



8

8 Model of the scheme as built showing access from a narrow residential street (lower left), through a small pedestrian entrance court. The Archive mediates between the scale of the quarry and the small cottages (left foreground)

9 The portcullis-like ironwork of the gates offers a first line of defence and announces a special space beyond



9

pragmatic protective reasons and as a symbolic gesture of reverence for the cherished objects within. Its sheer blankness is quite mysterious and the composition is made more abstract by the twin rainwater pipes.

### The reading room

The reading room has an independent steel-framed structure cantilevered on huge precast beams [Fig. 13a]. A glazed slot articulates its separation from the office spaces behind. Internally, it is a very formal chest-like space [Fig. 13b]. Initial thoughts had been that readers would prefer library-like private alcoves; sadly, however, because of the loss of original documents, the layout is intentionally open so that an invigilator can oversee the readers at a long table. The room has the quality of a panelled hall – the horizontal banding is expressed inside the ‘chest’ which has a calm and contemplative green coloured lining reminiscent of leather book bindings. The wooden table has the ceremonial quality of a large dining table – here, however, the shared endeavour

of the readers is their hunger for knowledge, which they have to seek in monk-like silence.

The reading room environment has to be carefully tempered since the documents are temporarily out of the repository’s stable conditions. It is toplit by clerestory and north light to avoid solar gain and penetration by direct sunlight. The roof is of heavy construction for thermal stability and comfort with specially exposed concrete panels. The world outside can be glimpsed through the long slot windows – giving seated readers a degree of visual relief. These windows are heavily louvred externally to reduce solar gain.

### Exhibition space

The aesthetic game is for the repository to be the replete cube, appropriate for its static storage function, whereas the reading room and exhibition areas are horizontally banded to convey a kinetic quality: these are the spaces in which the energy of the stored ideas is released. The metal bands of the oak treasure chest then become the module of the