

## Lasdun, Denys Louis 1914 - 2001



Denys Louis Lasdun [commonly known as Denys Lasdun] was born in London, England, on 8 September 1914 and briefly studied at the Royal College of Music before deciding to pursue a career in architecture. He subsequently attended the Architectural Association Schools in London from 1932 to 1937. Whilst still a student he designed his first architectural work, a house in Oxshott, Surrey (1934), and from 1935 to 1937 collaborated with Wells Coates (1895-1958) on projects. His next significant architectural work was 32 Newton Road in Paddington, London (1937). The house, which was designed for the painter F. J. Conway, clearly shows the influence of Le Corbusier on Lasdun's thinking at this time.

In 1937 he joined the London architectural practice Tecton, founded by the Russian émigré modernist Berthold Lubetkin (1901-1990). During World War Two Lasdun served in the Royal Artillery and then in the Royal Engineers building airfields. He was also involved in the D-day landings. Following the war he went back to Tecton and was a partner in the firm from 1946 to 1948. In 1948-49 he taught at the Architectural Association and in 1949 he formed a partnership with Lindsay Drake (1909-1980) who had previously been a partner in Tecton. In 1952 Lasdun and Drake formed a partnership with Maxwell Fray (1899-1987) and Jane Drew (1911-1996) as Fry, Drew, Drake & Lasdun, partly in order to run Fry and Drew's office whilst they were engaged on work in Chandigarh, India. The partnership was dissolved in 1959 and the following year Lasdun established his own practice, Denys Lasdun & Partners (from 1978, Denys Lasden, Redhouse & Softley).

The 1960s was a particularly fruitful decade for Lasdun. He completed a building for the Royal College of Physicians (1960); the University of East Anglia in Norwich (1962-68); the redevelopment of areas of the University of London, including School of Oriental and African Studies, the Institute of Education, and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (1963); and the National Theatre (now Royal National Theatre) in London (1963-1976).

In 1976 Lasdun was knighted for his services to architecture and in 1977 was awarded the RIBA Royal Gold Medal. In 1991 he was elected a Royal Academician (RA).

Lasdun refused to retire and his practice was never formally wound up. He died in London on 11 January 2001.

Worked in

UK

Works

See: British Listed Buildings; Historic England [*links below*]

Bibliography

Baird, George. 'Paradox in Regent's Park: a question of interpretation'. *Arena* vol. 81, April 1966 pp. 272-276 [The Royal College of Physicians in London designed by Denys Landun in 1960 is discussed]

Booth, Philip and Taylor, Nicholas. *Cambridge New Architecture*. Foreword by Nilolaus Pevsner. London: Leonard Hill, 3rd edition, 1970

Boyansky, Alvin. 'The architecture of etcetera'. *Architectural Design* vol. 35, June 1965 pp. 268-270 [The work of three architectural practices - Alison and Peter Smithson, James Stirling, and Denys Lasdun, is discussed]

Calder, Barnabas. 'The Education of a Modern Architect: Denys Lasdun in the 1930s' in *British Architecture and Design in the 1930s*. Edited Suannah Charlton, Elaine Harwood and Alan Powers. *The Journal of the Twentieth Century Society*, no.8, 2007 pp.118-127

Curtis, William. *Denys Lasdun: Architecture, City, Landscape*. London: Phaidon Press, 1994.

'Denys Lasdun: the evolution of a style'. *Architectural Review* vol. 145, May 1969 pp. 345-358

Harwood, Elain. *Mid-Century Britain: Modern Architecture 1938-1963*. London: Batsford, 2021

A language and a theme. *The architecture of Denys Lasdun & Partners*. London: RIBA Publications, 1976

Lasdun, Denys. 'An architect's approach to architecture'. *Architectural Design* vol. 35, June 1965 pp. 271-291

Lasdun, Denys. 'An architect's approach to architecture'. *RIBA Journal* vol. 72, April 1965 pp. 184-195

Lasdun, Denys. 'Architectural aspects of the National Theatre'. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* vol. 125, no. 5256, November 1977 pp. 780-792

Miller, Russell. 'Denys Lasdun, architect'. *Architect and Builder (South Africa)* vol. 21, March 1971 pp. 8-10

Powers, Alan. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. London: Merrell, 2005

Service, Alastair. *The Architects of London and their buildings from 1066 to the present*. London: The Architectural Press, 1979

Thirties: *British Art and Design before the War*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979 [Catalogue of an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 25 October-13 January 1979]

Webb, Michael. 'A palatial College for Physicians'. *Country Life* vol. 137, 29 April 1965 pp. 998-1001 [The Royal College of Physicians in London designed by Denys Lasdun in 1960 is discussed]

Webb, Michael. *Architecture in Britain Today*. London: Country Life, 1969

#### Links

- National Art Library Catalogue <https://naml.vam.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=Denys%20lasdun>
- North Carolina State University <https://postwarcampus.wordpress.ncsu.edu/2018/05/09/university-of-east-anglia-denys-lasdun/>
- Kenneth Powell. Sir Denys Lasdun. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Subscription service] <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/75034>
- Sir Denys (Louis) Lasdun. *Oxford Grove Art Online* [Subscription service] <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T049433>

- The Modern House <https://www.themodernhouse.com/directory-of-architects-and-designers/denys-lasdun/>
- YouTube. Denys Lasdun - Recollections and Recent Works. AA School of Architecture. Lecture date: 1989-04-15  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmLH4e2fsmk>
- YouTube. Spotlight on modernist architecture Denys Lasdun's legacy  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVilH\\_7NG-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVilH_7NG-4)
- YouTube. The anatomy of a building: Denys Lasdun and the Royal College of Physicians <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-4ydFg6jww>
- Heritage Calling. A Brief Introduction to Denys Lasdun  
<https://heritagecalling.com/2019/09/02/denys-lasdun/>
- Twentieth Century Society. Institute of Education, London designed by Denys Lasdun <https://c20society.org.uk/building-of-the-month/institute-of-education-london>
- Brutalism Online - Denys Lasdun <http://brutalism.online/brutalist-designers/381-denys-lasdun>
- Royal College of Physicians. The anatomy of a building: Denys Lasdun and the Royal College of Physicians <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/anatomy-building-denys-lasdun-and-rcp>
- SOS Brutalism - Denys Lasdun: University of East Anglia (UEA)  
<https://www.sosbrutalism.org/cms/15888753>
- AJ Building Library  
<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/architects?architectID=16633>
- Royal College of Physicians. The anatomy of a building: Denys Lasdun and the Royal College of Physicians <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/sir-denys-louis-lasdun>
- SOS Brutalism - Denys Lasdun: University of East Anglia (UEA)  
<https://www.sosbrutalism.org/cms/15888753>
- AJ Building Library  
<https://www.ajbuildingslibrary.co.uk/architects?architectID=16633>
- Royal College of Physicians - profile of Sir Denys Louis Lasdun.  
<https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/sir-denys-louis-lasdun>
- James Lasdun. 'The master builder'. The Guardian 29 November 2009  
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2003/nov/29/architecture.art>
- Diana Rowntree. 'Sir Denys Lasdun'. The Guardian 12 January 2001  
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2001/jan/12/guardianobituaries>
- The Philips Building by Denys Lasdun - home of SOAS Library  
<https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/centenarytimeline/tag/denys-lasdun/>
- British Library. sounds - Lasdun, Sir Denys. (1 of 10). National Life Story Collection: Architects' Lives <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0009XX-0100V0>

- Historic England - details of 18 architectural projects by Denys Lasdun

<https://historicengland.org.uk/sitesearch?searchType=site&search=Denys%20Lasdun&sea>

- British Listed Building - 21 records of listed buildings by Denys Lasdun

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/site-search/?q=lasdun>