



The SAHGB Annual Symposium 2018 Architecture, the Built Environment, and the Aftermath of the First World War

9 June 2018, The Institute of Historical Research,
Senate House, London

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 20 years as ones of 'Reconstruction' and 'Democratization'; what impact did these impulses have on the built environment?

SAHGB

The Society of
Architectural
Historians of
Great Britain



supported by

Call for Papers

The SAHGB Annual Symposium, open to scholars at **all** career stages and of **all** periods and disciplines, will examine the aftermath and legacy of the Great War in relation to architectural history. The Society is grateful for the support of the 20s30s Network, a trans-disciplinary network of scholars rethinking British interwar history.

The Symposium will consider how the War directly impacted architectural design and discourse, as well as what role designers and practitioners played in shaping the post-war period. In doing so, the Symposium will provide an opportunity for architectural historians to demonstrate how methodologically the built environment, broadly conceived, can be placed in, and contribute to, wider urban, cultural, social and political histories of the period.

The study of interwar British architectural 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 historiography of 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 1920s and 1930s. 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 *rapell a l'ordre*. Capturing and encouraging new research in this area will allow scholars of twentieth century architecture to draw on more considered and holistic interpretations of the impact of WW1 on the built environment, instead of resorting to out-dated characterisations of historicist design by an out of touch establishment pitted against a growing Modernist avant-garde.

The symposium and resulting edited volume of papers will represent an attempt at an integrated and rounded examination of the cultural, technical, social and political impact of the Great War on the built environment. Paper proposals are invited which examine continuities, ruptures and refractions in built environment practice and discourse in the early twentieth century primarily through these two central themes of 'reconstruction' and 'democratisation.' Such an examination will, it is hoped, provide an invaluable resource to scholars in the field and open up possibilities of more interdisciplinary study in this area.

Papers are invited in – but not limited to – the following areas:

- Histories of design (in particular typologies, educational systems, and regulations rather than stylistic analysis)
- The intersection of architecture and planning with wider material and visual culture (such as ornamental programmes, interiors and furnishings)
- Codification of architectural knowledge and discourse in research, theory, and criticism (in the general and specialist presses)
- Construction history and histories of technology and scientific research
- Histories of practice and professionalism in the built environment professions (architecture, planning, landscape architecture, engineering and so on)
- The role of associational culture in rural and urban development, and its impact on urban form
- Land use and value, and the histories of development (by the state, landowners and organisations) as well as conservation
- Legal, economic and political perspectives on the built environment (especially planning legislation, the impact of economic fluctuation on the wider construction industry and debates about the role of the state)
- Memorialisation and the presence/absence of the War in the built environment

Particularly welcome are papers dealing with imperial architectural histories of the period and postcolonial perspectives, perspectives on gender and the role of women, and institutional histories (both formal establishment organisations such as the Church, as well as informal associational cultures). Multi-, trans- and inter-disciplinary perspectives are warmly welcomed, particularly those that place trends in architectural history in a wider historiographical context. Examinations of unconventional or unexpected agents in the 'expanded field' of the built environment are also encouraged.

There is a firm intention to publish Symposium proceedings promptly, and proposals not selected for presentation at the Symposium may nevertheless be considered for the edited volume. Those submitting proposals should indicate in their covering email whether they would prefer to publish, present or both.

Practical Information

Proposals comprising a 300-word abstract for papers of 15 minutes should be sent to the Symposium Convenor, Neal Shasore (symposium2018@sahgb.org.uk) by **10am, Monday 30 October 2017**. Notices of acceptance or rejection will be sent out as soon as possible thereafter.

Any further questions or enquiries should be directed to the same email address.

The Symposium will be held on **9 June 2018** at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London in the Wolfson Conference Room.

Updates and further information can be found at www.sahgb.org.uk/symposium.

The Society invites proposals from members and non-members alike, from all disciplines, and at all career stages. There will be bursaries for students and early career professionals to participate in the Symposium, to be announced in due course. Speakers will be reimbursed for travel expenses within the UK, though not for participants based in London.