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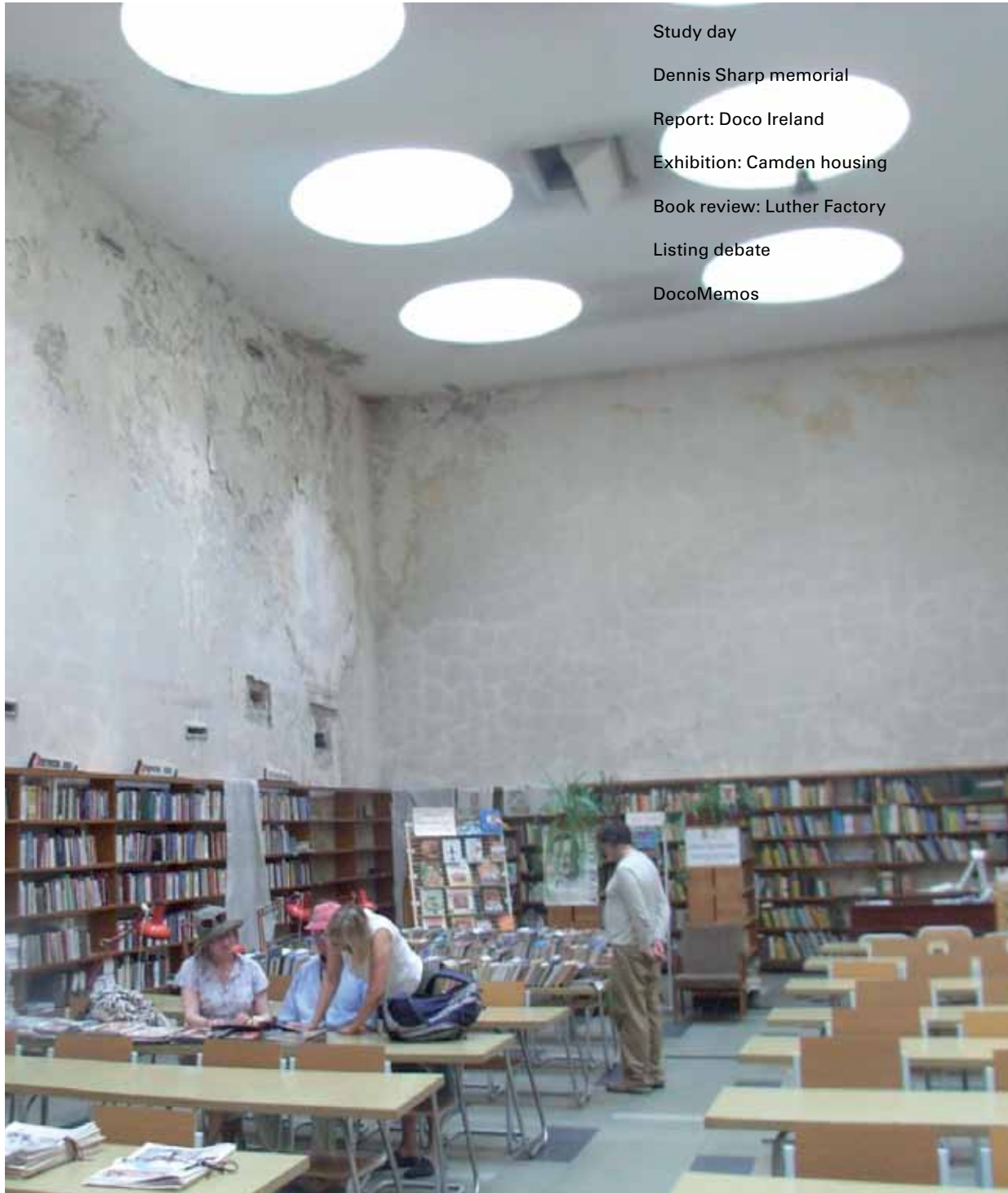
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DocoMemos



do-co-mo-mo

The Eindhoven statement
DOCOMOMO exists to:

1 Bring the significance of the modern movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the professionals and the educational community concerned with the built environment.

2 Identify and promote the recording of the works of the modern movement, including a register, drawings, photographs, archives and other documents.

3 Foster the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and disseminate this knowledge throughout the professions.

4 Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works of the modern movement.

5 Identify and attract funding for documentation and conservation.

6 Explore and develop the knowledge of the modern movement.

With the country reeling from daily reports of government policy changes that seem targeted at the most vulnerable, it is hard to find any genuinely good news or good cheer for this traditionally jolly season. There are several 'unintended outcomes' of the cuts and credit crunch, such as the stalling of major billion-pound developments in London on sites already partially demolished such as that at Ferrier Estate, Greenwich and the Heygate estate, Southwark. How these areas and their inhabitants will ever recover, after decades of poor neighbourhood management and neglect before becoming what the right-wing media call 'ghettoes', followed by demolition and blight, is unimaginable. Given the love and care that went into constructing idealistic and family-oriented neighbourhoods, the subsequent disdain for the people, the buildings and public spaces, and the total disregard for the architectural intent that so thoughtfully knitted them together, is hard to stomach.

Another 16-page issue contains further tributes and obituaries to our late co-chair Dennis Sharp, still very much missed. The memorial service at the Architectural Association on 1 July was packed with old friends and colleagues, and we heard some moving speeches (pages 7-9). The postponed lecture on German Expressionism by Iain Boyd Whyte, in memory of Dennis' lifetime fascination on the subject, takes place on 11 January. We have been impressively busy with our fantastic series of Concrete Lectures. All good things must come to an end, however, and as we send our sincere and heartfelt thanks to The Concrete Centre for their sponsorship, we look forward to the upcoming theme of the use of brick in MoMo, with a new series on the subject (page 16) sponsored by the Brick Development Association.

We have had some fantastic visits and study tours this year, the latest being the Hertfordshire visits on 2 October, starting the Sugden House by Peter and Alison Smithson (page 6), coordinated by Rob Loader, and my own Kensington Walking Tour, reviewed here. Tim Bruce-Dick took his students to Finland to visit Aalto's Vipuri Library (page 4 and cover); he also reports on a visit to London by a delegation from Docomomo Japan, when he gave them the classic MoMo tour of London, from Hampstead Garden Suburb to Trellick Tower.

Working party member John Allan reports on the Docomomo Ireland Conference (page 10) and continues our series on the Listing Debate (pages 14, 15), while James Dunnett reviews the exhibition on Cook's Camden (continuing at the Building Centre until 8 December, page 11) and looks back at Jack Pringle's contribution to the plywood furniture industry in Juri Kermik's classic book, *The Luther Factory; Playwood and Furniture 1877-1940* (pages 12, 13).

Finally after an exhausting and hectic year I would like to give my personal thanks to all those who contribute articles and images to the Newsletter, many of whom are hard-pressed Working Party members. As editor of Docomomo-uk's publication for ten years now, we have come a long way from the days when almost every word was written myself. The magazine has become richer and more varied and interesting due entirely to those who give up their time and expertise to further our aims. And as we welcome Chris Tosic into the fold as Newsletter designer, I would also like to thank Matthew Wickens for his ten years of working with painstaking attention and exemplary patience. ■

Emma Dent Coad



1 MoMo in Kensington

The long-awaited walking tour on 6 November kicked off at Basil Spence and JS Bonington's Kensington Town Hall and Civic Centre (1977), where I am based as local Councillor. Our lively group of 20 was rather restricted by the presence of a national Bagpipe Convention that had taken over the whole complex, but we were treated to the awe-inspiring Council Chamber from the Public Gallery, to the accompaniment of a moving bagpipe performance far less rowdy than the usual angry racket that accompanies Council meetings. The combination of grand civic spaces and private committee rooms, with their two sets of doors of double thickness to ensure quiet and privacy, the beautiful wood panelling, use of interior brick and concrete all contributing to a luxurious sense of space with purpose, is all intended to impress, as does the excellent state of repair. One concern is that of an upcoming reorganisation of internal space and new entrances in advance of a possible consideration of listing; definitely and quite intentionally the wrong way round.

A stroll up the road took us to a Council colleague's home in Tom Kay's JCR Bailey house (1967), a small but beautifully formed four storey house with hidden roof gardens and cunning spaces slotted into each other. This was another homage to the use of brick, both outside (Staffordshire

blue) and inside (black, with some parts rendered white to the horror of the purists among us). The spiral staircases with brick detailing were amazing, while slightly claustrophobic for some. Again the use of pleasantly patinated wood panelling on walls and corridors adds an opulence and timelessness to a tightly controlled austerity.

A short bus trip took us to the legendary Community Rooms at Maxwell Fry and Grey Wornum's Kensal House (1938), still owned by the Council. This community space was rescued from total dereliction and flooding some years back by a youth theatre, which with limited funds has repaired the spaces and brought them into loving use, though without the attention to detail that this listed building deserves and which they wish to achieve. Their future plans for improvement and extending community use are heartening, going far above and beyond self-serving Big Society aims. We wandered around the rest of the estate, with its Nursery currently used by Social Services and its circular play area cleverly placed to capture sun all day long.

The next stop nearby was to another social housing scheme, a personal favourite Pepler House by Peter Deakins for Clifford Wearden (1965). This is sadly destined for demolition and redevelopment though residents hope this ambition may fall by the wayside due to funding cuts. We were delighted to have Peter Deakins to introduce

his building, and were joined by chair of the Residents' Association Keith Stirling who will fight to the death to keep the bulldozers away. When Prince Philip opened Pepler House it was the longest social housing block in the country; it is still much loved by residents who live in the generous and beautifully designed flats, who have standards of space, light and storage much to be admired, with an ingenious sliding partition between kitchen and living space that has been used in very different ways to accommodate very different lifestyles.

Our final formal visit was to Cezary Bednarski's own home in Westbourne Park Road, brand new and only recently finished. His 'house on top of a house' on a rare undeveloped plot is strangely reminiscent of Tom Kay's, with its emphasis on use of materials, upside down arrangement with living space above bedrooms, and hidden roof garden. Bednarski's living space has all services in a central core, kitchen space on one side and loos on the other, with series of sliding partitions that will provide countless variations of privacy to accommodate work, cooking and family space. All finishes and materials are lovingly crafted, with a quite spectacular wooden staircase made to order in Poland. He has cleverly aligned full-length window slots to overlook a particular view of Portobello market to one side, or a tree on the other, and his living space is formed by a mix of solid brick wall, milky semi-transparent glass and transparent glass, quite a feat, and one which celebrates the busy area with its street life and rooftops, and gives splendid views of sky and sunsets; quite inspiring.

As there was much enthusiasm for this visit, another is planned for the spring that would take an in-depth look at the Cheltenham Estate that includes Trellick Tower and Edenham Way, studying its past, present and future as the Council once again casts an avaricious eye over this corner of my ward. ■

Emma Dent Coad

The casework I allow myself to become involved with is almost always concerned with conserving the sense of external space. Out of three issues, any success can be reported only in one.

The building of a new **Ashmount School** to replace that by HT Cadbury-Brown (1956) on Hornsey Lane, has been approved by Islington Council, despite a hard-fought campaign against it by a local group (and my own interventions for Docomomo), following the agreement by London Mayor Boris Johnson (who has vowed to protect open space) to allow the use of Metropolitan Open Land for the purpose. A conservation study by Purcell Miller Tritton had concluded that there was scope for bringing the existing school up to contemporary standards in most respects, and that the architectural interest of the school merited it. The school had been 'locally listed' by Islington Council but rejected by English Heritage for national listing – though they continued to press for its retention. It seems, however, that there may be insufficient funds to permit the building of the new school – unless the valuable and desirable site of the existing can be sold for redevelopment.... Tim Ronalds has volunteered that Cadbury-Brown's design with its glass skin inspired his own similarly-skinned Music School in Watford, which we visited on the Hertfordshire tour in October.

The change of regime from Lib-Dem to Labour in Islington in May has not altered the outlook for Ashmount School but it has for the **Sobell Centre**, by Bill Laming of Seifert and Partners, a large sports centre opened in 1972. The generous green space around the Centre had been perceived by the Lib-Dems as the site for 270 housing units, the developer of which, it was hoped, would pay for a new sports centre underneath. The credit crunch reduced the likelihood of such a deal, and money has now been spent refurbishing the ice-rink and the magnificent central hall, large enough to



1 Pepler House social housing in North Kensington, Peter Deakins for Clifford Wearden (1965)

2 Gateway Building, Manchester, Bill Laming for Richard Seifert (1965). Photo by Gavin Stamp.

3 Ashmount School

contain four 5-a-side football pitches, which is to be used for Olympic training. Bill Laming's curvaceous design followed on from his earlier even more curvaceous design for **Gateway House** in Manchester, an office block and local landmark outside Piccadilly Station, which is now under consideration for listing.

Bill Laming's mentor and boss in the Seifert office was George Marsh, architect of many of the best known 'Seifert' designs, notably **Centre Point**, a listed building. This status has however not prevented consent being granted by Camden for highly obtrusive station structures to be erected right in front of it for Crossrail, requiring the re-alignment of the critical access stair to the first floor lobby. The original pool and

fountain that formerly occupied the space were somewhat 'scrappy', but they did at least keep the space open and the magnificent 'zig-zag' pilotis of the tower in view and the view under the tower available. These are the spatial effects for which the 'tower in a plaza' format was created, and which the listing should have protected. Would a development be permitted in the forecourt of the Seagram building in New York? The proposed 'glass wedge' structures are simply outside canopies over the stairs down to the Cross-rail station. Many such stairs, e.g. in the Metro in Paris, are open to the elements and it is not clear that the canopies are needed here at all. ■

James Dunnett



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- 1 Alvar Aalto's Viipuri Library, completed 1935
- 2 Double staircase in reference library
- 3 Entrance hall
- 4 Exterior steps
- 5 Lending library
- 6 Terrace

Alvar Aalto's Viipuri Library, July 2010

At the AA in the 60s we had three or four gods: Corb, Mies, Gropius and of course Aalto. They were all alive and practicing and when we had to design a library, Aalto's at Vipurii in Finland was my inspiration. When this summer a group of us opted for an Aalto tour, a visit to this temple of curvy ceilings and round skylights seemed an essential part of the trip. Charles Jenks wrote that it was in ruins, and web sites contradicted each other; what was the truth? We were going to find out!

Following WW2 Russia nicked a large part of Finland including Vipurii, now called Vyborg. Getting there was an effort: being meanies we wished to avoid the obvious route via St Petersburg and its expensive visas, flights and hotels. Then we found that the Finns have arranged a visa-free two day visit from Finland, mostly for families visiting relatives left behind in Russia. Since we were in Finland visiting other Aalto sites this seemed a good idea. You board m/s Carelia at the pretty resort of Lappeenranta and sail down the Saimaa Canal.

Construction of the canal began in the early 19th century and it was inaugurated in 1856. In true Karelian fashion, the

celebrations were so intense that the Vyborg Castle's tower caught fire. The canal was widened and deepened in the early 20th century when it proved to be too small for larger ships. The present canal is about 43km long, half of it in Finnish and the other half in Russian territory. The difference in water levels between Lake Saimaa and the Gulf of Finland is 76 metres, and there are 8 locks. Each lock chamber is 85 m long and 13.2 wide, the locks' heights vary from 5.5 to 12.7 metres.

Five hours later we arrived at Vyborg, a hot, dusty, dilapidated town known for its lace and as a base for young soviet conscripts. You can see them marching round the town past the leafy park where the library stands. We tied up under the beady eye of the Russian guards before being driven to our soviet hotel, a concrete 70s special stepping back from the civic lagoon; you know the sort of thing. Having dumped our kit, we excitedly set off through the park, and then there it was coming into view amongst the mothers and prams: the Aalto Library!

Contrary to the bad news, so far as we could make out the library has been in constant use ever since it was built. Admittedly in true soviet style little has been spent on maintenance,

but you have to remember it is not one of the Czars' summer palaces. Nevertheless money has been spent on key locations round this surprisingly large Modernist building: specifically the roof, the entrance lobbies to both the main library and the children's library tucked under round the back, and of course to the main lecture hall. This very special space is immediately on your right as you enter beyond sliding doors; these we gingerly slid open to be confronted with Alto's masterpiece, seemingly complete but still 'work in progress'. While the wavy ceiling appeared recently restored, scattered around the plywood floor were building materials and various tools. Indeed someone had brought with them a photo from the web site that showed a bucket still in the same place! No matter we were all suitably thrilled to be there. Returning to the entrance lobby we admired the clean transparent stairs apparently partly designed by his first wife Aino Aalto. Opposite a corner of the spacious lobby is now used as an internet station testifying to the building's flexibility

Moving up the grand stairs to the main lending library we experienced elation and sorrow: the space was fantastic but the same stains from roof leaks down the walls and the skylight

drums that we noticed in the last Docomomo report [1993] were still there. You will recall that this space shares a great ceiling pierced with skylights with the slightly larger lending library half a level higher. Here Aalto's curious handrail down the middle of the flight has been removed but otherwise all is as he left it.

Elsewhere, especially outside on the roof terrace, concrete was breaking off to reveal reinforcement bars, and walls remained unpainted. But generally we found an air of quiet activity bearing in mind it was the hottest day of the year and everyone was probably at their dachas sipping lemonade by the river.

Talking to the librarians they were optimistic that gradually parts of the building would be repaired; but they shrugged and added 'who knows when'. When you review the web-site www.alvaraalto.fi/viipuri/restorat.htm you get a good idea of the present state of play, and the roof does appear to have been fully restored... but once you're there in the Russia of today, the heart sinks when you see how little has been done to repair and restore the walls for example, and how little you guess will be done. We hope we are wrong. ■

Tim Bruce-Dick

Docomomo Japan visit London, 14-17 September 2010

About 15 members of Docomomo Japan met us in London this September during their historic visit to England. They were led by Professor Kenji Watanabe from Tokai University, a graduate of the Architectural Association in the 90s. Other distinguished university alumni included Kazuto Kasahara [Kyoto Institute of Technology], Kaya Oku [Osaka University], and Izumi Kuroishi [Aoyama Gakuin University].

On Wednesday evening Tim Bruce-Dick collected the party from Hopkins's office and led them to Phillip Boyle's Modernist apartment high over Clerkenwell. About 15 Docomomo members answered our late invitation to attend, speeches were made and all concerned thoroughly enjoyed this rare opportunity to meet our Japanese friends.

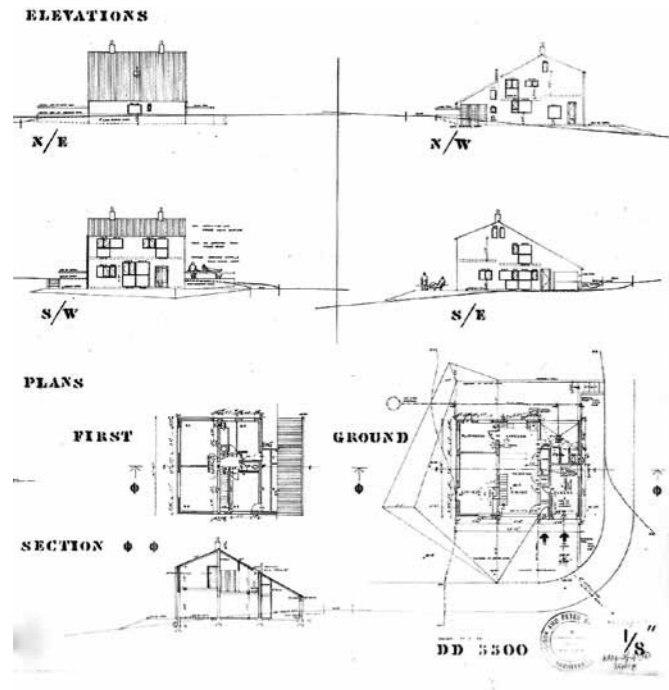
The next morning Matthew and Tim met them at their Canary Wharf hotel whence we set off in a rather large bus for an odyssey round London. First stop was the apparently doomed Robin Hood Gardens where we clambered up the stairs and checked out the ac-

cess ways; an air of decay and neglect hung over this monolith. Next and next door we visited Goldfinger's Balfour Tower complex, a mixture of robust concrete finishes but in need of restoration.

On the way to Hampstead Garden Suburb, we called in on Highpoint where we just had time to appreciate the lobby and exterior. After the Suburb [visited by special request] we dropped down to Goldfinger's own house in Willow Walk where the party split into two groups for guided tours; while one group went round the house the other was led by Tim and Matthew to Wells Coates's Isokon and Neave Brown's Fleet Road Housing nearby.

The High point of the tour came [literally] with our visit to Goldfinger's Trelick Tower where chairman James Dunnett joined us. James told us several intriguing stories of his days working with Goldfinger in his office on the ground floor. Then we took the lift to the 23rd floor where long time resident Lee Boland and partner graciously showed us their superb maisonette overlooking London. All agreed this was a spectacular end to the tour.

TB-D



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Between the Hunstanton School and the Economist Building during the period spanning the 1950s and into the 60s, Alison and Peter Smithson were largely preoccupied with the problem of the modern Home and what it might become. This took the form of many studies, some speculative, some for real clients, some as exhibition work, and some from their interaction with CIAM and Team 10. The Sugden House was the only house to actually get built if you put to one side their Wayland Young Pavilion (a bedroom extension) also their Solar Pavilion/holiday home for themselves, and the two exhibition structures they produce which dealt with themes to do with 'Home' and 'House', 'Architecture' and 'Art' in a more abstract way.

The disposition of both internal volumes and simplicity of the external volume is the key to the character of this house. This is of interest when compared with the initial scheme which while having a square-ish plan, has it divided into three 'bays' on the north-south axis, with each of the three 'bays' being expressed vertically with separate mono-pitch roofs (this was a device to give all first floor rooms windows with good aspects). The second and

built scheme is achieved (after discussion with the Sugdens) by the next key decision, which is the step in section at the top of the stairs under the wider roof slope which contributes to both the subtlety of the relationships of the internal spaces and the simplicity of the external volume.

The simple symmetrical external volume with no protrusions was a design aim. The house takes its key from historic popular rural buildings responding to sun, wind and weather and familiar to the designers in the north of England where the Smithsons originated. The resultant form with its ground-hugging north east elevation slotted into a slope and expansive south-west elevation has an inevitable natural logic seldom found in suburban house design.

Quite a few modern houses have a contrast between a smooth-skinned enclosing external envelope and a textured expansive interior. Here on first acquaintance the exterior skin is not smooth, it is roughish brick punctuated by smallish self-consciously scattered windows, not a strategy for machine made smoothness, a passion strived for in Modernism. It is necessary



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1 Various plans and sections drawn by A+P Smithson

2 Internal hall showing pitched roof

3-4 Two views of the exterior showing disposition of windows

to consider what is happening here in context. In the mid 50s the Villa Savoye (the most emblematic smooth-skinned/dynamic internal spaced house) was in a sad state following WW2 and not the pristine piece of heritage it is today. The Jaoul Houses had just been built after a long gestation. And the impetus for the Sugden House lies there. One of the surprises of the Jaoul houses is their external smoothness despite their rough brickwork punctured by small self-consciously scattered windows. Indeed it is in their extruded 'tubeness' and negative detailing that the Jaoul Houses achieve their extraordinary smoothness. The Sugden House is a work infused with a thorough understanding of the Jaoul Houses while in no way copying them despite sharing many of the materials used.

The influences are strategic and conceptual.

The ground floor has been rigorously and self-consciously designed, with every detail drawing attention to itself, but because of the honesty of materials the effect is vigorous calm. The first floor is compartmented for privacy, with attention to the careful size and volume of each bedroom space which is different so they are subtly and individually proportioned; again



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a lesson from Maison Jaoul, but with a different architectural vocabulary. The upper floor is completed by a final tour de force of a wc located centrally upon both central axes, the wc pan, the rooflight, the external vent all lined up with vent pipe like the prow of a ship or the nose of a plane, to use a modern machine comparison.

Here are some comments from Alison and Peter Smithson, which give a personal context:

'On the whole the English resist really large windows... the distribution of windows in this house allows the brickwork to flow together and coalesce with the roof to form a solid mass, with that appearance of all-round protection once the characteristic of English popular architecture and appropriate to our climate.'

'To 'manage' its piece of territory and to sit well in its surroundings the house is given an earthwork apron, whose facets effect the transition between the natural dished contours and the squareness of the house.'

'Things need to be ordinary and heroic at the same time.'

'These specifications introduce a method of working based largely on the notion of a building that is made out of what it appears it is made of.'

Philip Boyle



Dear friends of Dennis

May I ask your attention for the tango competition in 1996 at the 4th International Docomomo conference in Slovakia. What you see is the winner of the Prix d'Elegance with his Russian dance partner. He is in the mood we have known him for best. It is difficult to find photographs in our archives where Dennis is not smiling. Forever young; he was a Modernist at heart. Fittingly one of the beautiful mottoes he used was: 'While I breathe, I hope'.

Long before we started Docomomo in 1988 we knew Dennis by name, due to Modern Architecture and Expressionism and in particular his canonical book Twentieth Century Architecture – a visual history. When we first met in 1990, Dennis had joined a strong UK delegation to the first Docomomo conference in Eindhoven. He came in the slipstream of my friend Christopher Dean, together with people like Catherine Cooke, John Allan, Sherban Catacuzino, James Dunnett, Peter Palumbo and Martin Pawley. Peter Palumbo, by the way, just popped over by helicopter for an hour, to present his support for our initiative. From the first beginning Dennis put all his heart and soul in Docomomo.

The very first words he presented to his new Docomomo friends at our founding conference formed a clear statement: 'Finding a definition for modern architecture is difficult enough. The cultural evaluation of it is even more problematic. Modernism is an attitude of mind; a round view ...'. Later he wrote: 'Modernity that gives root to the Modern Movement is a cultural mode, a form of civilisation which permeated the world from the West, opposed to the idea of 'tradition', that is to say all earlier traditions, and is unswervingly dedicated to fundamental economic and social transformation'. 'Modern architecture kept persistently to its aim of revolutionising Modern Life'. Would it not be beautiful if these words by Dennis could still be used to describe modern architecture of today?

While debating criteria for the international selection of the key Modern Movement buildings world wide, it

was Dennis who – after length deliberations – concluded: 'Modern Architecture should essentially be seen as socially, technically and aesthetically innovative'. And it is this definition of Modern Movement Architecture that we have used ever since.

His contributions to Docomomo were plentiful and important. Dennis assisted with the original text of the Docomomo constitution and the Eindhoven Statement in 1990. For years he was a crucial member of the international specialist committee on registers. With this committee he prepared the advisory report in 1996, presenting the Docomomo proposal for nomination of Modern Movement buildings, sites and oeuvres for the World Heritage list.

Together with Catherine Cooke, he edited the book: 'Modern Movement in Architecture: Selections from the Docomomo registers' in 2000. Through the articles he wrote, papers he presented and his contributions to debate Dennis kept us on our toes. His network of friends over the world was instrumental in establishing new contacts. It is through Dennis that for example the formation of Docomomo Japan came about, now one of our most active national working parties.

Also nationally he was a catalyst. For many years he was chairman of Docomomo-uk. His beloved shop was a beehive for debate in London.

Dennis, on behalf of all the Docomomo community I thank you for your intellectual contribution, your loyalty and your enthusiasm. Let us be inspired forever by your example: 'While I breathe, I hope.' ■

Hubert-Jan Henket
Honorary President, Docomomo

Tim Benton and I first met Dennis in 1972 or 1973 when we were working on an Open University course on modern architecture and design between 1890-1939. As set books we had Pevsner's Pioneers of Modern Design and P. Reyner Banham's Theory and Design in the First Machine Age. We had signed up Peter Banham to write a course unit on mechanical services and we knew and admired Dennis's bibliography Sources of Modern Architecture and his book on Expressionist architecture, so we signed him up to contribute to a course unit on Expressionism. (Here I would like to underline Irena Murray's stress on the importance of Dennis's Sources... bibliography – it gave us a kind of armature for the course.) We also planned a course reader of extracts from the writings of architects, designers and critics of the period. As the book was to be published by a commercial publisher, the powers that be in the Open University publishing department decreed that we needed an outside 'name' to validate the enterprise. Dennis seemed an obvious choice, and he was duly signed up to co-edit and introduce the book. Over a period of months we photocopied in triplicate the mounds of material we had accumulated, to which Dennis added some suggestions of his own and, at meetings in his office at the AA, at our house in Stockwell, and once, memorably, in Dennis's wonderful library in Epping Green, we whittled down the material to manageable size. Dennis then wrote a general introduction and Tim wrote the section introductions and Form and Function was duly published to coincide with the launch of the course early in 1975.

Dennis was our introduction to the AA and, thereafter, we sometimes met up at lectures or conferences. In 1976-7 Tim made a new television programme for the course, on modern furniture. Based partly on PEL (Practical Equipment Limited) tubular steel furniture, the programme gave him access to the collection of PEL furniture held by Accles and Pollock, who were happy to make the collection available for an exhibition. Dennis was able to make available the gallery at the AA and also devoted an

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issue of AAQ to PEL and tubular steel furniture with contributions by himself, Tim and Barbie Campbell Cole. Between them, they also organized a conference on tubular steel furniture to coincide with the exhibition whose papers, edited by Dennis, Tim and Barbie were subsequently published.

After 1977 our paths diverged as Tim and I had to move on to work on things other than modern architecture and design, and it was only with the foundation of Docomomo in the late 1980s that I had the opportunity to renew my acquaintance with Dennis at meetings of the UK committee and at the first conference in Dessau. But we lost touch again and it was only when I joined the Docomomo-UK trip to Moscow in 2008, which Dennis had hoped to go on, that I learned that he was seriously ill. I last saw him at the University of Westminster exhibition and conference on furniture from Chandigarh; he was characteristically upbeat and optimistic about beating his cancer; sadly, it was not to be. ■

Charlotte Benton



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Dennis Sharp, who died last week aged 76, was a very British architect with collaborators worldwide, says Paul Finch

He was best known as an author, teacher and critic, with countless articles, books, events and magazines to his name, but Dennis Sharp was a practitioner from the founding of his first practice in 1969, and undertook many building projects as well as exhibition design.

Sharp liked construction, no doubt as a result of his family background with a grandfather and his father both having been builders in his native Bedfordshire (one of his great regrets was coming second in the competition to design a new bridge in the city). He also liked working on old buildings; conservation work included Chandos House by Robert Adam near the RIBA in London, much work on buildings by one of his favourite modernist firms, Connell Ward & Lucas, and advice on the listed buildings at Ascot Racecourse (with HOK Sport, now known as Populous).

In respect of new work, he collaborated with Santiago Calatrava on Trinity Bridge in Salford (and on the influential Calatrava exhibition at the RIBA in 1992, which resulted in the opening up of concealed lighting and other original features); more recently he worked with Fast & Epp on the exhibition at Canada House of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics building.

He had an eye for emerging architects of interest, helping Manfredi Nicoletti with his Cardiff Bay Opera House entry, and the young Ken Yeang with his first Building Centre exhibition. His enthusiasm for architectural initiatives was infectious – he gave a warm welcome to our launch of the World Architecture Festival and acted as a judge.

Sharp had a great sense of right and wrong; he rescued a failing Anglo-Japanese reciprocal exhibition, raising funds to ensure the young Japanese architects who were expecting to be shown at the RIBA were not disappointed. His editing of magazines was a theme of his professional life, from the founding of AA Quarterly in

1968 until 1982, to being founder editor of World Architecture magazine for the International Union of Architects.

As an author he made an impact early on with *Modern Architecture and Expressionism* (1966), while his *20th Century Architecture – A Visual History* (1972) is still in print. Monographic studies of architects as diverse as Connell Ward & Lucas, Santiago Calatrava and Kisho Kurakawa were evidence of his interest in a very wide range of contemporary architecture. His work with CICA, the international critics organisation, and Docomomo, will be remembered with admiration and thanks. The later part of his life was made happy by his personal and professional partnership with Yasmin Shariff. ■

Paul Finch
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I want to talk very briefly about Dennis and the AA Quarterly—which I am very apprehensive in doing with a whole roomful of people here who have known Dennis so well and for so long—and indeed actually worked with him or contributed to the AAQ...

In fact, I am afraid that I only really became personally acquainted with Dennis rather recently when we were in the early days of setting up our archives here at the AA. Characteristically he was extremely generous in taking time to visit our store room and to sit down with us and talk through our plans for a good couple of hours. Enthusing over student drawings of the 1920's and 30s and lending strong, sympathetic, but nevertheless firm, advice—instantly assessing where we needed help and gently urging us to be more forceful and vocal in pressing our case. It felt rather like being given a benign but firm guiding push or prod to get us travelling in the right direction...

But to the AAQ. What marked it out from its predecessor journals at the AA, and indeed placed it at the forefront of contemporary architectural journals, was its international scope, its intellectual range, and of course the sheer quality of the writing: to name just a few of the contributors; Charles Jencks, Bruno Zevi, William Curtis, Colin Rowe, Amos Rapoport, Lucien Kroll, Tim Benton, Colin Rowe, Adrian Forty—the list goes on.... It reads like a roll call, a who's who of architectural luminaries...

Well, the conception of the AAQ took place in 1968. Dennis had been hired the previous year to replace Frank Duffy as the editor of the AA's *Journal Arena*, whilst also teaching 2 days a week as Senior Lecturer in History. At this stage *Arena* was haemorrhaging money and was merged with *Interbuild*, the trade journal produced by Prefabrication Publications Ltd. This attempt to share costs, advertisements and ultimately, readership failed dismally, with the publisher pulling out in 1968—providing Dennis with the golden opportunity to put forward proposals for a new, invigorated, more broadly-based academic journal. In his own words "We had to invent a new magazine and I was de-



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termined that we would invent [one] that had a literary content, that was something like a combination of 'Encounter', 'Horizon', 'Time Magazine', and so on, with short, sharp articles but written to the length that was required for someone to make a point." Its principal aim was to "create an international magazine that could be academic, critical, topical, and theoretical, and which [crucially] would be unfettered by discussions of built work".

Indeed, key to the AAQ's editorial approach was Dennis' international awareness and range of contacts—just a handful of years into his editorship he was able to boast that "contributors so far have come from... the USA, France, Germany, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, Spain, Latin America, Malta, Poland, Holland etc". And of course, central to this international scope was the network of friends and contributors that Dennis built up, mixing work and socialising and pleasure—an extended family of contributors who could be drawn upon for reviews, comments and topical articles. Indeed, Dennis' editorial role has been described to me as something of an impresario, combining talent spotting with superb editorial judgement. Charles Jencks' 'Pop non-pop' articles, published by Dennis over 2 issues in 1968/9, whilst Jencks was still a PhD student at UCL. Likewise Michael Sorkin, in 1975, whilst still studying at Harvard, was given the opportunity to publish important early articles, including 'The Architect: A New American Movie Hero'—which looked at films such as *Death Wish* and *Towering Inferno*. Likewise, promising AA students were promoted and brought into Dennis' circle—Ken Yeang, also in the process of his PhD, had his 5th year portfolio drawings published as a pictorial essay in the 'First Real Ersatz Architecture' of 1972; whilst Robin Evans, 2 years after his AA graduation had his study of Bentham's Panopticon published in 1971, pre-dating Foucault's *Discipline & Punish* by 4 years.

Certainly in terms of breadth, issues ran the gamut from themes based around professionalism, to social and building needs, to architecture and politics, historical analysis, and a prescient concern with energy ques-

tions—in particular an important issue, 'The Human Setting' of 1970?, jointly edited with Amos Rapoport. As Dennis himself said recently—"we had everyone writing for us, from Wedgewood Benn to Paolo Soleri". Which other major journal would have run a 9 page spread entitled 'Motorama: introducing Gerald the Herald'—a comic strip following the adventures of a Triumph Herald, conceived by Piers Gough, Philip Wagner and Diana Jowsey—this published cheek by jowl with a rigorous examination of Pre Columbian Mexican architecture by John Adams, an article investigating Ocean Systems by Farooq Hussain and discussions of Paulo Soleri's Arcology.

Yet of course, in conclusion, it has to be said that Dennis' work with the AAQ was only part of his concerns with architectural journalism and writing within the AA. In conjunction with his more general editorial duties on such publications as the monthly, *AA Notes*, the research series 'AA Papers', and a host of other AA publications and texts, Dennis also operated an architectural journalism and criticism workshop for students. He seems to have been particularly proud of this course which aimed to "get an instant magazine out of students—the sessions covering journalism one week, criticism the following week, [and] elaborating a whole system of analysis and so on, and then at the end of the two term programme students were left to themselves to actually produce their magazine". Students graduated and were brought on board the AAQ as editorial staff, and amongst those students nurtured by Dennis through the course were the architectural journalist Neil Steedman and, of course, Martin Spring, who worked for AD before going on to become the architectural editor at *Building magazine*—a post he held for 31 years until 2009... Indeed, in many ways the course seems to encapsulate, or rather to have been an extension of Dennis' approach at the AA Quarterly—guiding and nurturing talent (which in turn fed into the AAQ network) and encouraging experimentation combined with rigorous, open-minded exploration of the broadest range of issues. ■

Edward Bottoms

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE MODERN MOVEMENT?

This ambitious question was the title of DoCoMoMo Ireland's inaugural conference held on November 10th at Dublin's awesome Collins Barracks, now converted to become the National Museum of Ireland and housing the intensely evocative Eileen Gray Collection. Organiser Shane O'Toole, a veteran from Eindhoven 1990, with DoCo-colleagues Peter Cody and Peter Carroll, had lined up a wide range of speakers that combined a strong Irish contingent with several overseas guests including Ola Wedeburn, Iveta Cerna, Sander Nelissen, Catherine Croft and myself. Opening the conference was Ciaran Cuffe, Minister of State for Environment and Heritage, whose evident engagement with, and full-hearted commitment to, modern architectural heritage (including his department's sponsorship for the conference itself) would put his British counterpart to shame.

The day was structured in three main sessions. The first, "Surveying the Scene" introduced by Paul Larmour and O'Toole, charted MoMo survivors and casualties of the post-war period in north and south respectively, and also covered the dedicated work undertaken by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage under William Cumming in compiling the Record of Protected Structures from 1700 to the Present. This remarkable county-by-county survey is now almost complete, with only Dublin – deliberately left till last – remaining to be undertaken. Finally Catherine Croft of C20 contributed the English dimension, pointing up the controversial progress of, and uneven protection afforded by, modern listing at home.

Session 2 – "Back From Utopia" – included presentations from Wedeb-

The sheer scale of these developments being a reminder of modernism's ubiquitous reach in the years of its hegemony

run on workshop projects for the huge Meat Market in Copenhagen, the Parnu Kek Soviet housing scheme in Estonia and the State Bacteriological Laboratory in Solna, Stockholm, the sheer scale of these developments being a reminder of modernism's ubiquitous reach in the years of its hegemony. Sander Nelissen then described the unfolding story and uncertain future of Lijnbaan Shopping Centre, Rotterdam, a modern urban prototype now 50 years old and threatened as much by erosive incremental change as by pressures for major densification. My own talk on producing Management Guidelines for the Barbican estate in London, believed to be the largest object ever listed, sought to show how the stewardship of such vast heritage assets – too large to police through enforcement – must seek to promote conservation by persuasion.

The lunchbreak offered an opportunity to visit the Eileen Gray Collection, lovingly curated by Jennifer Goff, and a testament to this singular designer's extraordinary artistic vision and creativity. Session 3, Case Studies, included an account by Graham Hickey of the Dublin Civic Trust of the varying fortunes of metal windows in the Irish modern canon; an authoritative review of some high profile concrete repair projects by Bill Fleeton; Wedeburn's barely credible story of 'modern movement' – in this case literally the re-location of Copenhagen Airport's 1939 terminal building one and a half kilometres to a new position on a rolling trolley of 750 wheels, and lastly my own project of rescuing the iconic Isokon apartments in Lawn Road, Hampstead.

Martin Colreavy chaired a lively

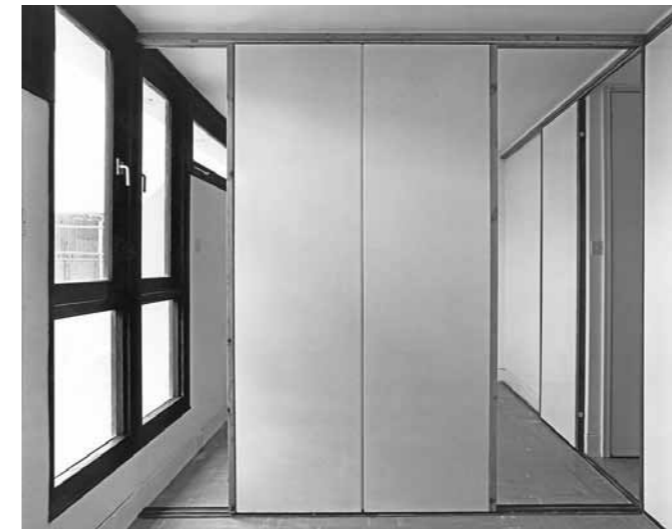
Q&A session among speakers and audience which concluded the formal proceedings, but delegates were rewarded with a final evening lecture by Iveta Cerna on the marathon task of restoring Villa Tugendhat in Brno. This masterpiece by Mies van der Rohe, completed in 1930 and inhabited for only a few years by its Jewish owners before being overtaken by the dark years of Nazism and numerous post-war vicissitudes, when its uses ranged from stabling horses to housing a ballet school, has now been inscribed in UNESCO's World Heritage list and is at last being restored in a meticulously researched project under the municipality of Brno. Due to re-open as a public monument in 2012 this unique building will then face its next challenge – of becoming a world destination for MoMo pilgrims.

In a single day this enthralling conference encapsulated the current contrasts in modern movement heritage and its public reception – from commitment to carelessness. On the one hand the immense achievement of DoCoMoMo over the twenty years since its foundation – its world-wide networks, its burgeoning literature, its range of exemplary rescue projects – would suggest a picture of unqualified success. On the other the continuing controversy over post-war designation, the precariousness of funding and official support, the ongoing neglect or disfigurement of fine modern buildings, and the altogether more nebulous state of public opinion, remind us that the task this optimistic group of kindred spirits set itself that bright weekend in Eindhoven in 1990 will remain a work in progress for decades to come. ■

John Allan

1 Sliding partition inside Alexandra Road flats, Camden by Neave Brown, (1977). Photo by Martin Charles.

2 Alexandra Road Flats, by Neave Brown (1977). Photo by Martin Charles.



Coming as I did in 1975 from the office of Ernö Goldfinger to that of the Department of Architecture of the London Borough of Camden was to find myself somewhere where there was equally serious dedication to the idea of the Modern Movement, but with a very different perspective. Whereas Goldfinger was heir to the prewar ideal of rebuilding the city as an open 'green' environment with well spaced buildings, some high-rise, and discarding (or making sparing use of) the 'corridor street' as organising principle, at Camden – at least in Neave Brown's renowned group – there had been a radical shift towards a high-density low-rise format, with maximum ground cover. Was this in fact compatible with the wider Modern Movement or Corbusian objectives of 'light, space, greenery' and 'the masterful play of forms under light'? Light angle studies were made to show that requisite standards could be met. The model was the traditional London terrace house which was to be reinterpreted to suit the brief for social housing, so the results would thereby meld with the older fabric around them rather than standing out as a distinct and disruptive 'estate'. It was important however that there should also be models for this, using his 'Roq et Rob' proposals for crosswall low-rise developments on steep hillside sites in the south of France, and for stepped section housing blocks in Algeria.

Mark Swenarton, of Oxford

Brookes School of Architecture, who mounted the current exhibition (called Cook's Camden after the Director of Architecture Sydney Cook 1965-73 who set the direction and hired Neave Brown) and chaired the Symposium at the Building Centre, is convinced of the success of the result and of the validity of this model for high-density inner-city housing 'where people will want to live'. Over thirty years have passed and the evidence should be available. That there was intense dedication to the achievement of excellence and success in carrying out projects highly ambitious in architectural concept, layout, and internal detailing cannot be doubted, and this was all the more remarkable in the context of a local authority architect's office. The schemes for which Neave Brown was directly responsible, Fleet Road and Alexandra Road, have both been listed along with a third – Benson and Forsyth's Branch Hill – built under the influence of similar theories.

Camden Council was careful to have their projects expertly and glamorously photographed in stark black and white by Martin Charles on completion, and these photographs provide an excellent source of base material for the exhibition. Not only the key 'Neave Brown' schemes – mostly built of exposed concrete or concrete block – but also less astringent schemes carried out by the Council during the same years by other groups and often using brick (such as the Harmood



Street scheme on which I myself worked), are shown. The 'high' schemes were often very expensive in construction and especially – with their complex sections – in design time (not controlled by the housing cost yardsticks), and it was very interesting to hear in the Symposium from the Chairman of the Council's Housing Committee at the time – a Conservative – who approved the massive and controversial Alexandra Road scheme: they had the money (Camden had the third highest rates income per head in the country) and they were going to create housing worthy of the Borough. It was not however until the very morning of the key Housing Committee meeting that the chief Planning Officer, Dr Bruno Schläffenberg, could be persuaded to support the scheme.

There is not sufficient room here for a detailed analysis, though the seriousness of the projects merits it, but I have to say that personally I have reservations about the results. For me the aspiration to space and light are fundamental to the Modern Movement. An expansive sense of space is one of the tools of an architecture that has set aside decoration, and the source of a sense of freedom. A desire for internal spatial freedom is evident in many Camden schemes, but only in those such as Branch Hill, or Highgate New Town Stage 1 by Peter Tábori (who had preceded me to Camden from Goldfinger's office), where a steeply sloping site allowed views to greenery

beyond the narrow external spaces created by the low-rise high-density format, is there external spatial freedom (as envisaged by Le Corbusier himself in his Roq et Rob proposals). If, in the words of Goldfinger, you believe that 'the most important thing about a house is the views from its windows', that is a serious concern. Then the massively articulated structure of a scheme such as Alexandra Road, with concrete crosswalls deliberately thickened (as Neave Brown told us during the Symposium), threatens to become oppressive within the confines of narrow external spaces. Cars become encased in extensive dark undercrofts. A lighter touch seemed desirable to me and, it appears, to Camden architects Bill Forrest and Oscar Palacio in their later projects such as Highgate New Town Stage 2C (1979), where the earnest desire to rebuild the city has by implication abated, signalling the end, perhaps, of the 'heroic' period.

Camden Council under Sydney Cook arguably made the last really serious effort to study the problem of urban social housing on a large scale in the UK, before the advent of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. So far only the Japanese have produced an adequate study of it (in 1981), and it is high time we had another look at it ourselves, catalogued it, and, with the passage of time, drew our own lessons from it for the future. ■

The Cook's Camden exhibition, at the Building Centre, Store Street, London WC1, continues until 8 December.

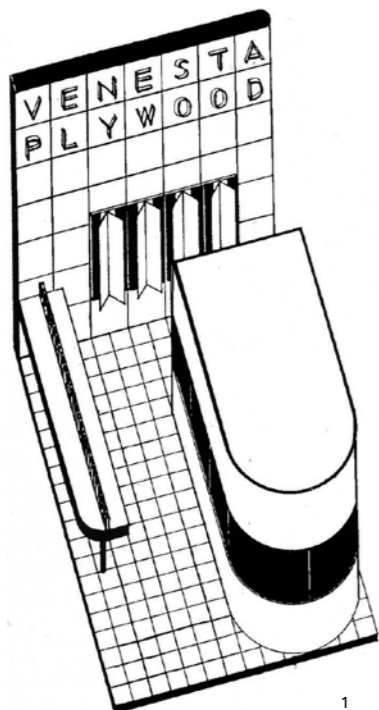
Book Review

The Luther Factory
Plywood and Furniture 1877–1940
by Jüri Kermik | ISBN 9985-9400-7-5

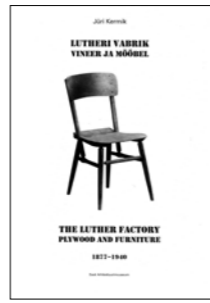
The man met the hour—or the hour begat the man. The hour was that point between the two World Wars when Modern-minded designers, keen to use new technology in a rational way to solve social and formal ills, began to look beyond the initial hard focus on metallic materials towards those with richer natural texture. The man who helped them achieve their aim was appropriately rational in outlook, humane, optimistic, vigorous—Jack Pritchard, a man whose job happened to be to promote the use of plywood.

The background to this meeting of minds is well documented in this study by Jüri Kermik. Developed before and during the First World War especially to meet the needs of the railway and aircraft industries, plywood satisfied the demand of designers for an artificial, precise material, and yet it exhibited the varied beauty of nature, which was seen as an essential counterpoise to that precision. Indeed by the technique of rotary cutting, it demonstrated a new character in wood-grain, creating veneers with a wild extravagance of pattern much appreciated for example by Le Corbusier, who even imitated it in his paintings,—patterns quite distinct from the straight veneers favoured by such as Adolf Loos.

Kermik's book is very interesting in the close-up portrait it paints of the growth of the AM Luther Woodworking Company (later called Luterma) of Tallinn, Estonia, one of the leading early producers of plywood and destined to bring about this meeting of minds. The Luther company (the family descended—according to Pritchard in his autobiography *The View from the Long Chair*



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Parallel text Estonian-English, 184 pages, published by the Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum (Estonian Architectural Museum) to coincide with an exhibition 18 June – 5 Sept 2004

but not confirmed by Kermik—from the instigator of the Reformation) apparently embarked on mechanised industrial production in 1882 out of conviction rather than from any idea of clear commercial advantage. It then struggled to find a commercially viable product until finally stumbling on plywood chair-seats. Some of their simpler early product designs, particularly folding chairs with ply seats and back rests, are of admirable quality and their advanced social policy led to the commissioning in 1904 of a social hall from the leading Finnish



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architectural practice Saarinen, Lindgren and Gesellius. But it is the path that led to the production of the classic Isokon furniture with Pritchard that primarily makes the company of international interest.

Deprived of its primary eastern market by the Russian Revolution, the company was forced to look west after World War I and directed attention to its London affiliated company Venesta Plywood—VENeers from ESTonia. Pritchard (who died in 1992, not 1981 as stated by Kermik—a significant point for this reviewer since it enabled him to have several meetings during the 1980s) joined the staff in 1925. He was 26, an engineer by training without particular visual orientation, but one who as a student at Cambridge had developed free-thinking ideas about economics and social policy under the influence of the educational theorist Henry Morris. In 1929 he met the Anglo-Canadian architect Wells Coates, who was raised in Japan and trained as an engineer and was amongst the very first in Britain to practice Modern design. Wells Coates opened Pritchard's eyes, accompanying

- 1 Luther Factory Venesta stand competition entry by Wells Coates (1931)
- 2 Christian Luther testing folding armchair (1890)
- 3 Ply folding chair (1890-1900)
- 4 Marcel Breuer's Long Chair for Isokon (1936)

him on a visit to Germany in 1931, including to the Bauhaus and to Erik Mendelsohn, man and work. Pritchard, who had earlier worked for Michelin, also visited Paris in his role as plywood salesman. Through his Cambridge friend the psychologist Portia Holman who shared an apartment at 90 Boulevard Auguste Blanqui, a block owned by the family of architect Paul Nelson, he met aspirant Modern architects Bertholdt Lubetkin and Ernö Goldfinger, who also lived there, and perhaps another resident—Ernest Hemmingway.

He thus had an entrée into the Parisian avant-garde and was much attracted by Charlotte Perriand, associate of Le Corbusier, from whom he commissioned the Venesta stand for the 1930 Building Trades Exhibition in London. The relationship did not move onto a personal footing despite an invitation from Perriand that he 'go canoeing' with her. But at about this time he engendered a child with educationist Beatrix Tudor-Hart, a friend of Portia Holman and colleague of Bertrand Russell who ran a nursery school in his house, while Wells Coates embarked on an affair with Pritchard's wife Romilly. This did not prevent the Pritchards from commissioning him for an apartment block for Lawn Road, Hampstead, to include a nursery school for Beatrix on the roof.

This became the famous Isokon block which was completed in 1934, with an apartment for the Pritchards replacing the nursery school on the roof and with relations with Wells Coates in tatters. It was finished just in time to receive refugees from Germany—Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Egon Riss, all from the Bauhaus. The earlier contacts with Pritchard had provided Gropius, by then effectively a Wanted Man in Nazi Germany, with somewhere to escape with his beautiful wife Ise. The building was concrete with plywood wall panelling, sliding doors, and other fittings. Pritchard appointed Gropius Design Director for his infant Isokon furniture company, who—as well as designing some plywood furniture of his own that never reached production - commissioned from Breuer the famous plywood Long Chair, upright chair, and nesting tables. These were mostly developments of earlier



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steel tube designs. Pritchard was the only person known to this reviewer who was entirely at home sitting in and getting in and out of the Long Chair! He ceased to be an employee of Venesta in 1935 in order to run Isokon, but remained a consultant and ordered the plywood components of the Isokon furniture from the Luther factory in Tallinn. He had visited company factories in Estonia and Finland in his Venesta years, seeing the while what Aalto was up to with plywood.

The Bauhaus forces moved to America in 1937, and Isokon and Luterma were both victims of World War II, but the sinuous curves of the plywood furniture remain as a testimony and are again in production. Plywood is a sensuous material and sensuous pleasures were part of the Pritchards' life—the food and wine served in the Isobar, the communal restaurant in the Lawn Road flats, was famously good. Pritchard wrote of Martin Luther, the director of the company with whom he worked, 'I came to have great respect for him, and besides, he had a sense of humour'—and he had a colourful private life of his own. This is far from the puritanical reputation of the early Modern Movement. Humour and vitality—as well as shrewdness—were the qualities with which Pritchard impressed one even in his eighties. Whilst building the Isokon flats he had simultaneously been involved in founding an organisation called PEP—Political and Economic Planning—, and 'pep' is certainly what he conveyed. These personal qualities inevitably do not always come through in Kermik's book, and it would have been good to have seen more illustrations of plywood in use for wall panelling, one of its most beautiful uses. But it is a most valuable example of a complex company history, casting light on the whole process of industrialisation and its cultural consequences. ■

James Dunnett



4

Post-war Architecture: Ugly Brutes or Cherished Heritage?



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- 1 Priory Green by Berthold Lubetkin (1937)
- 2 Balfron Tower by Erno Goldfinger (1967)
- 3 Robin Hood Gardens by A+P Smithson (1972)

The wholesale rejection of post-war buildings for listing

It's forty years since the statutory designation of modern architecture began with the so-called Pevsner list, yet the subject seems to have become no less controversial. There are now several hundred post-war listings, but even ten years after the 20th century finished people arguing for its architecture to be regarded as 'heritage' can still expect to face a sceptical audience. There are many reasons why modern architecture remains unloved by so many – its sheer ubiquity and familiarity, the visibly industrialised basis of its production, its frequent technical mediocrity or downright failure, its association with paternalistic forms of central or local government, the disparity between professional advocacy and actual performance, the alienating places and spaces that it so often created, and perhaps most of all – nostalgia for what it displaced. It's not surprising therefore that getting post-war buildings listed is so unpredictable. Goldfinger's Balfron Tower is safely listed Grade II while less than a mile away Robin Hood Gardens awaits demolition. The 1990 Act requires that listing depends on 'special architectural or historical interest'. But as designation is ultimately dependent on the predilections of the Secretary of State it is inevitably also a political matter. The determination of what constitutes 'special interest' is effectively a technical task of history and scholarship, but unlike historic buildings where 'specialness' is bolstered by rarity and popular sentiment, in the case of modern architecture these factors are usually absent. This leaves ministers to choose between the pleading of professional advocacy as against popular consensus, and it is not surprising that in controversial cases they will be likely to follow the path of least public resistance. The proposal to introduce 'compliance with the original brief' as an additional listing criterion is simply a convenient alibi to make the rejection of modern buildings appear more scientific. Hopefully that can now be disposed of.

Lack of adequate protection even after listing

The second proposition is more difficult to answer generically because ultimately it depends on a review of particular projects. The Commonwealth Institute is the topical case in point. The problem here lay deeper than the eventual scheme being proposed. It lay in the choice of architect – or I should say – the type of architect. If there is a general lesson to be drawn from this particular episode (and others I could mention) it's that it cannot be assumed that contemporary architectural 'stars', more accustomed to talking than listening, necessarily know how to behave when dealing with iconic modern buildings. It's a matter of both historical knowledge and good conservation practice. To get to planning application stage in as sensitive a case as this without preparing – or apparently even understanding the need for – a Conservation Plan suggests that there were grave deficiencies in both. In fact it was English Heritage that eventually had to produce a Statement of

Significance but this was too late to affect the design process. Add in the extended period of the building lying empty, a biddable local authority and the apparent lack of alternative takers and you have all the ingredients of a lost opportunity to get something very much better. Undoubtedly this building would need considerable intervention to be revitalised, but the ill-informed reading of its urban setting and architectural character set the new design off in the wrong direction from the start. In my experience conservation always entails change, but understanding and subtlety are what's needed, not bold gestures or 'starchitecture'.

We have to search for ways of intelligent adaptation, discreet upgrade and, where necessary, adding value that also maintain and honour the significance of MoMo works that caused them to be listed in the first place.

The shortening rebuild cycle – necessity or fashion?

This is really an extension of the last point and would also need a detailed narrative to understand properly. The short answer is it's both. But I'd still challenge the lazy stereotype of 'Modernism's dream of lightweight expendable buildings' - Zonnestraal maybe, but Finsbury Health Centre certainly not. This is a popular fallacy that needs regular correction. Anyway, it's not always technical underperformance that puts a modern building at risk and initiates an early rebuild project. It's just as likely to be that the land it stands on has become more valuable and the building becomes perceived as underdevelopment. Thus the demise of Robin Hood Gardens, though heaven knows, the consequent loss of embodied energy must be astronomical.

But upgrade projects triggered by underperformance can certainly be influenced by fashion. The assumption I would contradict is that when a modern building is kept and upgraded then its image needs changing as well. This is where the lack of a modern heritage culture is most damaging. The urge for makeover and the eradication of troublesome details is as much a result of prejudice as it is of ignorance. Estate managers want answers not history and such projects provide the ideal opportunity to dissociate an unpopular building from its stigmatised past. The real challenge in such cases is not to camouflage the building's identity – but to re-present it. This is certainly what we attempted in the major regeneration project at Priory Green, Lubetkin's large post-war housing estate in Islington, which is now upgraded to current standards without any loss of its original character.

Conclusions

How may the present situation be improved? Can we make any progress – assuming that by 'progress' we mean the beneficial retention and better care of more deserving post-war buildings. Here I want to challenge the implicit limitation of our title – 'The Listing Debate'.

An edited version of John Allan's contribution to the above debate of 15 June 2010

The invitation to take part in this debate asked me to address three specific points before concluding with some positive suggestions for how we might make progress with the issues implicit in the title – Ugly Brutes or Cherished Heritage?



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The issues go so much further than that. We can speculate about whether the new government may be more or less receptive to protecting 20th century heritage than the last one, but to rely on designation as the primary means of tackling modernism's unpopularity is really just to define the task in the same way that it's always been defined – that is - standing on an art-history soap-box and seeking to convert politicians through evangelical fervour; hoping to win a war by winning a series of individual battles. But to think that listing must be the only, or even the main way of achieving this, seems to me not only wishful, but also to ignore other opportunities whereby the future might be beneficially improved.

The objective must surely be to move from a situation where the better care and use of modern heritage can only be achieved through controversy and compulsion to a culture of volition and consent – and I suggest there are three factors that might help bring this about: diversity of motivation, the factor of time, and the impact of evidence.

Diversity of motivation

In virtually every modern building rescue that I have undertaken over the last 25 years I would have to say that conservation has been – or at least started off as – a secondary or even a peripheral client motive of the project. Except in the unique case of the National Trust for whom we restored the houses of Erno Goldfinger and Patrick Gwynne as publicly accessible visitor attractions, Avanti's modern conservation projects have almost invariably been initiated not by cultural aspirations but by financial logic and the desire for betterment.

Yet project motives that are essentially economic or commercial – need not exclude major conservation gains. These often only emerge as a project unfolds and people begin to perceive the value in what's long been forgotten or obscured. Those (like myself) who are interested in MoMo heritage are gratified naturally. But the point to appreciate is that everybody can derive their preferred type of benefit – investors, amenity groups, local authorities, and building users themselves who may have no interest whatsoever in the original architects or their historical significance. Even the managers of Finsbury Health Centre, impervious as they are to heritage advocacy, might be persuaded to abandon their absurd plans to dispose of this building if they could grasp the blunt arithmetical fact that rehabilitation is simply cheaper!

There can be compelling reasons for keeping and working with buildings that have nothing to do with their heritage value – social continuity, avoidance of dislocation, reduced carbon footprint, retention of embodied energy, etc. - and these arguments can all be deployed in promoting the advantages of retaining and upgrading existing modern property before resorting to special pleading for 'architectural or historic

interest'. Accommodating this diversity of motivation is surely crucial, for it opens the way to a more participatory and inclusive culture in which modern heritage can be seen to serve a wider range of beneficiaries than just professional devotees and architectural scholars.

The time factor

New buildings of any age will enjoy an initial period of attention before becoming familiar and eventually being taken for granted. They then enter the vulnerable stage when they're neither new enough to be current, nor old enough to be historic. In this respect modern architecture may be seen to be undergoing much the same process as that of previous periods – albeit in a more extreme manner on account of its sheer ubiquity and the fact that the Darwinian process of 'natural selection' is still in full swing. In other words, provided an asset is not actually lost, the elapse of time, and sometimes even a state of oblivion, may be a building's best friend if it is eventually to find a new purpose in life.

But time also works in more subtle ways. Over the past 25 years I have been involved in various works at Highpoint, Lubetkin's masterpiece in north London – undertaking individual flat refurbishments, including Lubetkin's own Penthouse, replacing the lifts, advising on services renewal, estate security and general consultancy issues. Over this same period the buildings' demographic has gradually changed from a preponderance of elderly residents, some of whom had moved in when the buildings were first completed and who had no concept of them as 'heritage', to a younger generation who are highly sensitive to Highpoint's significance and who aspire to live there precisely because of its heritage value.

This mindset is considerably more conducive to informed upkeep and even increased public access. Whereas twenty years ago ensuring repair was undertaken sympathetically was reliant on enforcement, now appropriate maintenance of the buildings and gardens can be expected voluntarily. Highpoint now has its own website and participates in Open House events. Thus through time the likelihood of good stewardship is, so to speak, being progressively being built into the situation.

The impact of evidence

Architecture – whether modern or of any other age - is intrinsically material, rooted in location, time and personal experience, and ultimately I advocate the power of buildings themselves as the primary conduits of their message and their values. To see, use or experience a significant modern building can trigger an emotional response that may not be reached through reading any number of illustrated books or scholarly essays. As one visitor to The Homewood recounted, 'to enter that building and experience its space, its sense of ease and light, its vision of how modern life can be lived differently from the past, is like turning a switch in your mind.'

In the end the most persuasive advocacy for modern heritage may lie in the buildings themselves, and it's this direct experience of the buildings, revitalised and re-presented as liberating and inspirational places to use and inhabit, that may slowly and steadily cultivate understanding and overcome resistance. This is why I maintain that it's not more exhortation that will change hearts and minds, it is more evidence. ■

John Allan

**DOCOMOMO-UK
Lecture Series 2011**

Sponsored by Brick Development Association – draft programme to take place at the ABA Gallery, 66 Cowcross St, London

**German Expressionist
Architecture – from the
Crystal to the Brick**

Iain Boyd Whyte

Tuesday 11 January 7pm

This lecture will expand on the intellectual and social context that prompted the brief and ecstatic flourishing of Expressionist architecture in Germany between 1914 and 1920, and consider its political legacy, reflecting particularly on the work of the architect Fritz Hoyer. The lecture will also commemorate the work of Dennis Sharp (1933-2010), late Co-Chair of Docomomo-uk, whose monograph *Modern Architecture and Expressionism* was a pioneering work in the field when it appeared in 1966.

Iain Boyd Whyte is Professor of the History of Architecture at the University of Edinburgh and Director of the Visual Arts Research Institute Edinburgh. He is a specialist in the German Expressionist period and was co-author of the major exhibition *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators 1930-45*.

**Hugo Häring and Hans
Scharoun – two ways of us-
ing brick**

Peter Blundell-Jones

Tuesday 15 February 7pm

Peter Blundell-Jones will contrast Häring's love of brick, evident principally in the famous farm at Gut Garkau of 1924-5, with Scharoun's 'willingness to do almost anything with materials' – including his inventive use of bricks in private house designs during the 1930s.

Professor Blundell-Jones trained as an architect and is Professor of architectural history at the University of Sheffield. He has written definitive books both on Hugo Häring (*Hugo Häring: the Organic versus the Geometric*, 1999) and Hans Scharoun, and also on Gunnar Asplund.

**The Grundtvig Church
– sacred brick**

Thomas Bo Jensen

Tuesday 30 March 7pm

The Grundtvig church in Copenhagen is the principal work of the architect P.V. Jensen-Klint (1853-1930) and one of the outstanding works of 'brick expressionism'. Its design will be set in its historical and regional context. The church is surrounded by housing designed by the same architect and forming a single composition, built 1921-1940.

Thomas Bo Jensen is an architect and Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. He is the author of an outstanding monograph on the work of P.V. Jensen-Klint published in 2009 – English title *P.V. Jensen-Klint: the Headstrong Master Builder* (Routledge)

**Modern Architecture and
Brick**

Richard Lavington

Wednesday 19 April 7pm

Richard Lavington will reflect on the series of lectures on brick and expressionism, and on the relevance of this work to architecture today.

Richard Lavington is a partner in the Anglo-Dutch architectural practice Maccree-anor Lavington, which makes extensive use of brickwork for example in the 2008 RIBA Sterling-prize winning *Accordia* housing in Cambridge. The practice won the Masterplan-ner of the Year Award 2009 for projects in Barking Riverside and elsewhere. ■



George Pace conference

Saturday 12 February 2011,
10am-5.30pm

St Michael's College
Llandaff, Cardiff

George Pace (1915-75) was an architect whose uncompromising Modernism still shocks conservatives while his respect for tradition and use of craftsmanship alienated him from functionalist Modernists of his own time. Through more than three decades following his death the mainstream has moved on, such that his work is now appreciated as an exceptional melding of continuity and modernity. Pace's work having focused on ecclesiastical commissions, this conference will include four (mainly illustrated) talks presenting it within that context, with visits to two of his key buildings, Llandaff Cathedral and the Chapel at St Michael's College.

Peter Pace (George Pace's son, himself a practising architect and the author of the monograph on George Pace) will speak on his father's work in general and that at Llandaff in particular. Robin Simon (art historian and founder editor of *The British Art Journal*) will speak on the role of his father, Bishop Glyn Simon, as patron of modern art and architecture in South Wales, including Pace's work at Llandaff and elsewhere. Alan Powers (Greenwich University and Twentieth-Century Society) will speak on post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Great Britain, as the immediate context for Pace's work. Judi Loach (Cardiff University and Docomomo-uk) will speak on the European context of ecclesiastical architecture in the post-war period, including some of the works referred to by Pace in his Llandaff works. ■

To book or reserve tickets call
Philip Boyle on 020 7253 6624

Bruno Taut's glass pavilion of 1914 (Cologne)

DOCOMOMO UK	
70 Cowcross St, London EC1M 6EL	
T: 020 7490 7243 E: info@docomomo-uk.co.uk	
Uk website: docomomo-uk.co.uk Int website: docomomo.com	
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