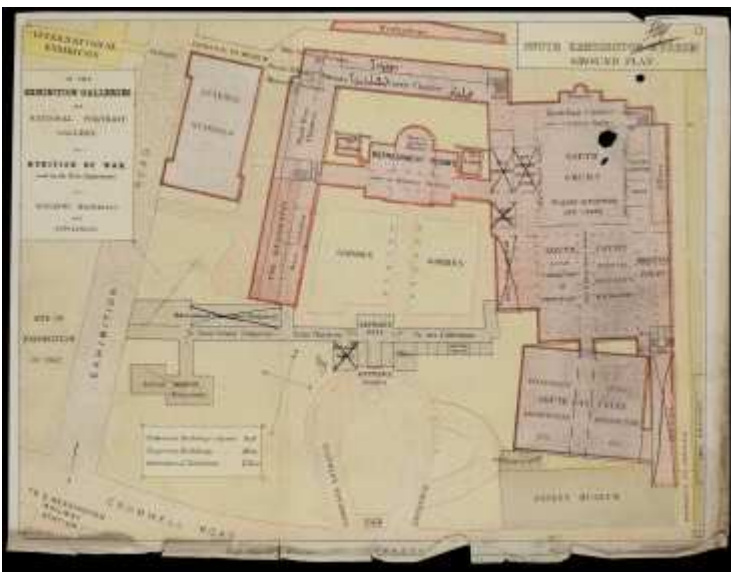


## STUDY RESOURCES

# Sources for the History of the V&A's Buildings



The complex of buildings that form the Victoria and Albert Museum is the result of several important architectural developments. Originally temporary sheds constructed of iron and clad in corrugated iron (they were quickly dubbed the 'Brompton Boilers' following their description as a 'threefold monster boiler' in **The Builder**), the iconic buildings that were erected in their place are recognised as objects worthy of study in their own right. Short accounts of the History of the Building and Victoria and Albert Museum Decorative Sculpture are available online (see useful links below).



*Ground plan repro. in **Guide to the South Kensington Museum (1871)**, V&A Archive, ED 84/233*

The V&A Archive holds a variety of records that aid a further understanding of the conception and development of the buildings on the South Kensington site. These are available for study in the Blythe House Reading Room.

Possible topics for research include:

- Design and construction of the South Kensington Museum
- Construction and decoration of the North and South Courts
- Design and construction of the Façade designed by Aston Webb
- Decoration of the interior spaces (e.g. Ceramic staircase, Leighton Frescoes, the Green Dining Room, mosaic floors)

### Principal secondary sources

- Physick, John. **The Victoria and Albert Museum: the history of its building**. London: [The Museum], 1982. Copies available at the National Art Library and V&A Archive
- John Physick, **From iron shed to marble halls: a history of the V&A and its buildings**. 2 vols. London: s.n., 1982. National Art Library pressmark 35.R.115-116
- **The Museums area of South Kensington and Westminster**. Survey of London, vol. 38. London: Athlone Press for the Greater London Council, 1975. National Art Library pressmark: 720.9421 MUS

## Principal archival sources

Many of the archives listed below which are referenced ED 84 were formerly held at the PRO/The National Archives but are now at the V&A Archive. This series of files relates to the early history of the Museum and its buildings. Files ED 84/48-101, 254-263 and 311-312 are all relevant. The V&A's correspondence files post-1930 are voluminous and are not listed below; information about specific projects can be provided upon request.

- Précis minutes of the Board of the Department of Science and Art, 1852-1899 (ED 84/35-43)
- Annual reports of the Department of Science and Art, 1854-1899 (available at the National Art Library or V&A Archive)
- Entry book of tenders and acceptances for works and services, 1859-1873 (ED 84/3-7)
- Miscellaneous letter books, reports etc, 1860-1891 (ED 84/10-15)
- Report on the Commission on Heating, Lighting and Ventilation, 1869 (ED 84/22)
- Correspondence: construction of Museum buildings, 1857-1930 (ED 84/54-59)
- Correspondence: heating, lighting and ventilation, 1859-1930 (ED 84/60-66)
- Correspondence: alterations, decorations and repairs, 1863-1934 (ED 84/67-71)
- Correspondence: plans and designs, 1864-1929 (ED 84/72-73)
- Correspondence: site and adjoining property, 1858-1952 (ED 84/254A, 254B, 312)
- Office of Works/Property Services Agency (PSA) files, 1870-1988, are at The National Archives in WORK 17

## Plans

- Relatively few nineteenth-century MS plans survive. Those that do may be consulted in the Prints & Drawings Study Room at the V&A and may be located by reference to the artist's name: viz. Francis Fowke, Owen Jones, Frank Moody, John Liddell, Aston Webb, Edward Burne-Jones, Reuben Townroe, Godfrey Sykes, Alfred Morgan, William Bell Scott, and Richard Redgrave.

- A number of printed plans are scattered through the ED 84 files in the V&A Archive, including:

ED 84/47: Plans c.1870 of the South Kensington Museum

ED 84/52: Block plan of buildings at South Kensington

ED 84/55/1: Plan of new building, 1865

ED 84/52/2: Plan of buildings in progress, 1869

ED 84/59: Plan of entrance

ED 84/190: Plan of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1905

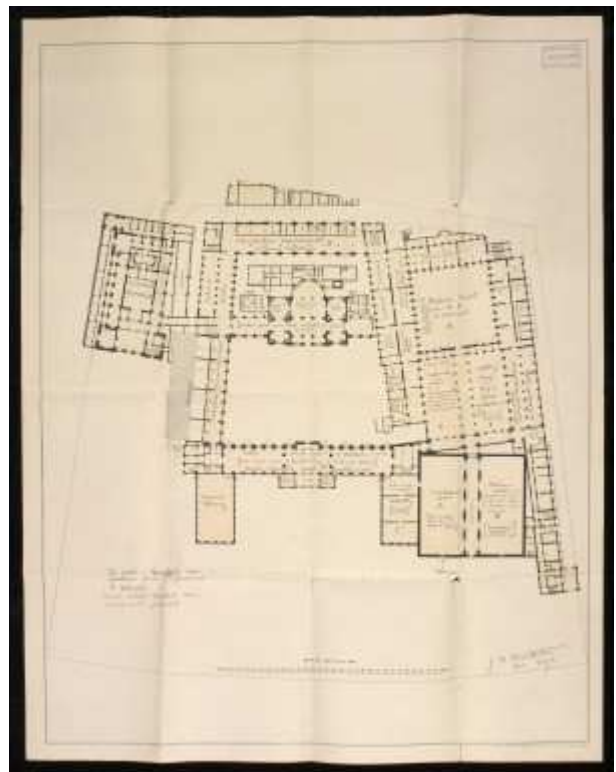
ED 84/195: Plans of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1909

ED 84/197: Plans showing scheme of arrangement of the collections, 1909

- Plans, drawings and elevations, principally from Aston Webb's office, 1900-1926, are at The National Archives in class WORK 33. A copy of the list is available in the V&A Archive.

- Some plans are held by the National Monuments Record (NMR), the public archive of English Heritage

- Plans c.1970 onward are held by V&A's Projects & Estate Department; where these have been added to project files they may be in the custody of the V&A Archive.



*Ground plan (1893), V&A Archive, ED 84/154*

## Photographs

Photographic material is dispersed mainly between several sections of the V&A but a consolidated finding aid is to this material is in progress.

- The Photographs collection, accessible via the Prints & Drawings Study Room, holds mainly early photographs of the Museum, especially under the pressmark X601. These may also be viewed via the V&A's Search the Collections database (under 'more search options', enter 601 in the 'current location' field):

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

- Some historical images of the construction of the V&A, and of its exteriors, interiors and gallery spaces, are freely available to view via V&A Images online: <http://www.vandaimages.com/collections.asp>

- The V&A Archive holds over 900 photographic guardbooks, 1853-1996, which include images of the South Kensington site and Museum interiors. The index to these volumes is held by V&A Images, whom you should approach in the first instance to enquire if they can check their indexes for any negative numbers relating to your area of research. Please email V&A Images < [vanda.images@vam.ac.uk](mailto:vanda.images@vam.ac.uk) > who should be able to assist you. With these negative numbers, it should be possible to identify the relevant guardbook(s). The V&A Archive also maintains a spreadsheet of V&A site images in the guardbooks, which staff can search in the absence of negative numbers.

## Press cuttings

Press cutting albums for 1837 to 1955 are held by the V&A Archive (MA/49).

## Useful links

- 'Brompton Boilers' - the Museum's temporary buildings fail to impress:

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/architectural-history-of-the-v-and-a-1856-1861-brompton-boilers-the-museums-temporary-buildings-fail-to-impress/>

- History of the Building:

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/h/history-of-the-v-and-a-building/>

- Victoria and Albert Museum Decorative Sculpture: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/decorative-sculpture-on-the-exterior-of-the-victoria-and-albert-museum/>

- The National Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

- British History Online ['Victoria and Albert Museum', **Survey of London**: volume 38: South Kensington Museums Area (1975): 97-123]: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47519>

- National Monuments Record: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.19915>

- V&A Images: <http://www.vandaimages.com/>

## Access to the V&A Archive

The Blythe House Reading Room, which serves the Archive of Art and Design, the V&A Archive, the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections and the Beatrix Potter Collections, is open Tuesdays to Fridays, from 10.00 to 16.30, by appointment only.

Further details of how to make enquiries and access the archives can be found on our homepage at

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-v-and-a-archive/>

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Contact us online at <http://vam.altarama.com/reftooo.aspx>