The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain

ARCHITECTURE, THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Annual Symposium, 8-9 June 2018

PRACTICAL INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:
12-5pm, Friday 8 June and 9.30am-5pm, Saturday 9 June 2018
Wolfson Conference Room, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London

The SAHGB Annual Symposium – convened by Neal Shasore, University of Liverpool – is open to scholars at all career stages and of all periods, places, and disciplines. The Society is grateful for the support of the 20s30s Network, a transdisciplinary network of scholars rethinking British interwar history, and the Twentieth Century Society, which exists to safeguard the heritage of architecture and design in Britain from 1914 onwards.

Registration is priced at £65 for two days, and £50 for Saturday only. A limited number of student tickets are available at £50 for two days. Please register at www.sahgb.org.uk/symposium.

Registration includes refreshments across both days, and lunch on Saturday. Registration also includes an optional, free, expert-led tour of interwar buildings run by the Twentieth Century Society on Friday morning starting at the RIBA headquarters, 66 Portland Place, and ending at Senate House. There is limited capacity for these tours; places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. Please email symposium2018@sahgb.org.uk to register interest after booking for the Symposium.

SYNOPSIS:
2018 marks the centenary of two events central to the early twentieth century: the cessation of hostilities in the Great War, and the passing of the Representation of the People Act which expanded the franchise significantly, ushering in a new age of democratic participation. Both of these events coloured the following decades as ones of ‘Reconstruction’ and ‘Democratization’; what impact did these impulses have on the built environment?

This two-day Symposium will highlight new directions in scholarship for specialists in interwar and twentieth century history and architectural history, and provide methodological models for those making tentative steps into the study of the built environment of this period from within and outside the discipline. The impact of the war and the expanded franchise should also provide for general interest through a wide-ranging survey of subjects and themes.

The study of the built environment in interwar history is growing and developing, asserting its place in longer trajectories of nineteenth and twentieth century design, construction, practice and professionalism. And yet, despite it being a period chronologically (and in some senses, artificially) defined by two major international conflicts, a systematic and holistic examination of the impact of the first of these – the Great War – on the built environment has not yet emerged. This is in stark contrast to the latter half of the twentieth century, in which ‘reconstruction’ and the emergence of the social democratic consensus around the Welfare State in the wake of the Second World War have been more rigorously explored in relation to architecture and planning. The double centenary in 2018 is a fitting moment for the Society to convene a Symposium redressing this imbalance.

Elizabeth Darling’s examination of interwar Modernism, Re-forming Britain (2007), took as its subtitle ‘Narratives of Modernity Before Reconstruction.’ It might, however, just as easily have been called ‘Narratives of Modernity After Reconstruction.’ A new Ministry of Reconstruction, initiated by Lloyd George in 1917, looked closely not only at physical renovation (e.g. housing), but also social reform (e.g. industrial and social relations). Though
in formal policy terms reconstruction had come to an end amid economic turbulence in early 1920s, the idea and its impulses had longer-term repercussions throughout the interwar years. Changes in commercial practice, in governance, in industrial technologies and in social relations were widely felt, and often demanded physical expression of various kinds in the built environment – indeed, the metaphor of ‘reconstruction’ invoked material transformation. Similarly, there were changes in the conception of clients, consumers, and users of the built environment at this time as part of a broader process of self-conscious democratisation, encapsulated by the expanded franchise.

This Symposium will aim to reframe the period after the Great War as something altogether more positive and vibrant than its typical characterisation as unimaginative and moribund in architectural terms. The First World War was neither necessarily a spectre nor a harbinger. It was a challenge and a stimulus; a creative and dynamic opportunity for many in the built environment more than a rappell a l’ordre. Presenting new research in this field will allow historians of the twentieth century to draw on more considered and holistic interpretations of the impact of the war on the built environment, instead of resorting to out-dated views of the period as one characterised by historicist design and an out of touch establishment pitted against a growing Modernist avant-garde.

Friday afternoon will take us from the scale of the global, indeed the Imperial, to the local and the domestic. The latter session will focus not only on the delivery of housing but also the making (and running) of the home, marking the additional centenary of the publication of the Tudor Walters Report in November 1918. It is hoped these opening sessions will also bring to the fore feminist and post-colonial perspectives which can be further explored across the rest of the programme. To round off the first day, the Twentieth Century Society will convene a session on tangible and intangible heritage of the interwar period, encouraging delegates to think imaginatively about how their research can make significant impact on the heritage sector, and vice-versa.

On Saturday, five sessions have been arranged to give a broad but holistic overview of the impact of the Great War on the built environment. Paper titles below are prefixed by a ‘tag’ or keyword to make explicit wider thematics and resonances and to help structure discussion. Subjects covered span the built environment and discourse in relation to economic history, urban history, ecclesiastical history, planning history, and more. The final papers will return to the local and imperial scales with which the Symposium will have opened, in particular their intersections with the role of women and colonial or dominion nationhood.
PROGRAMME:
Each session will be followed by questions and discussion, with coffee breaks interspersed throughout the day.

FRIDAY 8 JUNE 2018, 13:00-17:00

13:00, WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
Neal Shasore (University of Liverpool)

13:10, FROM THE GLOBAL AND THE IMPERIAL...
Rhodes House, Oxford, and the Architecture of Memory
Geoffrey Tyack (University of Oxford)

WW1, Dyarchy and the Design of Interwar New Delhi
Smriti Pant (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg)

Japanese Architecture and Japan-ness in the 1920s and ’30s
Neil Jackson (University of Liverpool)

14:05, …TO THE LOCAL AND THE DOMESTIC
From Cape Town to Croydon: the architectural projects of Annabel Dott (1868-1937), pioneer woman builder and housing reformer
Elizabeth McKellar (Open University)

The ‘Efficiency’ Style: Gender, Labour-Saving and the ‘Ideal’ Home
Deborah Sugg Ryan (University of Portsmouth)

‘On the Artistic Side’: Electrification, Building Products and the Feminisation of Technical Arenas in the Interwar Period
Katie Lloyd Thomas (Newcastle University)

We cannot deal with the poorest. They have always been an unmitigated nuisance and there will be no objection to the municipality dealing with that section’: Private Enterprise and the Addison Act
Calum White (University of Oxford)

‘Peculiar and Fanciful’?: Re-evaluating the Contribution of Ernest Trobridge to Post-war Housing Provision
Tess Pinto (Twentieth Century Society)

16:00, TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE
Convened by Catherine Croft and Clare Price (Twentieth Century Society), this session will highlight work by Jon Wright at Purcell architects, Debbie Mays at the Heritage Place, and on the rebuilding of Ypres by Tino Mager from TU Delft. Further information TBC.

17:00, CLOSE
Neal Shasore (University of Liverpool)
SATURDAY 9 JUNE 2018, 09:30-17:30

09:30, WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
Neal Shasore (University of Liverpool)

09:40, INTRODUCTORY
ECONOMY: The First World War and the Transformation of Britain’s Built Environment
Peter Scott (Reading University)

DISCOURSE: Democratisation, Reconstruction and Criticism: The Architectural Press 1921-1927
Jessica Kelly (University for the Creative Arts London)

10:25, CORPORATIONS
BUSINESS: Machines for Working in: The Palaces of New Technology in Interwar Britain
Dennis Wardleworth (Independent Scholar)

PRACTICE: Why the tables never quite turned: the fate of the American professional service firm in architecture in England
Horatio Joyce (University of Oxford)

GOVERNMENT: Redrawing the State: The Interwar Architecture of Percy Thomas
Robert Proctor (University of Bath)

11:45, INSTITUTIONS
DIOCESE: The Technology of Worship: Innovation and Architectural Style in the Design of Interwar Anglican Churches
David Lewis (University of Oxford)

PARISH: ‘The Building of New Churches Became a ’Democratic’ Activity’: The Emancipation of Church Design After the First World War
Clare Price (University of Oxford/Twentieth Century Society)

SCHOOL: Impington Village College: A Progressive Experiment in Community Education
Kieran Mahon (Bartlett School of Architecture)

12:50, LUNCH

13:30, THE PUBLIC REALM
ATMOSPHERE: Gendered Trauma, Atmosphere and Care in Virginia Woolf’s Postwar London
Adam Walls (Bartlett School of Architecture)

PUBLIC SPACE: Public Space, Recovery and Community in the Aftermath of the First World War
Ben Roberts (Teeside University)

PUBLIC PARKS: Mawson’s ‘Volksparks’?
Luca Csepely-Knorr (Manchester School of Architecture)
LEISURE: Dance Halls and the Democratization of Pleasure after the First World War
James Nott (University of St Andrews)

15:45, WARFARE: OPPORTUNITY AND LOSS
PLANNING: Out of the Battlefields of the Great War: Modern Space as Extended Environment
Volker M Welter (University of California at Santa Barbara)

Fiona Smyth (Trinity College Dublin)

IMPERIAL MEMORIAL: ‘He is not missing, he is here’: The relationship between British imperial memorialisation and interwar mourning
Hanna Smyth (University of Oxford)

LOCAL MEMORIAL: The Role of Women in Commissioning Local War Memorials
Elizabeth Blood (University of Leicester)

17:00, CLOSE
Neal Shasore (University of Liverpool)