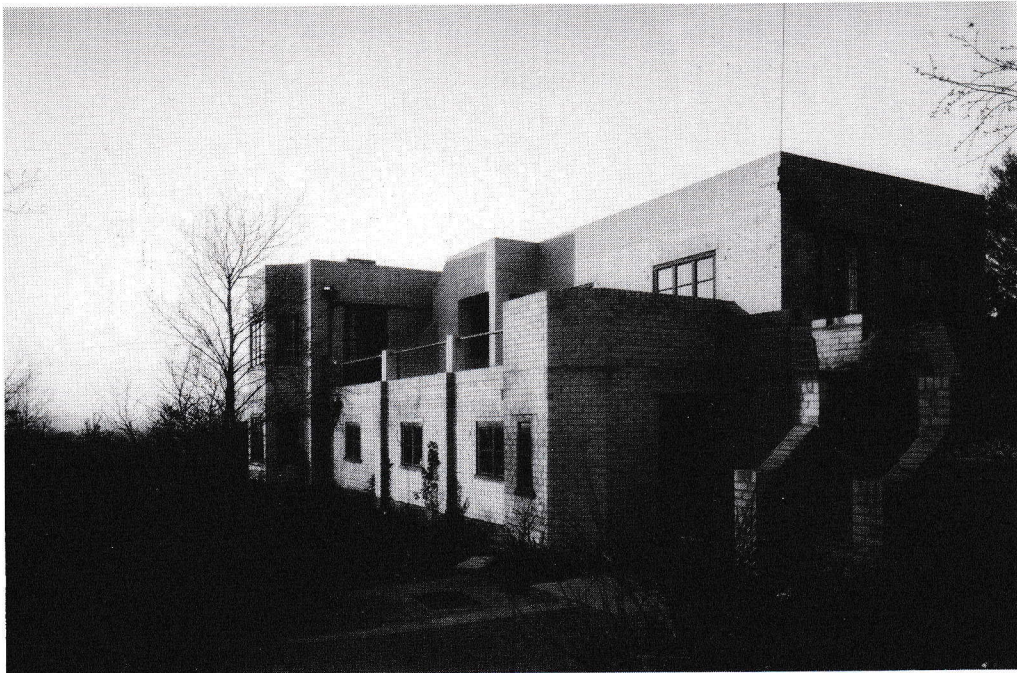


*'Altitude 250' designed in 1933 at Thornhill Park.*



*The White House, Storrington built in the early 1930's on the edge of the South Downs.*

## INDIVIDUAL HOUSES AND PROJECTS

Although Herbert preferred designing houses in groups, he also designed a number of interesting individual houses.

In 1930 he designed his own home at 38 Brookvale Road on a large plot almost opposite his former home at no. 59. In contrast to the brick neo-Georgian houses he was building on the Uplands Estate at the time, his own house is in an unpretentious neo-vernacular style with roughcast walls, leaded light casement windows and a deep pantiled roof. The rooms are well proportioned, with a loggia opening off the sitting room and a deep bay window in the dining room overlooking the rear gardens. An oak staircase leads up to a spacious landing which was used for displaying watercolours by various members of the family. Herbert's study has French doors leading onto a balcony and was boldly decorated with black walls and red fitted bookcases. The walls in the rest of the house were plain off-white plaster and the woodwork was stained, with rugs on the hardwood strip flooring.

The lawned rear garden slopes away from the house, with wide herbaceous borders, yew hedge and a summerhouse built of *pisé de terre*. Herbert followed Clough Williams-Ellis' book on the material and built it with a re-usable timber framework. In front of the summerhouse is a small pond, originally fed by a water butt from the house. In 1954 he designed Highfield Vicarage in the garden immediately south of no. 38, and in 1967 designed a pair of flats in the garden to the north. In 1973 Herbert and his wife moved into the ground floor flat, no. 2 Abbots Way and remained there for the rest of their lives.

In 1933 he designed the house 'Altitude 250', now 52 Douglas Crescent, in a densely wooded area on the eastern outskirts of Southampton, close to the Thornhill Park Estate. The client was Mr. L. G. Russell, a craft teacher at a local school, who still lives in the house. All the principal rooms face south-west and the grouping of the windows give the elevation a horizontal emphasis. The design reflects the 1930s vogue for fresh air with its sun balcony and ground floor loggia, and the result is a combination 'modernistic' and traditional 'Collins' elements. Building work was completed in the summer of 1934 at a cost of £700, of which Herbert's fee were £34.

At about the same time as 'Altitude 250', Herbert designed the White House in Sandgate Lane, Storrington, Sussex. It is situated on the edge of the South Downs and is one of Herbert's most extraordinary designs. The flat roofed house is built of white garden wall bond brickwork on a red brick plinth. Because of the slope of the site the principal rooms are at first floor level, approached by a canted brick stair leading to an open terrace. A smaller external stair leads up from this level to a roof terrace. Like 'Altitude 250' it is a curious combination of elements from the 'modern movement' style and Herbert's earlier traditional buildings.

Individual blocks of flats designed by Herbert around Southampton include the accomplished neo-Georgian Henstead Court near the Polygon, the conversion and small scale extension of Wordsworth House, Anglesea Road, Shirley and the conversion of large Victorian houses in Winchester and Winn Roads.

Ascupart House in Portswood Road incorporates the wing of an earlier house

of the same name, and the gardens include an ancient mulberry tree formerly in the grounds of old Portswood House. Built in 1935, it is now difficult to imagine the revolutionary impact of Ascupart House, one of the first 'modern' blocks of flats in Southampton. It was featured in 'The Architect & Building News' in 1936, and the flats boasted a refuse chute system, a communal wireless aerial, built-in gas refrigerators and extensive rooftop sun terraces.

Herbert designed two churches. The first in 1929 was the Congregational Church at Chandlers Ford, of red brick with stone dressings in a conventional style. Two years later he designed the rather ponderous Swaythling Methodist Hall in Burgess Road, instigated by his father who was a devout Methodist.

W. J. Collins made a gift of the site and £10,000 towards building costs. This was matched by a donation from another ardent Methodist, Joseph Rank, father of J. Arthur (later Lord) Rank, of cinema fame. It was the era of the Central Hall Programme, where mass preaching was to be unhampered by ecclesiastical overtones, so the trustees wanted the building to look as little like a church as possible and it also had to function as a cinema. Herbert designed the main hall as a large red brick octagon with a copper domed roof which forms a distinctive landmark. The hall was capable of seating eight hundred, including two hundred in a gallery. Ancillary accommodation was arranged behind in a two storey block, and a small matching brick manse was built alongside, facing Burgess Road. The hall was opened in October 1932 by the Mayoress of Southampton, Mrs. F. Wolley. Cinema showings included Sunday evenings, after the service of worship, which were intended to attract 'outsiders' — some came to the service first to secure a good seat for the film!

In 1960 it was decided to change the hall into a church, and a central aisle was formed and new furnishings added. The church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1982.

Herbert's other non-domestic buildings in Southampton include the YMCA in Cranbury Place and Talbot House, Brunswick Square. The YMCA scheme was partly financed by W. J. Collins and involved the addition of two new wings onto an existing mid-nineteenth century house. Work was completed in 1927, but the building received a direct hit during the War. It was substantially rebuilt and officially reopened by the Duke of Wellington in 1954.

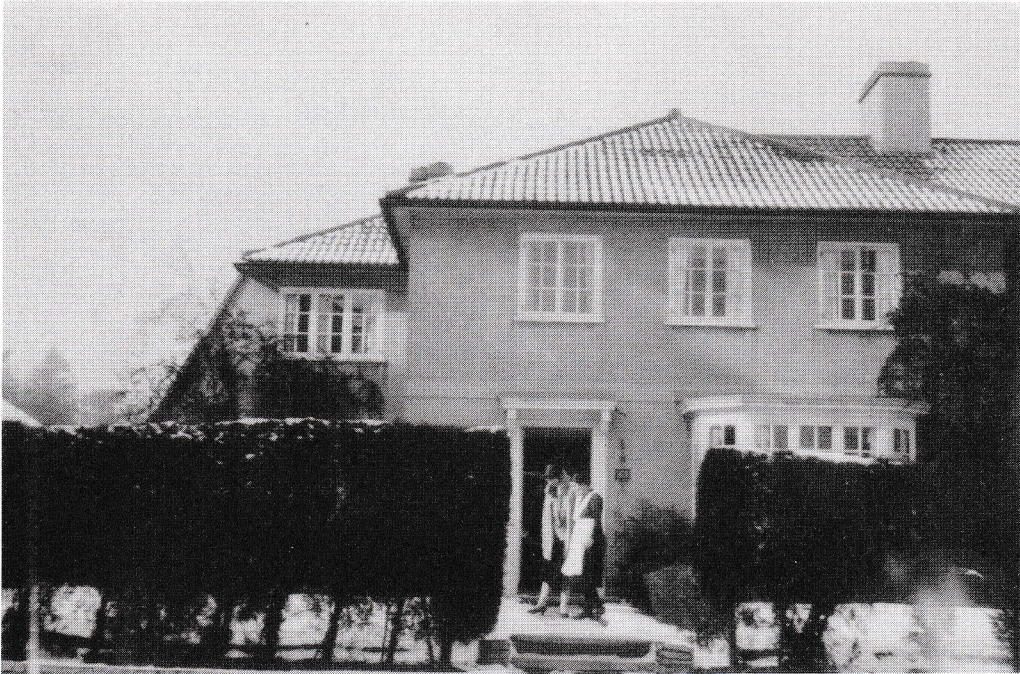
Talbot House was built in 1932 for the organisation 'Toc H' to provide accommodation for young seamen while they were on leave in the town or waiting to join a ship. The site was long and narrow, hemmed in by other buildings and the result is Herbert's most urban building. It is built in a restrained neo-Georgian style, with a progression of window heights from the tall sliding sashes on the ground floor to the small square casements on the third 'attic' storey. In the late 1950s adjoining buildings were demolished and Talbot House was modernised and extended by the architect Percy Tutte.



*The opening ceremony of Chandlers Ford Congregational Church designed in 1929.*



*The YMCA, Cranbury Place, new flanking wings built on to an existing house.*



*Anne with maid outside 59 Brookvale Road, Herbert's home from 1922 to 1930.*



*The garden elevation of 38 Brookvale Road, Herbert's home from 1930 to 1973.*

## HERBERT COLLINS IN SOUTHAMPTON

Herbert Collins' architectural career spanned a remarkable sixty-six years, from designs for his father's estate in Muswell Hill in 1906 up to alterations and extensions to his own home in Southampton in 1972. Throughout his long career he designed less than fifteen hundred houses and flats and only a small number of non-domestic buildings. Many of his architectural contemporaries also started their careers with small housing schemes, but later progressed to larger, more prestigious commissions. However, Herbert's few non-domestic buildings are undistinguished and indicate that his talent lay in designing small-scale buildings. He had a genuine enthusiasm and commitment to housing work.

Despite the absence of important large buildings, Herbert's architectural career is remarkable for his unique contribution to housing, covering virtually all types — urban, suburban and rural; new build, conversion and rehabilitation; houses, bungalows, flats, cottages, bed-sitters, hostels and accommodation for the elderly; schemes for local authorities, housing societies, charities, and private clients; housing for rental and sale, both freehold and leasehold. Much of this work was initiated by the Collins family and often by Herbert himself, strictly against the RIBA code of conduct which forbade the financial involvement of architects in building developments. He was fortunate in having private means which enabled him to some extent to build as he wished, unlike other architects who had to rely solely on commissions. Moreover, Herbert used his own money to finance schemes which otherwise would not have been built, such as low rental flats and the reconstruction of Bitterne Manor.

Herbert's early schemes at Muswell Hill and the Uplands Estate were sponsored by his father and had to show a profit. Using the income generated by his speculative developments in London and Southampton, W. J. Collins later became a generous and well-known local benefactor. He held church garden parties and summer camps for the Boys' Brigade in the grounds of his house 'The Wilderness' at West End. He also inaugurated a trust fund for the benefit of the local Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade in memory of his son Martyn who was killed in the First World War. Herbert later became chairman of the trust and took a personal interest in the activities of the two organisations, attending various Brigade gatherings when possible. W. J. Collins' donation towards the building of Swaythling Methodist Hall included the clause that his son should be the architect. Herbert obtained several other commissions through his father's generous donations towards building costs, including the YMCA in Southampton, St. James' Church Hall at West End and the almshouses at Chandler's Ford.

Herbert was not such a shrewd businessman as his father and rather than working for motives of profit, he aimed to provide decent housing that almost anyone could afford. Much of his work reflects his idealistic principles. Following his early involvement with the garden city movement he remained dedicated to its ideals for the rest of his life. His own scheme for a garden city at Marchwood was never built but he based his housing developments on garden city principles and won the approval of Ebenezer Howard himself. Herbert had much in common

with the pioneers of the garden city movement. Like Raymond Unwin, he was an active member of the League of Nations, later the United Nations Association. He was also teetotal for most of his life and interested in the Non-conformist religions, designing both Methodist and Congregational Churches. Politically he followed the Liberal tradition of the Collins family, although he had leanings towards the Labour Party.

Herbert was interested in issues far beyond the immediate concerns of his architectural practice. He was a keen supporter of land nationalisation. In 1972 he wrote a paper on 'Development values and public control of land use', advocating State ownership of land and outlining a system of implementation through the issue of State Bonds to compensate land owners. Most of his houses were sold on 999-year leases with an annual ground rent payable to himself, the freeholder. This enabled him to retain overall control of the houses, as in the first garden cities, where leaseholders are under obligation not to alter their houses except with the permission of the freeholder.

Herbert was a member of the Council of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association (later called the Town and County Planning Association) from 1925 to 1945 and attended many of their conferences. He was also involved in planning issues locally as a member of the Southern Hampshire Regional Planning Committee. In 1930 he helped with the founding of the Hampshire branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and remained on the committee for the next thirty years. Herbert was originally appointed as the representative of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Architectural Association and retired in 1960 after serving longer than any other member.

He was a founder member of the Southampton Civic Trust, later renamed the City of Southampton Society, and served as vice-chairman for many years, rarely missing a meeting. Herbert organised and led tours of the city for members and took an active role in many of the society's campaigns. He had a great affection for Southampton even though he only came to live in the city in 1922 when he was thirty-seven.

Perhaps he was best known in the city for his work with the United Nations Association, called in some circles Southampton's 'Mr. United Nations'. He founded the local branch of the League of Nations Union in 1924 and as secretary built up membership to over four hundred, making it one of the most successful branches in the country. He established an International Charities shop in the city to raise funds, inaugurated a public speaking competition on the subject of world wide peace in local schools, and started the tradition of a flag raising ceremony at the Civic Centre each year on UN Day. His work was recognised by the national UNA when they awarded him one of the first Anderson Awards of honorary life membership of the United Nations Association. He retired as secretary in 1969 after holding the position for twenty-four years.

Herbert's other interests included hockey and tennis when he was younger, and several of his estates included private tennis courts for the use of residents. He also enjoyed music, playing the cello and piano. His piano at 38 Brookvale Road was a Broadwood for which he designed the case. A lifelong hobby was sketching in watercolours, an interest shared with other members of the family, especially his



*Three generations of the Collins family at the opening of 'Collins House' in 1972 for the Collins Memorial Trust in Hillside Close, Chandlers Ford. From left to right:- Mr. Mann, Herbert Collins, his wife Doreen, daughter Julie, grand-daughter Alison, Mrs. Ferrett, and Mr. & Mrs. Bran, long serving committee members of the Trust.*



brother William who used to accompany him on sketching and painting holidays. A favourite subject was boats and, like his brother Ralph, he was a keen sailor and for many years kept a boat *Dawdler* on the River Hamble. When Peter Whitworth worked for him as an assistant he had to keep his sailing gear at the office, so that when the mood took Herbert he would close the office and they would go off down to Hamble! For many years his personal transport was a 1930s Austin Cambridge with a rather special Tickford Drophead Coupe body, and he continued to drive a car locally up until about a month before his death.

After a short illness, Herbert Collins died on 21 October 1975. The City of Southampton Society, in conjunction with the City Council, instituted a memorial to him on the grassed area in front of his Market Buildings at Swaythling. In 1977 his widow, the late Mrs. Doreen Collins, unveiled a simple plaque there inscribed:

“This place is dedicated to the memory of  
Herbert Collins (1885-1975)  
Architect and Worker for Peace”

# BUILDINGS DESIGNED BY HERBERT COLLINS

## Housing Estates

### ROOKFIELD ESTATE, MUSWELL HILL, LONDON

Rookfield Avenue (1906-11); The Homesteads, St. James's Lane.

### UPLANDS ESTATE, HIGHFIELD, SOUTHAMPTON

Brookvale Road (1922-4); Highfield Close (1923); Orchards Way (1924-48); Highfield Lane (1920s); Uplands Way (1930s); Glebe Court (1930s). Including blocks of flats:- Highfield Lane (1920s); corner Brookvale Road/Highfield Lane (1933); centre and corner of Glebe Court (1930s); Unity House, Brookvale Road (1956); Spinney House, Uplands Way (1967).

### SWAYTHLING HOUSING SOCIETY ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON

Pilgrim Place, Capon House, Howard Close (1926/7); Wide Lane, Westfield Corner, shops and flats (late 1920s); Walnut Avenue (early 1930s); Mansbridge Road, Monks Way, Brookside Way, Claude Ashby Close, Wessex Lane, Farmery Close, Brookside Way, Westbrook Way, Friars Way, Bankside (1930s); Octavia Road, Robert Cecil Avenue, Itchenside Close, Meadowside Close (late 1940s, early 1950s).

### BASSETT GREEN ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON

Stoneham Lane, houses and flats (late 1920s); Ethelburt Avenue (late 1920s, 1930s and late 1940s); Bassett Green Road (late 1920s, 1930s and early 1950s); Field Close, Leaside Way (1930s); Summerfield Gardens (1950s).

### VICTORY HOUSING SOCIETY ESTATE, TIPNER, PORTSMOUTH

Tipner Lane, Harbour Way, Victory Green, Range Green, Tipner Green (1930s).

### THORNHILL PARK ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON

Thornhill Park Road, The Close (late 1920s); Woodlands Close (mid 1950s); Kootenay Avenue, Moorhill Gardens, Bramdean Road (1950s); Pine Drive East (1962).

### ORCHARDS WAY, WEST END, NEAR SOUTHAMPTON

Orchard Way (1938/9).

### COLLINS MEMORIAL TRUST, HILLSIDE CLOSE, CHANDLERS FORD

Hillside Close bungalows (1937 and 1958); Hillside House (1960); Collins House (1972).

### COXFORD AND ROMSEY ROAD ESTATE, MAYBUSH, SOUTHAMPTON

Coxford Road, Thorndike Road, Thorndike Close, Hardwick Close, Romsey Road, Arliss Road (1948-51).

### TASKERS ESTATE, ANNA VALLEY, NEAR ANDOVER, HAMPSHIRE

Unexecuted scheme of about seventy houses for employees of Taskers Factory, prepared in the early 1950s.

## Blocks of Flats (not on previous estates)

Flats and garage showrooms, Lodge Road, Southampton (mid 1920s).

Flats and shops, Market Buildings, Swaythling, Southampton (1931).

Utility Flats, Canute Road, Southampton (1933).

Southcliff House, Southcliff Road, Southampton (1930).

Flats, Lime Street, Southampton (1930) (demolished).  
Ascupart House, Portswood Road, Southampton (1935).  
Henstead Court, Polygon, Southampton (1938).  
Bitterne Manor House, Bitterne Road, Southampton (1952/4). (conversion and new building).  
29 and 36 Winn Road, Southampton (c 1950). (conversions).  
444 Winchester Road, Bassett, Southampton (mid 1950s). (conversion).  
Wordsworth House, Anglesea Road, Southampton (1964). (conversion and new building).  
Flats at Highcliffe, Hampshire.

### **Individual Houses**

Lepe Cottage (c 1921) and The Croft (1930s), Portswood Residents Gardens, Southampton.  
38 (c 1930) and 46 (c 1927) Brookvale Road, Portswood, Southampton.  
2 (1967) and 23 (c 1922) Abbotts Way, Portswood, Southampton.  
Lane End and The White House (now Hurst Lodge), Sandgate Lane, Storrington, Sussex (1933).  
'Altitude 250', Douglas Crescent, Thornhill, Southampton (1933/4).  
'Loe Bar', Chalk Hill, West End, Near Southampton (1954).  
Highfield Vicarage, Brookvale Road, Portswood, Southampton (1956).  
House adjoining Glebe Court, Highfield Lane, Southampton (1930s).  
The White Cottage, Blackboys, Near Uckfield, Sussex.  
Pair of stone holiday cottages, Studland, Dorset.  
Chapel Cottages, Cheriton, Hampshire. (rehabilitation).  
Yew Tree Cottages, Upham, Hampshire. (rehabilitation).

In addition, a number of individual houses were designed in the early 1950s largely by Herbert's partner J. Norman Calton. These included houses in: Bassett Green Road, Bassett Dale, Saxholm Way, Bassett Wood Drive, Glen Eyre Way, Bassett, Southampton; Winchester Road, Shirley, Southampton; Chandlers Ford; Jermyns Lane, Ampfield; and Sandy Lane, Boldre, New Forest.

### **Churches and Church Halls**

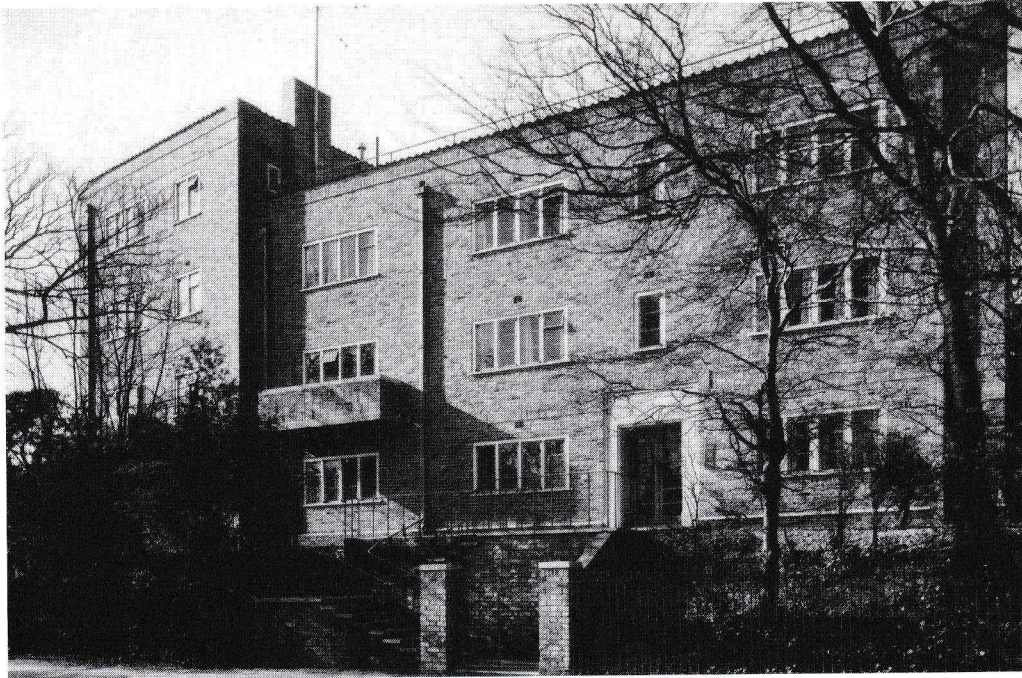
Congregational Church, Kings Avenue, Chandlers Ford (c 1930).  
Swaythling Methodist Church and Manse, Burgess Road, Southampton (1932).  
St. James' Church Hall, West End, Near Southampton (1938).  
South Stoneham Church Hall, Southampton (1956).

### **Village Halls**

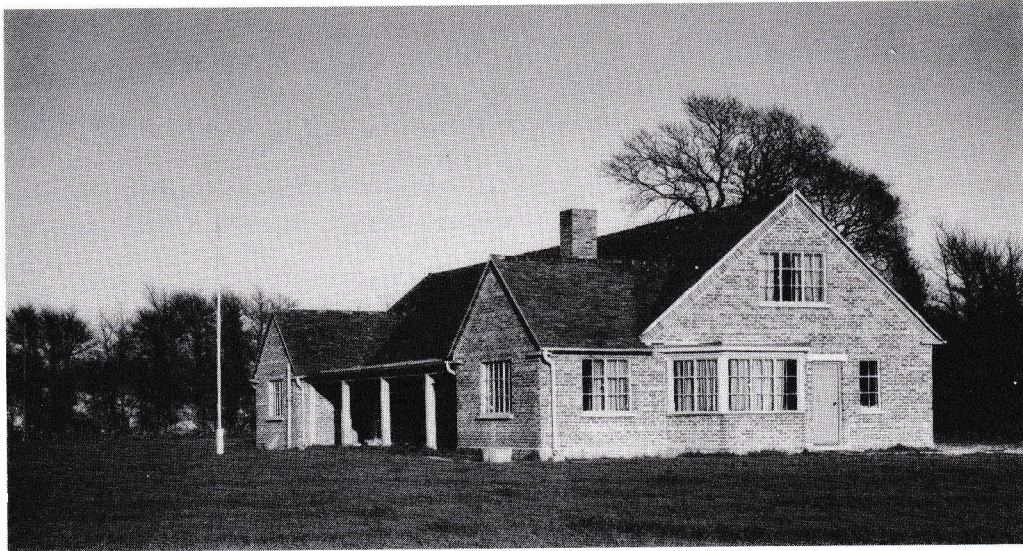
Clymping, Sussex (mid 1930s).  
Aldingbourne, Sussex.  
St. Mary Bourne, Hampshire. (conversion from brewhouse).  
Woodgreen, Hampshire.

### **Others**

Fire Station, High Street, West End (1939).  
YMCA, Cranbury Place, Southampton. (conversion and extension 1927, post-war rebuilding 1954).



*Ascupart House, Portswood Road designed 1935.*



*Village Hall, Clymping, Littlehampton, Sussex.*

Talbot House Seafaring Boy's Residential Club, Brunswick Square, Southampton (1932).

RSPCA Animal Welfare Centre, 8A Stoneham Lane, Swaythling, Southampton (c 1930s).



*Herbert's holiday cottage, with resident housekeepers cottage adjoining, at Studland, Dorset, built of local stone with stone slate roof in the 1930's.*

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is based on my 1982 thesis on the work of Herbert Collins. Although his work has been widely illustrated there is little published material available, so most of my information has been drawn from primary sources: archives, interviews and various unpublished documents. In 1981 I was fortunate in finding a number of original drawings by Herbert at his former offices.

Many of the photographs used in this book are from the collection of Herbert Collins, courtesy of Mrs. Lee, Mr. Martyn Collins, Mrs. J. Ozwell with additional photographs from Swaythling Housing Society Ltd. and myself.

I am grateful to the staff of the archives and libraries I have consulted: Royal Institute of British Architects; Royal Town Planning Institute; Town and Country Planning Association; British Architectural Library; Polytechnic and Bodleian Libraries, Oxford; Southampton Civic Record Office and the Local History Library, Southampton.

My thanks to all those people who have helped so generously with my researches and welcomed me into their homes. I am indebted to the Collins family for their help and encouragement, especially Herbert's wife, the late Mrs. Doreen Collins, and his daughter Mrs. Julie Ozwell for the loan of material. Thanks also to Herbert's former office staff, Mrs. Lee, Mr. J. N. Calton and Mr. Peter Whitworth for providing invaluable background information.

I am also grateful for the advice and guidance in writing this to my tutor Mr. David Whitham, Mr. A. G. K. Leonard, and fellow members of the City of Southampton Society, notably Mrs. Mary South.

Finally I would like to thank my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Williams for making this book possible.

This book is dedicated to those fortunate enough to live in 'Collins' houses and flats — may they maintain their homes with care and respect so that future generations may also enjoy the remarkable work and unique vision of Herbert Collins.

## THE CITY OF SOUTHAMPTON SOCIETY

The City of Southampton, formed in 1962, is a constituent member of the Civic Trust, a national body with which over 1100 similar societies are registered. The Southampton organisation was formed to bring together those citizens concerned with the preservation of what is best in the city and with the quality of new developments, and whose independence, expertise and informed opinion would be recognised by the City Council when new proposals were being considered.

It is an entirely independent voluntary body, relying wholly on members' subscriptions and support. It endeavours to see that proper use is made of the city's rich heritage; the Common, parks and open spaces and its historic areas. It works closely with the Council, who recognise its importance by inviting comments on all planning applications in conservation areas and on other proposals of importance in the city. Through regular Dialogue Meetings with elected representatives and officers of the Council, the Society can seek and obtain early information about new developments and make its views known before decisions are taken.

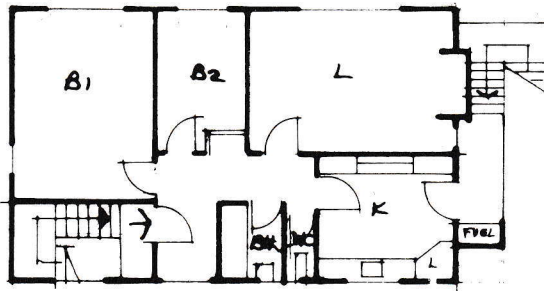
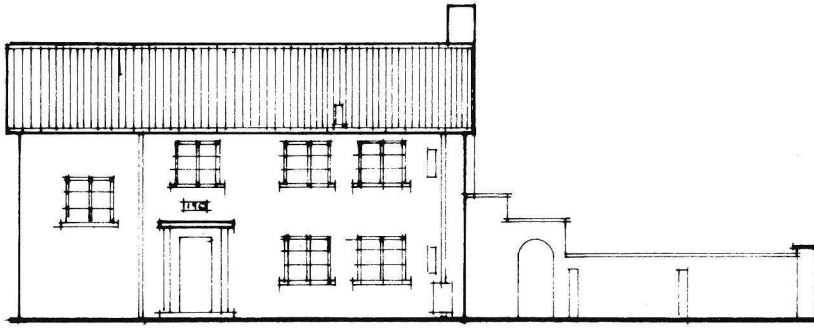
The Society has a programme of Open Meetings when matters affecting the future of the city can be aired. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings.

Besides these activities, the Society also publishes occasional books such as this one; previous publications include, *Southampton Common*, *A Childrens Guide to Southampton*, *Southampton's Historic Buildings* and *Georgian and Victorian Southampton*.

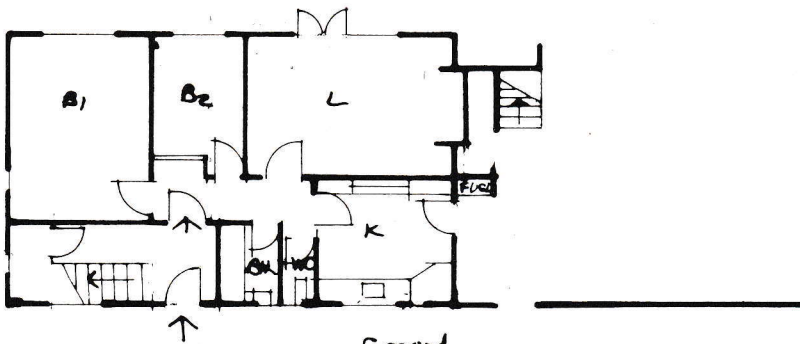
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert L. Williams was born in Bitterne, Southampton in 1956. He was educated at Bitterne Park Comprehensive School and Richard Taunton College, Southampton. He studied at Oxford Polytechnic from 1976 to 1982, gaining an Honours Degree and Graduate Diploma in Architecture. In 1984 he was awarded the Patrick Plunket Memorial Scholarship by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. He works for a private architectural practice in Southampton, and is a member of the Executive Committee of the City of Southampton Society.

# HERBERT COLLINS' LAST HOME



First



Ground

2 Abbots Way, Mr. and Mrs. Collins final home. Designed in 1967, he made alterations and extensions to the ground floor flat in 1973 when he was 89.