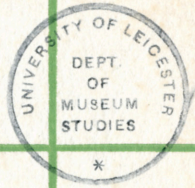


COUNTY BOROUGH OF DONCASTER

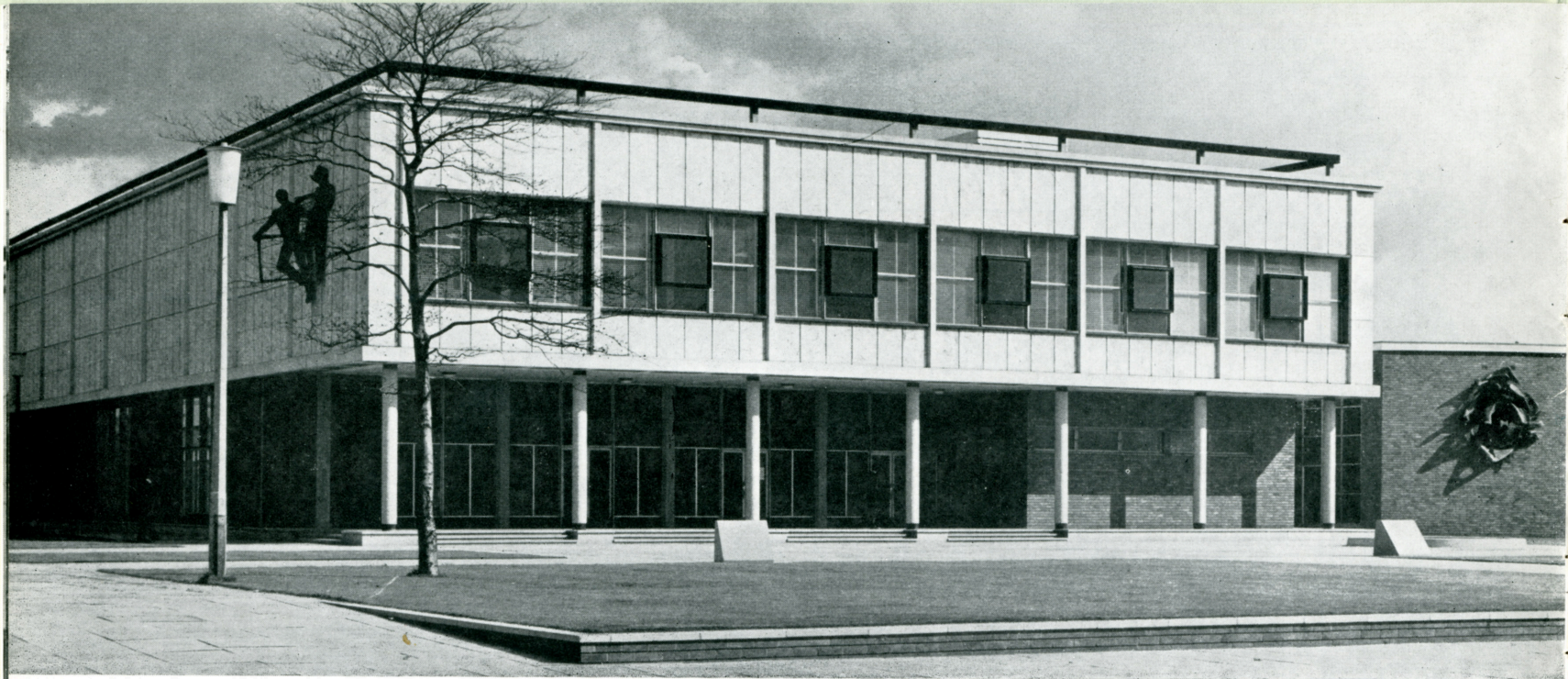
LIBRARIES, MUSEUM AND
ARTS COMMITTEE



MUSEUM AND
ART GALLERY

OPENING
CEREMONY

30th OCTOBER 1964



THE FRONT OF THE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

THE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

In 1896 a meeting of the Council-in-Committee received a small deputation led by the late Dr. H. H. Corbett, who asked the Council to grant a space in the Old Free Library (The Guildhall) for forming the nucleus of a town Museum.

In 1897 a room was granted and plans prepared, but due to various delays this was not opened until 1900.

This small museum's collections rapidly outgrew the space available and in 1908 the Council decided that Beechfield House on Beechfield Estate, Waterdale, then recently purchased, be occupied as a Museum and Art Gallery.

Up till this time the Doncaster Scientific Society had primarily dealt with the Museum matters, then in November, 1908, Doncaster Art Club made a request for room for use by members of the Art Club.

At a Council Committee meeting on the 1st March, 1909, it was recommended that a Museum Committee be formed. This new Committee met for the first time on the 24th May, 1909, and among other business, recommended the appointment of Dr. H. H. Corbett as part-time Curator, for 12 hours per week minimum, at £50 per annum. The Town Council agreed to this and Dr. Corbett's resignation as a Committee Member was accepted.

The Beechfield House Museum & Art Gallery was eventually opened by The Viscountess Halifax on the 28th October, 1909.

As the Museum and Art Gallery progressed, in due course a full-time Curator was appointed, the first being Mr. E. C. Senior of Leeds, who took up his appointment on the 4th September, 1911, at a salary of £120 per annum.

The gradual development and increase in the collections of the Museum and Art Gallery made it imperative by the 1920's that a new building be erected. By the mid 1930's plans had been drawn up and tenders obtained, but the 1939-45 World War prevented this from proceeding.

In 1952 when the present Director took up office, matters were in a difficult state and it was imperative that plans went ahead for a new Museum and Art Gallery. A new building was designed in the Borough Architect's Department to conform with specialised details provided by the Museum and Art Gallery Director. Eventually proposals were placed before the Town Council by the Museum and Art Gallery Committee, and after many delays due to financial

difficulties, these were finally agreed in 1958. By late 1959 tenders were received.

Great assistance in the early stages was given by the International Harvester Company (Great Britain) Ltd., in digging the foundations for the building.

Work on the new building began in the middle of 1960, but further delays occurred and it was not until the middle of 1961 that the building got fully under way.

The Foundation Stone of the new Museum and Art Gallery was laid by the 6th Earl of Rosse, Chairman of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, on the 10th April, 1962.

Occupation of the Administration Block was obtained in December, 1962, and after some 10 weeks, removal of the collections from the old Museum was completed.

The front Foyer area of the Exhibition Block was handed over in 1963 and the remainder of the building on 1st March, 1964, although after this date, many minor jobs still required completion.

In conjunction with the new building, a nationally advertised Sculpture Competition was held early in 1963 to obtain two modern pieces for the external walls of the building. Two prizes of £750 each were offered, made up of £1000 from the Council and the remaining £500 generously subscribed by some half-dozen local firms. From over sixty entries, two pieces were selected by a panel of judges and are now in position on the Museum and Art Gallery walls.