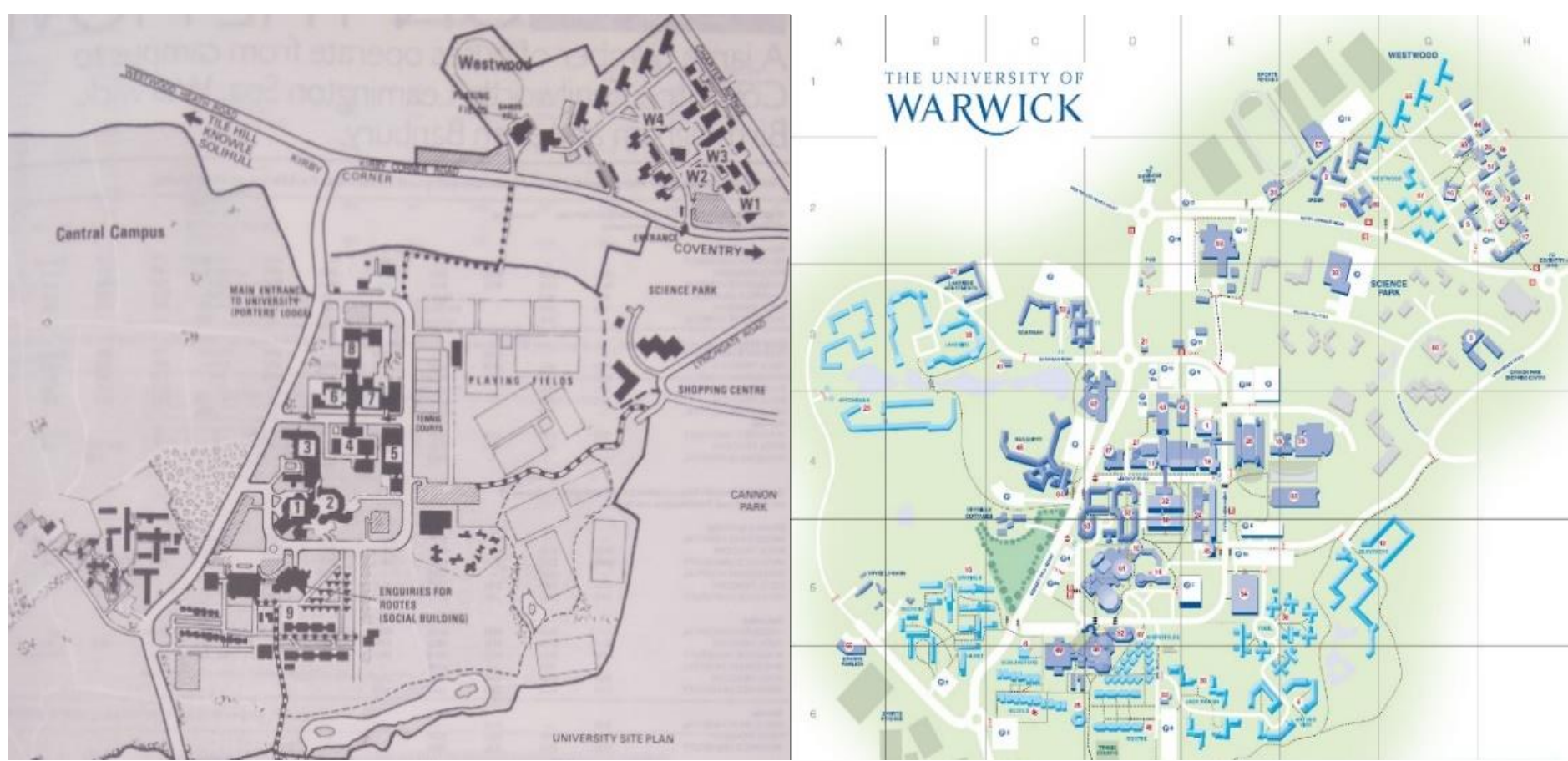


Introduction

Since its opening in 1965, the University of Warwick has quickly developed a rich history for theatre and performance around its campus, supporting the development of highly acclaimed work that has toured nationally and internationally. This report provides a brief insight into which venues around the campus have been used as venues for performance, what types of performances have taken place in them, and how their uses have changed over the first 50 years of the University's development. This research considers venues in the following 3 categories:

- Theatrical venues – Venues specifically designed for theatrical performance
- Non-theatrical Venues – Alternative venues that have been used to house theatrical performance
- Performative locations - Spaces where Non-theatrical performative events have taken place.

The results of this research project will be used to create a new map of campus for exhibition at Emerge 2015 in the Warwick Arts Centre, as well as being publicly available online. It is hoped that this research will act as a retrospective to allow reflection on the history of student performance at the university, but also to inspire and influence use of space in the future.



Figures 1 & 2 – Maps of the site from 1988 and 2014.¹

Theatrical Venues

Warwick Arts Centre: The Warwick Arts Centre first opened in 1974, marking the first time that Warwick students had a properly equipped theatre venue on campus. Since then the arts centre has played host to several student productions a term, showcasing 11 student-produced theatre pieces in its first year, while in 2015 7 pieces of student theatre took place in the studio, and 2 in the theatre.

Studio Spaces: Performances regularly take place in the Campus' studios due to their lighting capabilities, acoustics, and large spaces. While the Reinvention centre, Humanities, Avon and Capital studios are managed by IATL, the two studio spaces in Milburn house are managed by the theatre department.



Figure 3: Rehearsals in the Humanities Studio¹

Students Union: The SU's first theatre space 'The Elephants Nest' (later Zippy's) was opened in 1979, but was converted to a society's storage area after the 2009 refurbishment, and remains closed as of 2015. 'Rolf's' opened in 1990, which would later become 'The Copper Rooms', after the 2009 redevelopment. The Copper Rooms possesses professional lighting, and a staging area, but is rarely used for theatre due to its poor acoustics and large space.¹

Non-Theatrical Venues

The Old Library: 'The Old Library', located on the Gibbet Hill site of the University was a popular venue for performance until its closure in 1968.

Benefactors: Benefactors lounge was often used as a rehearsal and performance space from the time of its opening in 1966 to its closure in 2012.

Re-invention Centre: The reinvention centre is occasionally used as a venue for rehearsal and performance, although is predominantly used as a space for teaching and learning.

Piazza: The Piazza is used for a variety of student events, especially during the summer term. With the installation of the 'big-screen' overlooking the piazza, the SU have also begun to screen films and sporting events.

Bluebell Woods/Tocil field: Since 2012 the woods behind Bluebell have been used as the venue for WUDs in the Woods, a yearly outdoor performance of an early modern English play. Tocil field has often been used as a venue for sport and performances, as well as corporate events and film screenings. The 'Meadow Meanders' project also took place on this field in July 2013.



Figures 4 (above) – Boar article about the opening of the Reinvention Centre.¹
Figure 5 (below) – View of the Piazza.¹

Performance Environments

Demonstrations/Occupations: Students at the university have a long history of political engagement, which has resulted in a number of demonstrations and occupations around the campus. These include the 1967 demonstrations against the Vietnam war, or more recent demonstrations against the rise in tuition fees. Several buildings around campus have also been used as sites for occupations, including the Arts Centre (1974), Senate House (1975 & 2013).¹



Campus Allotment: The University of Warwick established a growing space in 2009, which was eventually taken over by the Allotment Society in 2011.

Celebrity Visits: Celebrities and dignitaries often visit the campus. Among them are Margaret Thatcher (1990), Tony Blair (2004), Queen Elizabeth II (1970), and President Clinton (2000).



Figure 6: Protestors occupying Senate House.²
Figure 7: Bill Clinton speaking at the University of Warwick.¹

Looking to the future

With the number of performances staged at Warwick ever-increasing, it's of vital importance that students are afforded convenient access to theatrical spaces. Thus it may be of use for societies to consult with the theatre department and SU in order to negotiate better access to Milburn studio spaces, and the re-opening of Zippy's, if space becomes scarce.

Selected References

1. ARCHIVE, M. R. C. University of Warwick Archive - Student Union Handbooks/Warwick boar newspapers/President Clinton Visit
2. Photograph of PPU Occupiers. *Public Domain*.
3. 2015. *University Interactive Campus Map* - <http://campus.warwick.ac.uk/?bf=362> (Accessed 01/10/2015).

