's surface is impermeable to water and can be easily cleaned while remaining unaffected by disinfectants and cleaning agents.

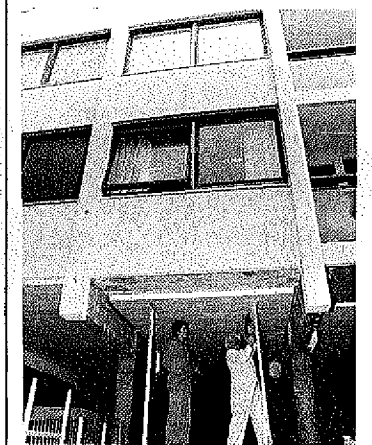
These properties are in addition to the improved thermal and acoustic insulation which Styroclad's extruded polystyrene "core" will achieve.



A number of major authorities are already studying the new product for various applications in upgrading projects.

## Vandals given the bird!

When the Borough Engineers Dept of Brighton Borough Council began considering the upgrading of flats at Albourn Close, Swanborough Place on the Whitehawk estate, Brighton, one of the problems they had to overcome was the poor condition of the existing polystyrene on the open soffits.



Over a period of ten years the material had suffered from the attentions of weather, vandals and more recently the nest building activities of the local bird population. Quantities were removed to provide well insulated nests! There were even instances of birds nesting in the polystyrene.

Brighton Borough Council invited proposals and tenders from specialist insulation contractors and after carefully reviewing the alternatives, decided that Styroclad provided the best solution in terms of cost and efficiency.

One of the attractions of Styroclad was the ease of fixing. In the Brighton project, the board was mechanically fixed by a combination of adhesives and screw plugs.

The Borough Engineers Building Maintenance Group, who were responsible for the Council's upgrading scheme were "extremely pleased with the way in which the product performed and the manner in which Sheffield Insulations have handled the contract."

Sheffield Insulations Systems  
**STYROCLAD**  
The Extruded Polystyrene Masterclad Laminate

## Sheffield Insulations Systems

Please send me further information on Styroclad B3/4/81  
 Please ask your technical representative to make an appointment.

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Position \_\_\_\_\_  
Company \_\_\_\_\_  
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