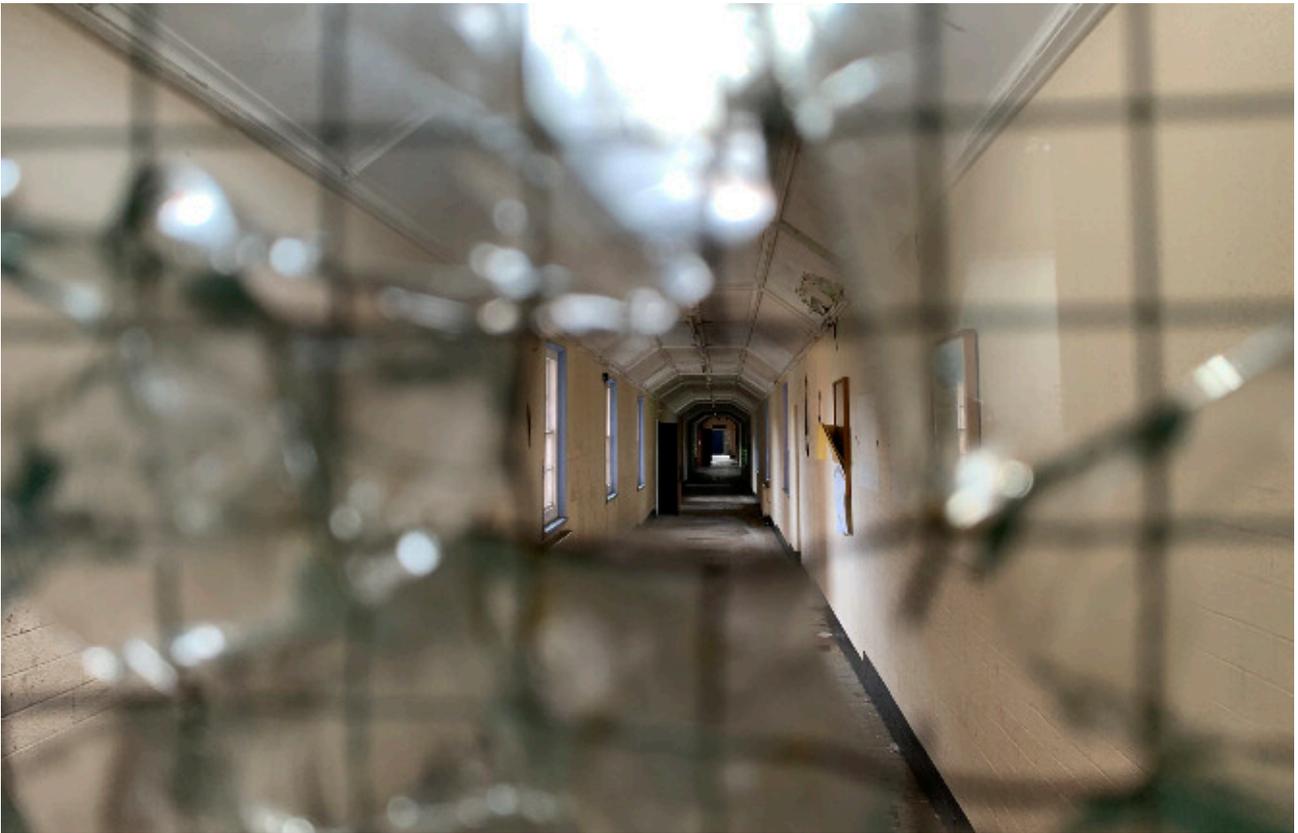

RENOVATION OF WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL

ART 504: Case Studies and Regional Work (Part 2)

Clarence (Yunfan Zhang)



Source: ZHANG Yunfan 2019

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In the first phase of module 504, Whitchurch Hospital's background information, historical information, surrounding business forms, as well as the structures, functions and drawings of its buildings have been made clear. In the second phase, the purpose of the module is to renovate the hospital with the premise of protecting the historical buildings, so that they can be reused while making some contributions to the local society and economy. The author's plans for the hospital is as follows: first, evaluate the value of the hospital buildings. Then, determine the buildings which need to be preserved and which can be reconstructed or demolished. Next, determine the general function of each part of the building blocks combined with the surrounding environment analysis in the first phase. Finally, renovate the buildings according to the spatial characteristics of each function and the existing conditions of the buildings.

VALUE ASSESSMENT

As Hughes (2019) mentioned in her report of the first phase of module 504, Evidential Value, Historical Value, Aesthetic Value and Communal Value are the four component values of Cadw's guidance on Conservation Principles (2011 pp.16-17). This is a scientific and reasonable classification method of value assessment, which takes into account the objective factors of architecture and the subjective feelings people give to buildings. However, for this project, this classification method of value assessment cannot be adopted. Because there is no opportunity to visit and investigate the surrounding residents or the staff who have worked there, the subjective factors affecting the buildings value assessment cannot be taken into account. So, this value assessment will only judge the buildings of Whitchurch Hospital from an objective point of view. The factors are divided into Historical Value, Scientific Value and Artistic Value.

HISTORICAL VALUE

In the Victorian era, with the general development of science and the industrial revolution in Europe, people's awareness of mental illness grew, and a large number of asylums were constructed during this period (Gnoinska 2019). George Herbert Oatley, the designer of Wills Memorial Building in Bristol, also did many works for the development of multiple mental health treatment complexes. He and Willie Skinner designed three asylums together: Winwick Hospital (Fig. 1), Warlingham Park Hospital (Fig. 2) and Whitchurch Hospital (County Asylums 2019).

Whitchurch Hospital is one of the most valuable and largest buildings with a mental health design from the Victorian period. After Winwick Hospital and Warlingham Park Hospital were demolished, it became the last example of the collaboration between Oatley and Skinner (Gnoinska 2019).

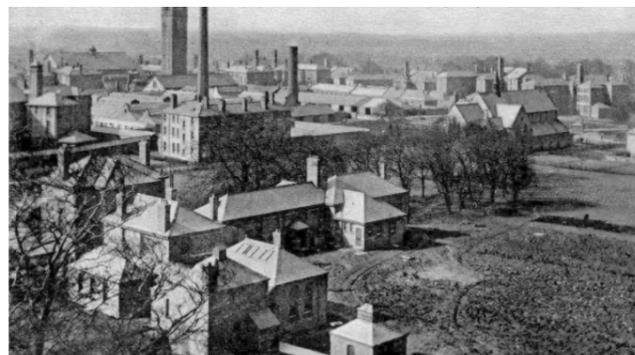


Fig. 1: Winwick Hospital
Source: <http://winwickremembered.org.uk/index.htm>



Fig. 2: Warlingham Park Hospital
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/8866197>

SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Whitchurch Hospital is the last project of the Oatley and Skinner's collaboration. Working together on two other large hospitals before (Winwick and Warlingham), the architects developed certain tendencies, layouts and programs as well as engineering concepts that allowed them to apply all the already tested solutions when designing Whitchurch (Gnoinska 2019). In other words, when Oatley and Skinner designed Whitchurch Hospital, they were more experienced in their layout methods and technical treatments, so doing research about asylums using these buildings is more valuable.

Although Whitchurch Hospital has been abandoned, the building's structure remains intact. The building can be seen as an example of architectural history and can be used as a reference for building similar hospitals or conducting academic research in the future.

ARTISTIC VALUE

It's worth noting that the building in Whitchurch represents Artistic Value, not Aesthetic Value. Their differences were first proposed by Ingarden Roman (1964), and he believes that artistic value depends on the art itself, and the aesthetic value depends on the perspective of the viewer. That is to say, the artistic value is objective, while the aesthetic value is subjective. For architecture, artistic value is mostly reflected in the style of architecture, such as Baroque, Gothic, etc., while aesthetic value is a kind of judgment from the aesthetic point of view.

The artistic value of Whitchurch Hospital is shown in its layout (Fig. 5). The layout of Whitchurch Hospital shows the most common layout in architecture for mental healthcare — a 'broad-arrow' form of the plan (...) [with a] flat south front and steeply angled, oblique, flanking corridors; from these, three- and two-story pavilion buildings, of quite complex form, step back in echelon on either side (Taylor 1991). It is not a common layout in other buildings, so it has the unique aesthetics of a psychiatric hospital.



Fig. 3: Internal Space of Corridor
Source: photoed by Yunfan Zhang



Fig. 4: Internal Space of Recreation Hall
Source: photoed by Yunfan Zhang



Fig. 5: Whitchurch Hospital
Source: <https://www.countyasylums.co.uk/whitchurch-hospital-whitchurch>

LAYOUT

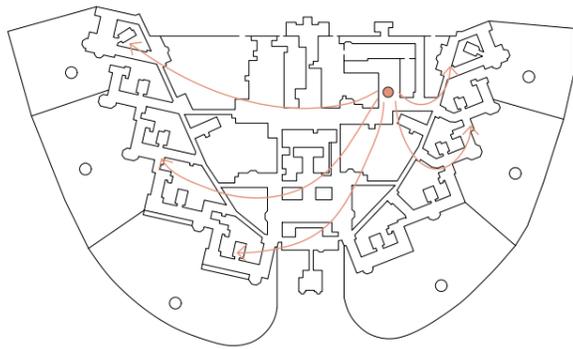


Fig. 6: Whitchurch Hospital: Layout
Source: Author's own based on (GoogleMap 2019)

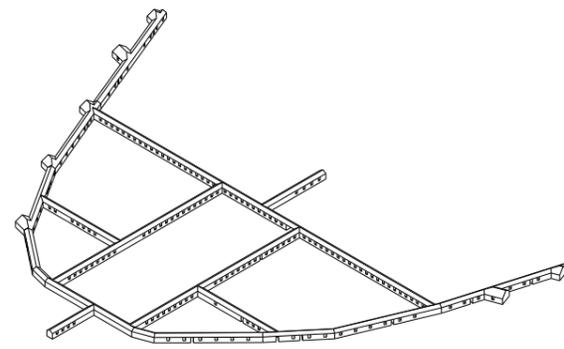


Fig. 7: Corridor System of Whitchurch Hospital
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang

After understanding the objective value of Whitchurch Hospital, it can be found that its layout is a very important part of its value assessment. Its layout has the following characteristics: First, the blocks are separated, and there are five independent blocks on the east and west sides. Second, the buildings are organised in a radiant manner with a water tower in the centre of the plan (Fig. 6). This has a lot to do with the corridor system (Fig. 7). These corridors, like blood vessels, connect the individual blocks closely. Third, the rooms are only arranged on one side of the corridors (Fig. 8).

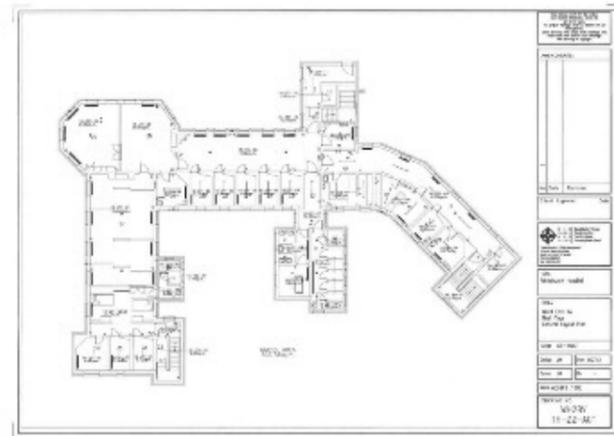


Fig. 8: Rooms only one side of the corridor
Source: Paul Hayes 2019

PERIODS OF CONSTRUCTION



Fig. 9: Periods of Construction
Source: Author's own based on (GoogleMap 2019 and Digimap 2019)

PRESERVATION, RENOVATION OR DEMOLITION

According to the figure showing the construction periods of Whitchurch Hospital (Fig. 9), it can be seen that many buildings were added in a later period and do not have great historical value. Moreover, the illogical addition makes many parts of Whitchurch Hospital unreasonable and difficult to use. As shown in Fig. 10, the included angle between many walls is sharp, which erases space and greatly reduces the connectivity between the blocks. A lot of courtyards are enclosed like this, and these courtyards are even often inaccessible. Fig. 11 shows that the large space is divided by the additional buildings, which makes the traffic space area increase, while the real available space is almost completely swallowed. Considering the value of each building and its possibilities of being used, the author puts forward the proposal on preservation, renovation or demolition of each building in the Whitchurch Hospital (Fig. 12).



Fig. 10: Inconvenient Place 1
Source: GoogleMap 2020



Fig. 11: Inconvenient Place 2
Source: GoogleMap 2020



Fig. 12: Proposal for Preservation, Renovation or Demolition
Source: Author's own based on (GoogleMap 2019)

FUNCTION ORIENTATION

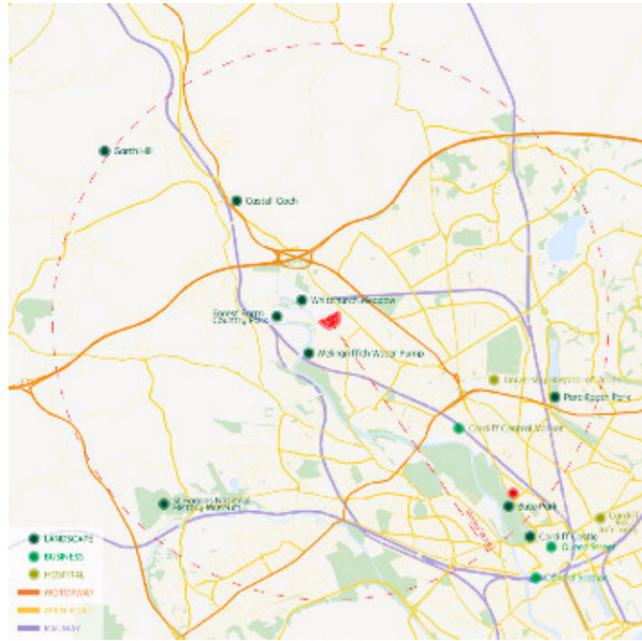


Fig. 13: Landscapes around Whitchurch Hospital
Source: Author's own based on (BaiduMap 2019)

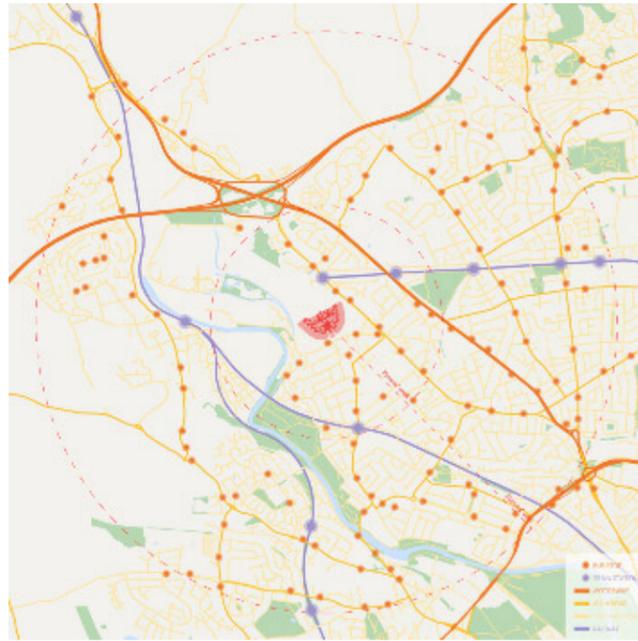


Fig. 14: Transportation
Source: Author's own based on (BaiduMap 2019)

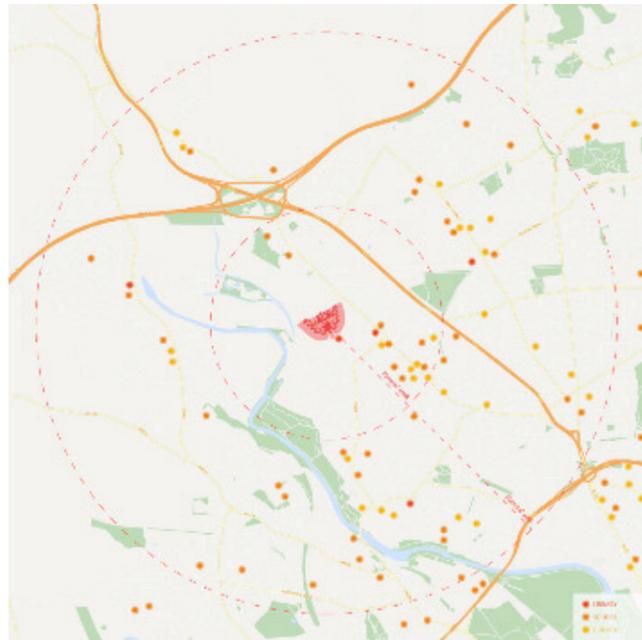


Fig. 15: Library, School and Church
Source: Author's own based on (BaiduMap 2019)

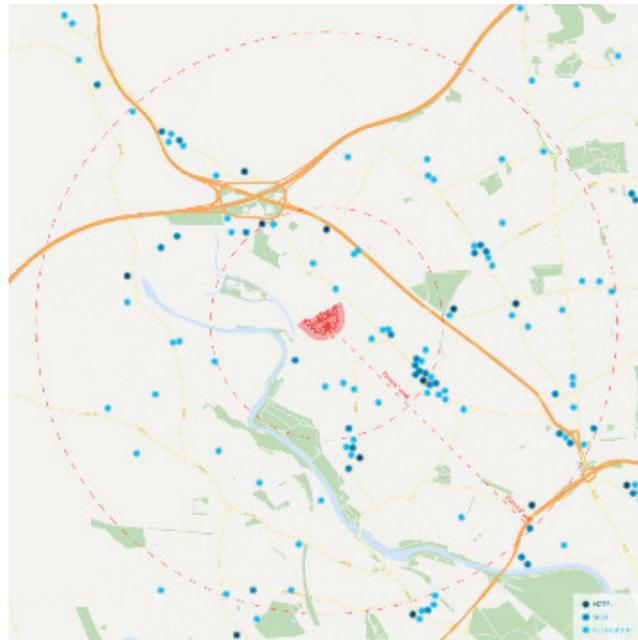


Fig. 16: Hotel, Shop and Restaurant
Source: Author's own based on (BaiduMap 2019)

These four figures are all made by the author in the first phase. Through Fig. 13, it can be seen that there are many scenic spots around Whitchurch Hospital. If through the renovation of Whitchurch Hospital, the connection between these scenic spots can be strengthened. The public transportation around Whitchurch Hospital (Fig. 14) is very convenient: all trains and buses are within close proximity to the hospital. Therefore, it is very suitable to use as a tourism service centre which can provide tourists with basic information of surrounding scenic spots and travel suggestions. In addition, it can also be used as a new tourist spot: some of the buildings can be used as a museum which show the history of Whitchurch Hospital, and some can be used as an experience center of asylum, so that people can better understand this type of

buildings and the psychiatric industry. If there is enough demand, a museum displaying the local history and culture can also be set here, so that visitors can learn more about Whitchurch, Cardiff and even Wales after visiting.

With regards to the facilities and amenities around the site (Fig. 15, 16), it can be seen that there are many schools and restaurants around, but fewer hotels and shops. When considering the function orientation, the balance between it and the surrounding industry should be noted. The general functional layout around Whitchurch Hospital is shown in Fig. 17, it is better to set more business functions in the right side of the site and more quiet functions in the left side. The function partition after renovation is shown in Fig. 18.

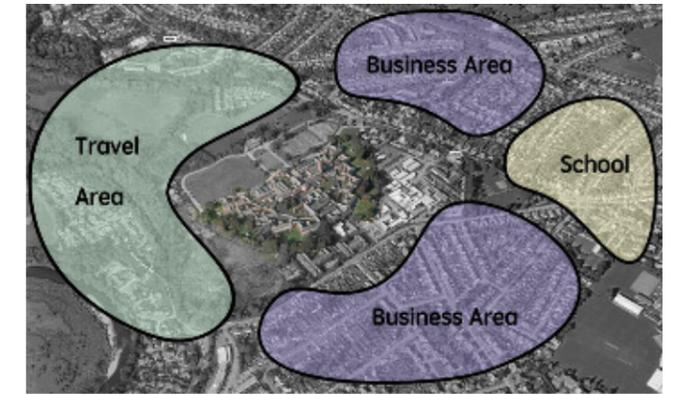


Fig. 17: Functions Around Whitchurch Hospital
Source: Author's own based on (BaiduMap 2019)

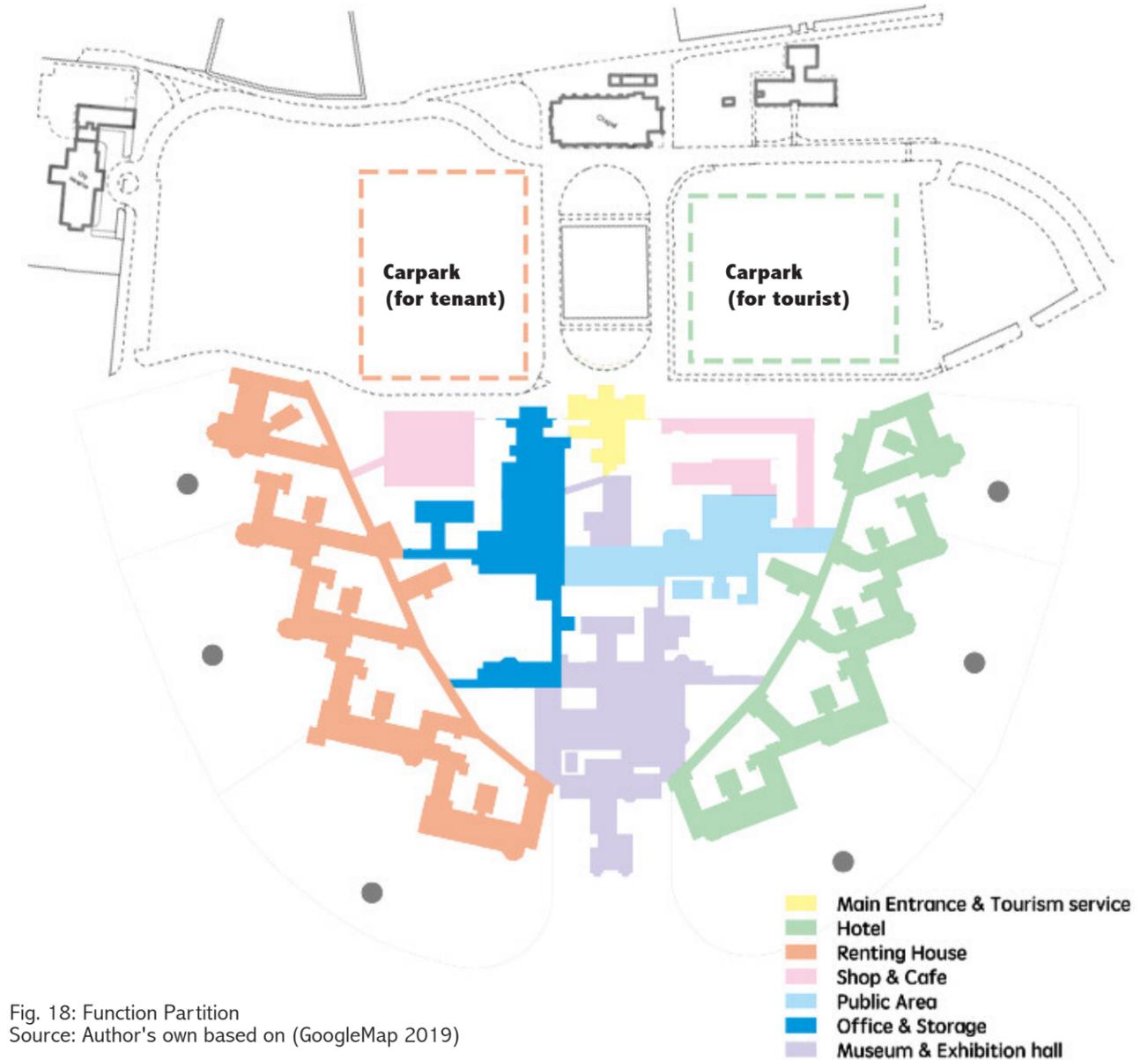


Fig. 18: Function Partition
Source: Author's own based on (GoogleMap 2019)

ISOMETRIC VIEW OF WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL AFTER RENOVATION



Fig. 19: Isometric View of Whitchurch Hospital After Renovation
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang

RENOVATIONS

Because the building has many functions, the connection between them is more important. The public area is set in the centre of the building as much as possible in order to strengthen the connection between different functional blocks and the communication between different groups of people. In the process of renovation, the fragmentary space should be integrated so that some outdoor space is not only for moving and some courtyards and squares should be made in order to maximize space utilization. As the author mentioned before, although the developed corridor system facilitates the intercommunication between blocks, it also divides the outdoor spaces. For the renovation, the walls of some corridors should be replaced with columns in order to make the originally closed corridors become the "grey space" between courtyards, and greatly enhancing the connection between courtyards. The same method is also used in the renovation of some hard to use sharp spaces (Fig. 19).

The water tower is the landmark of Whitchurch Hospital. If the connection between other blocks and courtyards is strengthened, the prominence of the water tower could be affected. Therefore, the author's plan is to set up a large platform (Fig. 19) between the water tower and the two-story building which in the most central position of the site (also the place where the flow of people converges most intensively), which can be directly reached from first floor. The most visible place on the platform is the outdoor communication space (leisure square, outdoor exhibition hall, etc.) and the other end of the platform directly reaches the foot of the water tower and passes through the big steps, so the connection between water tower and other functional spaces can be increased in both sight and accessibility.

Due to the two side blocks being used as a renting house and hotel, the layout of their ancillary functions is also different. What tenants would need are sports grounds and places for entertainment and recreation in peacetime, while tourists need some functional spaces that are not commonly used in daily life, such as an exhibition hall, communication area, etc. Also, in terms of commercial choice, a supermarket selling necessities is close to the renting house, while a market selling small commodities is close to the hotel. It can also be seen from Fig. 19 that there is a gap in the use of outdoor space on both sides.

To summarise, on the basis of protecting the historic buildings and the original fabric of Whitchurch Hospital, the main purpose of this renovation is to activate and utilize this site, and integrating it into people's lives is the best activation plan. The connection with surrounding scenic spots and the link-up with nearby businesses make the renovated Whitchurch Hospital not only a historical block, but also a tourist area, commercial area and living area. Fig. 20-23 can see various activities on this site more specifically, hoping that these activities can inject new vitality into these old buildings successfully.

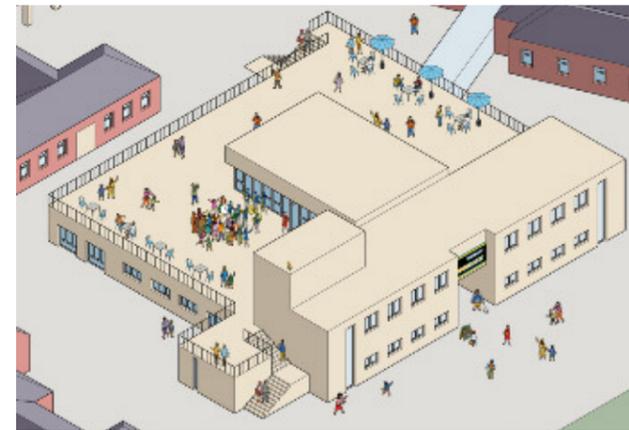


Fig. 20: Supermarket
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang



Fig. 21: Main Entrance
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang



Fig. 22: Shopping Street
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang

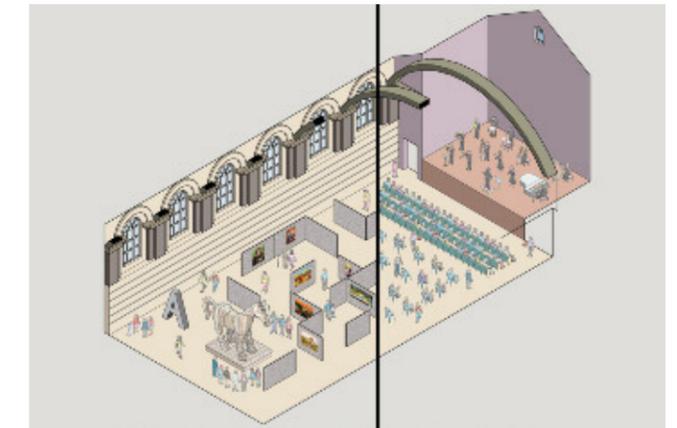


Fig. 23: Recreation Hall
Source: made by Yunfan Zhang

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