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CHAPTER 6

THE SOUTH BANK SITE

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THE ORIGINS OF MODERNISM

On the South Bank on 4 May 1951, the Combined Exhibition was opened to the general public by the King and Queen. On the following day their Majesties and the public were greeted by,

an urban environment of an elegance and gaiety unknown in contemporary Britain.....The plan of the site is a masterpiece of picturesque grouping. Deceptively casual, the irregular building forms leave paths that move into a central concourse. Enchantment is gained, not with conceptual grandeur but by a myriad of detail that entranced as it changes. Strolling across the fountained plaza, sipping tea above the slowly moving barges of the River Thames, or arguing over the ubiquitous works of art, the visitor found himself in a world worth having fought for.¹

This inspired piece of brilliance was due to a group of young British architects (most of them were under the age of forty) led by Hugh Casson, who were given an opportunity to introduce the British public to their conception of modern layout design and architecture within the centre-piece of the Festival. The architects and designers exposed the public to a plethora of new exterior and interior designs and materials; nowhere on the site were there any solid structures of heavy stone, instead, pavilions were composed of glass and reinforced concrete supported on pilotis of steel. The use of these materials, together with the layout of the site, created an aura of airy illuminated cheeriness which pervaded the South Bank Site. (See Fig. 1)

To most of the British public this was of course both novel and exciting, but to pretend, however, that the architects and designers conception was new, original, or even completely true to

1. Anthony Jackson, The Politics of Architecture, pp.176-177.

modernism and its principles, would be misleading. The centre-piece of the Festival on the South Bank was a direct legatee of the developments in the fields of Architecture and Design which had taken place twenty-one years earlier in Europe and, in addition to this, the Festival architects and designers benefited greatly from one of the main outlets for modern architectural displays - the International Exhibition. To begin to understand and assess what was seen at the South Bank, it is necessary to examine the influence which the Modern Movement had on British architectural development and design. Furthermore, it will be necessary to investigate the role played by International Exhibitions in determining and influencing the Festival's style and look, with particular reference to the Stockholm Exhibition which greatly impressed the architectural movement in Britain.²

The Modern Movement had evolved as a result of changes in philosophical trends in England towards the end of the nineteenth century, which were adopted by Europe, in particular, Germany. Added to this, technological and industrial innovations were being pioneered during the middle and later stages of the nineteenth century, and by the close of the First World War the shape of the new architecture had been determined. Lastly the Movement and its distinct style had emerged as a direct consequence of a combination of economic, physical, social and political change wrought by the ordeal of war. In architecture and design the movement was shaped by two main influences: The Bauhaus School in Germany led by Gropius who was appointed its Director in 1914; and the De Stijl

2. David Dean, The Thirties, p.103.

group, created between 1915 - 1917, by Theo Van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian. The contribution of De Stijl to the theories and development of the Modern Movement was of paramount importance. The De Stijl group had its official foundation in 1917 at the initiative of Van Doesburg who launched a review which brought together the painters Mondrian, Bart Van Der Leek, Vilmos Huszar, the poet Antony Kok, sculptor George Vantongerloo, architects J.J.P. Oud, Jan Wils and Robert Van't Hoff, to be joined later by Gerit Rietveld, Cornelis Van Eesteren, and the painter cinematographer Hans Richter.³ The premise of the group dated from somewhat earlier. In 1914 Van't Hoff returned from America deeply impressed by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright to which he gave his own stripped-down interpretation in two houses near Utrecht in 1914-15; between 1914 and 1916, Theo Van Doesburg came into contact with Kok, Evert Rinsema, Oud, and Mondrian, studied the Theosophical texts and writings of Kandinsky; published a small volume on the 'astral' painting of Janus de Winter in 1916; and carried on extensive correspondence with Tolstoy, Mondrian, for his part, had explored Expressionism and Cubism since 1909 and in 1915 had arrived at a series of paintings called Pier and Ocean which were composed of pure horizontal and vertical lines. For Mondrian, the development of the concept of vertical and horizontal lines was tied to mystical understanding, which evolved from ideas of asceticism such as flight from the tragic as defined by Schopenhauer, and also from M.H.J. Schoenmaekers, a Theosophist who in 1915 published his 'New Image of

3. Manfred Tafuri and Francesco Dalco, Modern Architecture, p.126.

the World', followed a year later by 'Plastic Mathematics' - both books were steeped in positive mysticism and attempted to explain the universe in terms of structure based on controlled precision, conscious penetration of the real and exact beauty.⁴

To Mondrian, nature and all reality "appeared to be dominated by conflict, by the tragic sense due to the loss of pristine harmony, caused by the maturation of man". For him, the task of the artist as he now perceived it, was "to reveal metaphorically the possibility of a new harmony, or a new concordia discors". Mondrian maintained that the tragic could be overcome by taking over its form (the vertical, horizontal, and the three primary colours, red, yellow, and blue - the three essences that determine the tragic) and regenerating them in pure compositions. The artists, architects and sculptors all strove to formulate a true syntax for the language of Neo-Plasticism. These efforts could be seen in the syncopated geometric canvases of Van Der Leek, the ascetic rigour of Mondrian, the mathematic sculptures of Vantongerloo, and the architecture of Van't Hoff, Wils, Oud, Rietveld and Van Eesteren.⁵

The De Stijl Review, first published in 1917, stated that it was dedicated to the "absolute devaluation of tradition....the exposure of the whole swindle of lyricism and sentiment". The artists involved emphasized "the need for abstraction and simplification; mathematical structure as opposed to impressionism and all baroque forms of art."⁶ The vertical and horizontal lines would give clarity, certainty and order in visual conceptions and

4. Ibid., p. 126.

5. Ibid., p. 126.

6. H.H. Arnason, History of Modern Art, p 241.

presentations. These abstractions were translated into solid cubes and rectangles, with the three primary colours and the three neutral colours (black, white and grey) used to enhance and define the nature of these shapes. The coloured cube and rectangle or the vertical and horizontal lines would become the corner-stone of the Modern design, the identification mark of the emerging International Style.

In 1919 Walter Gropius began his term as Director of the Bauhaus School in Weimar. The initial roots of Bauhaus philosophy lay in the expressionist, abstractionist ideology that was popular amongst the avant-garde artists and designers in Germany and other parts of Europe before, during and especially after the war. A substantial part of the Bauhaus approach attacked the classical traditions which still dominated the academies. The programme promoted by the School was designed to liberate the student from past prejudices by emphasising practical experience and studies of non-western philosophies, particularly from the Orient and mystical religions.⁷ Forced to escape from the suspicions and hostility of the citizens of the Weimar, in 1925, the school relocated its operation in Dessau, a new centre of large-scale industry in the heart of Germany's coal and heavy industrial area. This move marked a change in the School's ideological attitude as well as in its fortunes: less than two years before the move to Dessau, in the autumn of 1923, post-war inflation in Germany had reached such staggering proportions that a decent meal had to be paid for in millions of marks. However, between 1925 and 1929 the situation was

7. Ibid., p.258.

looking brighter, largely with the help of heavy private American investment being poured into the country. In Weimar the situation was such that:

The students had often gone hungry and had worked in the kitchen garden helping to keep the institution alive. Little wonder that the mysticism of Itten and the equally unrealistic speculations of Van Doesburg were so popular among the students and that so much time was spent in pure art, rather than workshop production.⁸

The School's move to Dessau was also marked by an increase in material prosperity, commissions and productive optimism. More significantly the ideology changed, Gropius began to steer the School away from its mystical-utopian craft-centred beginnings. As early as 1923 he had announced that the emphasis would no longer be on building cathedrals but on designing 'machines for living', and that 'art and technology' would create a new unity.⁹ A new practicality set in, geared more and more towards industrial production and social housing. Increasingly, the work of the school began to penetrate the industrial market-place: Bauhaus textiles, lamps, chairs, typography, advertising and even buildings began appearing in national and international trade fairs and exhibitions.

The teaching at the Bauhaus reflected this new practicality and prosperity, with important innovations coming out of the metal and furniture workshops. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who joined the staff of the School in 1923, abandoned the traditional working of precious metals and devoted himself mainly to designing electric lighting in

8. Open University, Design in the 1920's, p.7. Johannes Itten was a Swiss painter, and one of Gropius' early colleagues at the Bauhaus.

9. Tafuri and Dalco, p. 132.

nickel and chrome-plated iron. Another teacher, Marcel Breuer, invented and built the first steel tube furniture. Similarly, work in typography, textiles and mural painting became simpler and more rational - no more elaborate ornamental compositions but terse legible pages, fabrics and wallpaper of a single colour with varying grain and texture.¹⁰ Furthermore, the emphasis on architecture, which Gropius had always considered the 'mother of the arts', was substantially increased. The aim in this area was, he said:

to create a clear organic architecture, whose inner logic will be radiant and naked unencumbered by lying facades and trickeries; we want an architecture adapted to our world of machines, radios, and fast motor cars, an architecture whose function is clearly recognisable in relation to its form.¹¹

Within and without the School (he gave up Directorship of the School in 1928) Gropius concentrated on designing buildings that reflected the spirit of the age and on theorising about what he described as workers' housing. As the fame of the School spread both in Germany and internationally, Gropius was joined in his efforts by fellow architects and designers: Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe, Erich Mendelsohn, Le Corbusier, Josef Albers, Moholy-Nagy, and Marcel Breuer. All of these individuals contributed to the theoretical and practical advancement of Modernism. On the architectural side, Van der Rohe explored and developed a complete mastery of the use of glass and steel in construction. He perfected the glass box, creating structures of crystalline purity and precision. Le Corbusier, for his part, contributed to the Movement's theoretical development with his book 'Vers Une Architecture', he designed

10. Benevolo, History of Modern Architecture, p.429.

11. Arnason, p 259.

structures such as the pavilion L'esprit Nouveau for the 1925 Paris Exposition, and the Villa Savoye at Poissy (1928-9) which became the epitome of modern design; he also contributed to the Movement's concern for town planning by designing 'le Ville Radieuse' (1933-35). The problems of rebuilding, rehousing and the restructuring of cities had become an issue after the war and the Movement was anxious to present novel solutions to this long-standing dilemma. Le Corbusier's perfectly planned city became the hallmark of good town planning, dominating the field throughout the middle years of the twentieth century.

Although the physical and social dislocation after the Great War called for the Modernist prophet's skills, the economic climate was such that their visions for the new world could not be realised on the scale they envisaged. They began to operate in the vacuum of theory, kept at a distance from practical tasks and achievements, for although the state expressed an interest in using some of their ideas, by force of circumstances they ended up designing and building for themselves and for a small minority who were attracted to experimentation. The vast majority, on whose behalf the architects and designers laboured, rejected their revolutionary ideas, choosing instead to remain ignorant and suspicious of change. A method had to be devised that would expose the work of these designers and architects to the suspicious and fearful majority, and exhibitions were the ideal vehicle to achieve this goal for they presented opportunities for the practical realisation of the new shapes, materials, and spatial concepts.¹²

12. Benevolo, p. 490.

Thus the exhibition developed a new role: "it lost its original nineteenth century character of the showplace for goods and was conceived ideally as a mechanism for influencing the visitor". The aim of the architect and artist was to make comprehensible to the spectator an alternative to the traditional way of living; as a result, the aims of the Modern Movement radically altered the traditional form of exhibitions. Some of the new layouts pioneered by the Modernists were described by Moholy-Nagy in 1928:

Moveable walls, lettered with new slogans, rotating colour filters, light projectors, signal demonstrations and reflectors: transparency, light and movement, all in the service of the public. Everything so arranged that it can be handled and understood by the simplest individual. Then also exciting use of celluloid, lattice work, enlargements, small and large sheets of wire meshing, transparent displays with lettering suspended in space, everywhere clear and brilliant colours.¹³

From 1925 onwards the exhibition became a showplace not only for these techniques, but for the principles of modern design in interiors and exteriors. In 1927, some of the characteristics of the new style exhibition were utilised in the Deutsche Werkbund Exhibition at Stuttgart, which was initiated by Mies Van Der Rohe. The Exhibition brought together architects and designers who shared the same ideological commitment to exposing the merits of the International architectural style: the buildings produced had a harmonious and unifying quality, and the participants in this project formed an impressive list: the Germans; Behrens, J. Frank, R. Docker, Gropius, L. Hilbershermer, H. Poelzig, A. Rading, H. Scharoun, A. Schneck, the Taut brothers, and Van Der Rohe; the

13. Ibid., pp. 489-490.

Dutchman Oud, the Belgian V. Bourgeois, M. Stam, and Le Corbusier.

As well as the usual temporary pavilions, Van der Rohe obtained permission to lay out a district of permanent buildings on some high ground on the outskirts of the city, the Weissenhof Siedlung. His plan put into practice certain theoretically proven principles: buildings independent of the roadsides; separation of motor and pedestrian traffic; and following the contour of the sloping ground with sensitivity and moderation.¹⁴ These same principles would be adopted by the architects and designers on the Lansbury site which would show good urban planning and housing. Among the buildings designed was a main structure with a steel framework; Gropius designed two detached houses which were prefabricated with metal supports and dividing walls of cork; and Le Corbusier designed a further two detached houses built on pilotis of reinforced concrete. - The public were shocked, particularly by the minimal dimensions of certain rooms: for example, the corridor of a house in iron ^{(sic),} was no wider than that of a railway train.¹⁴ With the Stuttgart Exhibition, the public were presented for the first time with a coherent review of the Modern Movement with the works of the architects of various nationalities emphasising their common aims rather than their differences.

Individual pavilions in various exhibitions further highlighted the educational aspect of the Movement. Le Corbusier's pavilion, L'esprit Nouveau, designed for the Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts 1925, and Mies

14. Ibid., pp. 479-481 and 486.

Van Der Rohe's German pavilion created for the International Exhibition in Barcelona in 1929, illustrated this point. As a house, rather than a pavilion in the true sense of the word, Le Corbusier's pavilion was undoubtedly the most innovative and influential building of the Paris Exhibition. The structure, a simple concrete cube within a cube, stressed the free interpretation of solids and voids. A tree which stood on the site was incorporated into the pavilion with its own circular opening built into the roof and the irregular, organic form of the tree was played off against the crisp rectilinearity of the building.¹⁵ Van Der Rohe's German Pavilion "was a visual realisation of his belief that an exhibition pavilion was not an ordinary building but something essentially different, which was to remain in existence only as long as it was going to be looked at and which was at the service of the public looking at it". For this reason Van Der Rohe did not conceive of the exhibition pavilion "as an enclosed building but rather as a collection of detached buildings, suited temporarily to defining a certain stretch of space".¹⁶ His pavilion, although only temporary, was constructed in semi-precious materials such as marble, onyx, steel, coloured glass and travertine on the interiors and exteriors. The pavilion's horizontal sweep, nudity, open space and its high rational order "caused it to be regarded as one of the truly seminal buildings of the Century".¹⁷

Exhibitions were also places where those architects and

15. Peter Selz, Art in our Times, p.222.

16. Benevolo, p.490.

17. Selz, p.223.

designers, from countries which were not so exposed to the Modern Movement came to experience the developments from which they were cut off. The Stockholm National Exhibition 1930 was a case in point; an example to the British architects and designers, who were deeply impressed by what they saw. This had been their first opportunity, apart from smaller displays such as the Stuttgart Weissenhof Siedlung of 1927, to see Modern architecture displayed consistently over a wide area, with grace and craftsmanship, a lightness of touch and lack of dogma.¹⁸ It was no coincidence that in 1951 when the architects displayed their version of Modern architecture on the South Bank, a substantial part of its layout, style and influences could be traced back to the Stockholm Exhibition.

The architectural journals and magazines of the day were generally full of praise for the Stockholm Exhibition and its chief architect, Gunnar Asplund. In his review of the Exhibition for the Architectural Review, P. Morton Shand began by explaining how the Gothenburg Exhibition of 1923 had revealed to an astonished world that Sweden was not merely an 'artistic' nation, but almost the only country that really counted as far as design and craftsmanship were concerned. As a result of the surprises created by Gothenburg, the public was waiting with intense suspense for Stockholm, 1930, which was to be on a much larger scale than Gothenburg and was to be devoted exclusively to Swedish arts and crafts. The reactionaries, Shand said, "hoped that that the Exhibition would definitely stem the tide of Cubism (by which they meant the evolution of one style

18. Dean, pp. 103.

expressive of our own age and not hypnotised by the dead hand of past centuries); the progressives hoped that Sweden would rally whole-heartedly to Modernism and give it the definition which it still lacks". When the exhibition was unveiled, the comments from the gathered world press, although not unkind, for the most part revealed an undercurrent of bewilderment which could be detected beneath the stereotyped eulogies.¹⁹

The reasons for the bewilderment, lay with the fact, as Shand explained, that the world had difficulty coping with Sweden entering the Modernist Market because it never identified her with what they considered as "that distressing France-German sideline", and further because "the world has expressed the considered opinion that the form in which 'this Swedish Stuff' is already familiar to it, is a perfectly satisfactory one". Regardless, however, of what the world wanted to perceive Sweden as, the new guard of the country elected to inaugurate a new forward policy for their nation, turning their backs on their past and its glories and looking resolutely forward. The old guard, ignored redundant and unhappy, when told that the population of Stockholm was showing every sign of feeling thoroughly at home at the Exhibition, made the rather triumphant retort: "Wait till you hear what the English have to say about it".²⁰

The old guard English may not have appreciated it, but the younger men were enamoured with what they saw. The Stockholm Exhibition site lay along the shores of the waters of Djugardsbrunnssirken. (See Fig. 2) Trees and gardens were used to

19. "Stockholm, 1930", Architectural Review LXVII-LXVIII (August 1930), p. 67.

20. Ibid., pp. 68-70.

give the site an atmosphere of rural picturesqueness, which acted as a foil to the rather severe geometricity of the buildings. This contrast was further enhanced by the floating drapery of innumerable flags and banners "whose swaying folds echoed the rustling of the foliage and the ever moving reflections in the water". With regard to the pavilions, the reviewers for the Architect and Building News, Robertson and Yerbury, felt that Asplund seemed to have taken a middle course by designing pavilions which were primarily effective from the point of view of the exhibits, denying himself the luxury of outward display, so as not to distract attention from the main object of the show, and from the beautiful setting of the site. Individually as well as collectively, the pavilions, displayed a consummate skill in grouping - the interiors of the pavilions, show flats and houses, were marked by an excellent utilisation of space and good proportions.²¹

The Paradiset Restaurant, its approach, and the housing section achieved unanimous praise from Robertson and Yerbury. The Paradiset, the main restaurant on the site, was designed in an uncompromisingly Modernist manner and, in the opinion of Morton Shand, was one of the best buildings in the Exhibition and, indeed

21. "The Stockholm Exhibition 1930", Architect and Building News. 124 (July 1930), p 20. The reviewers for this journal, Robertson and Yerbury, felt that the banners were slightly overdone, in spite of performing satisfactorily the function of blunting the geometricity of the buildings. The combination of their colours (red, yellow, blue and orange) with movement tended to distract attention and confuse the general effect. The colours of the banners were also repeated in blocks on the facades. These acted neither as a colour foil nor did they reinforce the smaller colour combinations on the flags. The resultant impression was a lack of unity.

of its kind. (See Figs. 3,4,5) It was a deceptively uncomplicated building, combining external simplicity with internal severity in terms of its colour scheme and lighting: it was constructed of steel, glass and vitrolite, and used coloured awnings and, according to Robertson and Yerbury, it was an "amazing affair". When the restaurant closed at night one was able to see it at its best:

You perceive the wonderful blue of the midnight sky and you mentally take your hat off to Asplund for his blue walls, which so melt into the blue outside that you feel that the restaurant has no walls but is part and parcel of the midnight space.²²

The housing section consisted of a series of small villas designed by different architects, and a building divided up into a large number of tiny flats, with the aim of making a modern contribution to the housing problem. The houses displayed an economy of spacing combined with actual spaciousness, "such charm of colour depending with great daring almost entirely on large planes of colour".²³ The flats showed considerable ingenuity particularly with regard to kitchens and bathrooms: some of the kitchens were lined with steel and had marble draining boards; and the bathrooms were designed to provide every accessory, though they were in some cases quite small with short baths and built-in hip baths. The one feature this Exhibition seemed to be lacking was a real funfair: Robertson and Yerbury said that the funfair at the Exhibition was a little too restrained, and had it been less so, it would, they thought, have helped to put the crowd in a carnival

22. Ibid., p.48.

23. "Functionalism Boldly Expressed", The Stockholm Exhibition 1930, Architects Journal 72 (July 1930), p.84.

humour - a shade more freedom would, they felt, have provided a good contrast to the more serious side of the Exhibition.²⁴

By the mid-1930's, Europe's experimental heyday was drawing to a close. This was largely due to the rise of authoritarian regimes: Fascism in Germany and Italy (although in the case of the latter its architecture was not necessarily affected by its politics): and the consolidation of Communism in Russia. Architects and designers were no longer free to construct architectural wonders, develop aesthetic theories or social doctrines. This attitude was evident at the Paris Exposition Universelle 1937, its only notable triumph was its layout, in concept completely different from the picturesque informality of Stockholm 1930. The Paris Exhibition was traditional and monumental in design and scale. When reviewing this Exhibition Serge Chermayeff said that this "more than compensates for the absence of any outstanding buildings and the disappointingly safe and unimaginative individual architecture of 1937".²⁵

For seventy years the French had staged all their important national exhibitions on almost the same terrain in the immediate centre of Paris. In 1937, the traditional French genius for monumental planning was exposed to the full. The review, by the editor of the Architectural Review, stated that "no-one else would have conceived....let alone carried off....the boldness of the central idea: that of an exhibition city itself set down in the

24. "The Stockholm Exhibition 1930", Architect and Building News 124 (July 1930), p. 48.

25. Serge Chermayeff, "Circulation Design Display: The Architect at the Exhibition", Architectural Review 82 (August 1937), p.91.

centre of a great metropolis".²⁶ Running the length of the Seine which formed the main axis, two further elements were created to form the cross axis, the new Trocadero and the Eiffel Tower (constructed for the 1889 International Exhibition by Gustave Eiffel). The site was laid out with ornamental gardens, trees and fountains and was cleverly lit. Beyond all this, however, with the exception of the pavilions of the Scandinavian countries and those of Austria, Holland, Spain, Poland, Japan and Czechoslovakia, who continued to experiment with the Modernist style, the other pavilions were unprepossessing and dull. On entering the exhibition, the first thing the visitor was confronted with were the pavilions of Germany and Russia - facing each other. Both were extremely classical and regressive in manner. The German pavilion, designed by Albert Speer, was given its finishing touches after he gained illegal access to the Russian drawings; it was supposed to be the perfect foil to the Russian pavilion, and was crowned with an aggressive looking eagle; in contrast, the Russian pavilion was topped off with a classically triumphant 'ordinary' man. The contributions of the French architects, were for the most part, in the classical beaux art tradition. The reviews were unenthusiastic: the reviewer for the Architect and Building News said: "Will Paris 1937, be remembered as a milestone of taste? The answer is no. The whole trend is regressive. There is clever design, sensational design. But there is nothing new. Paris has

26. "Paris Exhibition 1937", Architectural Review 82 (August 1937), p. 85.

gone back from modernity to Art".²⁷ In this repressive environment many architects and designers decamped and fled - and England was their first stop.

27. "Events and Comments", Architect and Building News 151 (July 1937), p 100.

THE MODERN MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

The Modern Movement arrived fairly late in England. The first wave of Modernism to catch the English imagination had come from Scandinavia and Holland, then from France, with glimpses from Germany and Russia - though by the time the news of what was happening there got through, 'Stalinist Russia' was already turning its back on post-revolutionary experiment in favour of the monumental. In 1927 one of the key books on Modern Architecture was published in England, Le Corbusier's 'Vers Une Architecture', translated by Frederick Etchells. The arrival of this book with its sweep, certainty and incantatory fervour was just what the progressives had been waiting for:

They were transfixed by its hymning of 'the great primary forms of cube, cone, sphere, cylinder, and pyramid and by its memorable dicta ('Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light'). And his masterpiece the Villa Savoye at Poissy (1928 - 29) was an irresistible icon. With its image always in their mind's eye of a slim white cube, lightly poised on stilts in a green field, there could be no doubt of the potency and, as it seemed, the definitive perfection of form which modern architecture could achieve in the new machine age.²⁸

The young architects and designers read and studied the developments in the influential 'Architectural Review', an enlightened liberal journal committed to furthering the ideas of the Modern Movement.

Some building in the modernist style had gone on in Britain in the 1930's. In that year Amyas Connell and Basil Ward received a

28. Dean, p 14. Etchells, a Vorticist painter in Paris before the First World War, turned to architecture in the twenties. He designed the Crawford's building in Holborn, an important modern office building in England; he founded Haslemere Books, a distinguished private press; and he ended his career restoring churches in Berkshire.

commission to design a house for Bernard Ashmole, the Director of the British School in Rome where both architects had attended after winning the Rome scholarship. The House, 'High and Over', was designed on a Y-shaped plan, which was novel, but the interior spatial development was traditional in its static clustering of separate volumes. What was new for Britain, however, was the treatment of form: "the angular shapes, the plane surfaces, the surface windows, the hovering roof slab, the glazed staircases; these were all motifs derived from continental practice."²⁹

The Royal Corinthian Yacht Club at Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, completed in 1931, was designed by Joseph Emberton: "The Club's simple functional planning, its bold massing of glass and cement (covering a structure of steel with brick infill) and the nautical building, together with 'High and Over', were Britain's contribution to the Exhibition inaugurating the Architectural Department of New

29. Anthony Jackson, pp.22-23. Other modern style houses built in England in this period included Alding (now New Farm) at Grayswood near Haslemere, Surrey (1932). It was designed for Sir Arthur Lowes Dickinson by Connell Ward and Lucas. The design, a complex plan radiating from a glazed stair tower, showed Connell's concern for the interplay of light and shadow, voids and solids, and for bringing the continuous windows flush with external walls. In 1934, Saltdean, near Brighton, was designed by the same firm. It was a variation on a simple theme, with a roof canopy and an external staircase to the sun terrace. Dean, The Thirties, p.15.

York's Museum of Modern Art in 1932.³⁰

Thus, by the time the Masters arrived in England (Walter Gropius in 1934, closely followed by Marcel Breuer) there were already some contributions to the Modern Movement and their work and theories were not unknown. Their arrival increased the numbers of the already existing small circle of emigre architects and designers which included Lubetkin, Mendelsohn and Chermayeff. To the younger architects like Maxwell Fry, Yorke and the Architectural Association graduates of Tecton, who were committed to the theories and aesthetics of the Modern Movement, the arrival of the masters in England was timely and Britain could now experience the Movement at first hand. The depth of feeling created by Gropius' arrival can be seen in Maxwell Fry's description of his first meeting with him:

I can remember exactly the overcrowded room and he was standing among us, speaking with utmost clarity in broken English of how we could mend the disunity of our machine civilisation, and what moved us was the mixture of humility and authority with which he addressed us. He gave us in that moment an unexpected accession of strength and assurance. The theme was already familiar, but not the depth of purpose with which he invested it.³¹

30. Ibid., p.25. Other non-domestic buildings included Owen Williams' 1935 Pioneer Health Club Centre in London which, by its glass and concrete structure, exemplified a "vigorous statement of one branch of the new style"; also in the same year, Lubetkin (a Russian emigre who arrived in England in 1930) and Tecton (a group of Architectural Association graduates) completed Highpoint (a block of apartment dwellings). Le Corbusier, praising Highpoint, described it as "the second seed of the vertical Garden City....an achievement of the first rank....for a long time I have dreamed of executive dwellings in such conditions for the good of humanity". Dean, p.54.

31. Benevolo, p.588.

For their part, the Masters saw these ardent architects and designers as a perfect vehicle through which they could continue their work. Despite the ardour with which they were received, however, they were quick enough to grasp that the Movement in Britain was in the minority, and, if they were to succeed, caution would be the byword.

The emigrés entered into partnerships with their British counterparts. Gropius formed a partnership with Maxwell Fry, Mendelsohn with Chermayeff, and Breuer with Yorke. Gropius began very cautiously in Britain: not attempting to impose his personality or to repeat the experiments broken off in Germany, he sought instead to methodically assimilate and elaborate the characteristics of the British environment. Furthermore, he was careful to emphasize the possibilities of integration between the two different cultural heritages within which he perceived common themes.³² Together Gropius and Fry produced a few buildings in the Modernist Style, the most successful of which was Impington College in Cambridgeshire, completed in 1939, long after Gropius had left for America. Impington, a community cultural centre, constructed in brick and glass, was designed to be in harmony with the surrounding countryside, with its form and function merging to create a common identity.

Perhaps the most important by-product of the Masters' sojourn in Britain was that in 1933 the younger generation of architects and designers now felt confident enough to join together to form MARS,

32. Ibid.

the Modern Architecture Research Group. Their aim "was to identify the problems of modern architecture and to move towards their solution".³³ Gropius wanted the MARS Group to have an international role, to lead the Modern Movement whose centre was forced to move from Germany, and he expressed these sentiments to Wells-Coates saying that "the moment was right for England to play a prominent role in the modern building movement, using CIAM, the Congress Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne as a platform to do this".³⁴ The MARS Group became recognised as a subsection of CIAM, with its members participating and contributing to the formal meetings of CIAM. The members of MARS included Wells-Coates (Chairman), Maxwell Fry (Vice Chairman), F.R.S.Yorke (Secretary), as well as Connell, Ward, Lucas, Chermayeff, Lubetkin, Samuel and Skinner (of the Tecton Group) and also H.T.Cadbury-Brown, Erno Goldfinger, M.Hartland-Thomas, Ove Arup, Hugh Casson, Misha Black and Ralph Tubbs. The MARS Group made two major contributions to promoting the cause of the new architecture in Britain. In 1938 MARS held an Exhibition at the New Burlington Galleries. Its expressed intention was to "offer an invitation to judge the real nature of modern architecture and the part it will play in contemporary life". The Exhibition's layout, designed by Moholy-Nagy, and completed by Misha Black, after Moholy-Nagy departed for Chicago, made a considerable impact on its seven thousand visitors. Le Corbusier visited the Exhibition and was

33. Dean, p. 113.

34. Timothy Pruss and David Davidson, eds. A New Design for Living: Design in British Interiors 1930-1951, p.26.

suitably impressed. He saw the British version of Modernism for the first time, and described it as a "charming display of youth". Moreover, he was struck by its "elegance, the intimate eloquence, of its sequence of presentations none of which could possibly harm anybody". The second major offering from the MARS Group was a plan for the redevelopment of London: an East-West spine was to be created across London, with North and South, a series of residential/commercial recreational ribs, the whole encircled by a major ring-road".³⁵ The plan was of course radical and visionary, and an innovation for the British planners and architects, but it was in reality, however, yet another impracticable scheme joining the ranks of the Utopian cities already created by Sant'Elia and Le Corbusier.

By the late thirties and early forties, the emigrés began to leave England. This was due in part for fear that in the current political climate they might be interned but they also felt that their mission was at an end - not because they had managed to convert the majority, but because they realised that the Movement would remain within the minority. The young architects and designers were working within the constraints of a deeply conservative society whose antipathy towards things foreign (particularly German), and indeed towards foreigners themselves has always been extremely strong and was especially so during this period. The British xenophobia towards the Modern Movement and its preachers was openly and clearly expressed - there were many vituperative statements. The hostility of the time can be

35. Dean, p.114.

illustrated by the following extracts: Reginald Blomfield said in a broadcast debate which was published in the Listener of 28 November 1934:

Since the War, Modernism or Modernismus, as it should be called on the German precedent, has invaded this country like an epidemic and though there are signs of reaction, its attack is insidious and far reaching with the wholly fallacious prospect of a new heaven and a new earth which it dangles before the younger generation and it poses a threat to established culture: Whether it is Communism or not, 'Modernismus' is a vicious Movement which threatens that literature and art, which is our last refuge from a world that is becoming more and more mechanised every day. ³⁶

In April 1937, in another Journal, 'Building', C.H. Reilly, the Head of the Liverpool School of Architecture, returning from the appeal over the house Chermayeff designed at Bentley Wood near Halland in Sussex, summarised the Local Council's antipathy and view towards the new architecture:

Bungalows we have heard of, suburban villas we know indeed have passed by the hundred, but what is this? Something foreign and therefore unpleasant in spite of its whiteness. Indeed one may be pretty sure of that. Our surveyor, that excellent authority on drains and road surfaces, says the building is un-English, what more do you want. ³⁷

Apart from these attacks, the architect faced many obstacles, the toughest of which was planning consent, for amongst the powers given to local authorities by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932, were those permitting the regulation of size, height, design and external appearance of buildings and the rejection of any proposed building that would be "likely to seriously injure the amenity of the locality". The aim of these provisions was to

36. Charlotte and Tim Benton, "Architecture: Contrasts of a Decade, in the Thirties: British Art and Design before War", The Thirties Exhibition Catalogue, pp. 47-48.

37. Dean, p. 35.

prevent unsightly and sporadic development, but the local authorities and committees which examined the designs often consisted of conservative local businessmen who would be unlikely to be sympathetic to innovations and ultimately used this part of the act to protect their local communities from the encroachments of modern architecture. To aid the Local Authorities in their decisions, the RIBA, in conjunction with the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, had already set up an architects' panel system - a voluntary organisation within the Provincial Allied Societies. These panels were narrowed down to a sub-panel of three architects who looked at the proposed designs.³⁸ This often meant that older architects, with more traditional views, were judging the work of their younger colleagues who adhered to the modern principles which they rejected. Even when permission was granted, often after long drawn-out wrangling, the architect and their clients were frequently threatened with litigation instigated by local architects) objecting to the proposed design on the grounds of its possible effect on the amenity value of the area. Some clients were able to stand the personal abuse and the financial cost of litigation, but others were not.³⁹ The controversy over these modern buildings only served to reinforce the feelings of isolation

38. Jackson, p.26, and Dean, p.35. Connell faced those sort of difficulties during the building of High and Over which was held up because of a dispute over the design of the water tower.

39. Benton, pp. 57-58. In one case the distressed client, himself a solicitor, pursued his case to the High Court; the huge costs of doing so bankrupted him.

from without and the solidarity within the Movement and under the circumstances, the Masters had no choice but to leave England for America, where the foundations of Modernism had been laid by great architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, Schindler, Louis Sullivan, Neutra, Howe, Lescaze and others. With the outbreak of war, architects and designers in Britain ceased experimentation; their talents were used by the state in areas such as propaganda, wartime exhibitions, town planning and camouflage techniques.

If Europe underwent profound change after the First World War, after the Second World War it underwent a complete metamorphosis, with political, economic and social divisions becoming more clearly defined. The alteration of European society occurred not only in political configurations but also in physical terms. The Second World War left behind it greater material damage than did the previous, with whole cities requiring rebuilding. In England, cities such as Coventry and also parts of London had to be reconstructed; two hundred thousand houses had been totally destroyed, a further quarter of a million made uninhabitable and an even larger number were in need of repair. In addition to this, new buildings for the manufacturing industries had to be constructed and with the advent of the 1944 Education Act, new schools had to be built to replace the five thousand that had been destroyed.⁴⁰ All this rebuilding and reconstruction, in keeping with the Labour Government's philosophy, was not going to be handed over to private enterprise, it would be orchestrated by the State, so that the new

40. Jackson, pp.166-167.

client was now central government. Many young architects who would previously have joined a private practice, now joined the local authorities.⁴¹ These conditions made it difficult for the individual architect to hold hard and fast to any architectural style. In the grave post-war situation neither the Labour party nor later, the Conservatives, were willing to accept architectural mannerisms that interfered with fast, cheap and efficient construction. This view was explained to the RIBA Council by the coalition Conservative Minister of Works a week before the end of the war in Europe:

We desire as much as anyone to maintain diversity of design and scope for the individual talents of the architect. But first things must come first. The houses must go up and nothing must stand in their way.

In consequence, the main bulk of housing built by the Labour Government "were without architectural pretensions having neither the conceits of stylistic disciplines nor the popular deceits of the speculator. These buildings were built to function and any additional achievement was gratuitous".⁴² With the building of prefabricated houses due to the shortage of materials and the ever pressing time factor, it would have been difficult indeed to attain any additional architectural effects.

While the architects and designers were adjusting to the realities of post-war practice in their profession and preparing to

41. Jackson, p.172. By 1948 not only did forty per cent of practising architects work for Government Departments but the remaining sixty per cent received most of their work from Government commissions.

42. Ibid., pp.168-169.

design the new homes and towns as best they could under the circumstances, austerity set in. Along with the acute shortages of construction material, there were shortages of food and luxury goods. The war was over but wartime deprivations continued unabated. The British people had to endure economic dislocation, shortages and rationing.⁴³

Seven years after the war, against this background of seemingly insurmountable austerity measures and stifled creativity, the Government decided that the British people needed a morale booster. The Festival of Britain gave the younger generation of architects and designers, now in their early forties, a chance to show what they could achieve when freed from the constraints of building houses, schools and designing new towns. Furthermore, the Festival provided the public with their first opportunity to see modern architecture and design on a large scale, and the part it could play in their lives.

43. See pp.75-78, 159-162.

THE SOUTH BANK SITE

The architects of the South Bank project, led by Hugh Casson, were for the most part firmly committed to the Modern Movement. According to Casson, they all spoke the same language, "as the majority of them had been and still were members of the MARS Group, and thus were dedicated to the same end - to fully expose the aesthetics of modern architecture to the public eye."⁴⁴ The architects and designers were given twenty-seven acres of ground on the South Bank to transform into an exhibition area. The site had few decisive advantages, and numerous disadvantages. It was small and needed a great deal of drainage and clearance before the erection of exhibition structures could begin. Further, it was also split in half by the Hungerford railway bridge which destroyed its potential unity. Its major advantage was its setting - it stood in the heart of London and could therefore be linked visually to the picturesque backdrop of Whitehall and the Palace of Westminster. Furthermore, the land was bordered by the River Thames which could prove aesthetically useful in providing the exhibition with an elegance and ambience of its own.

Another limiting factor was, however, brought about by the Government who decided that the Festival as a whole should have a

44. Sir Hugh Casson, Interview held at 60 Elgin Crescent, London, 20 January 1983. The MARS Group; formed in 1933 and disbanded in 1957 included the following members who designed structures and co-ordinated the layout of the South Bank site: E. Maxwell Fry, H.T. Cadbury-Brown, Misha Black, Hugh Casson, Wells Coates, Erno Goldfinger, Ove Arup, M. Hartland-Thomas, Ralph Tubbs and Peter Moro.

theme. The theme chosen was "the British Contribution to Civilization Past, Present and Future" and it would be visualised through the advances made in the arts, science and technology, and architecture and industrial design. The imposition of a theme was initially constricting but it was nevertheless turned into a positive attribute by the way in which the Executive Committee, the architects and designers handled it. From the early weekend conferences at Barry's home in 1948, the Executive Committee members concluded that Britain's contribution to civilization was a combination of two dominant forces: the land of Britain, and the people of Britain. Further, it was decided that the best way to handle this theme would be by giving the Exhibition on the South Bank a narrative approach, and the site, with its division, lent itself admirably to this type of account. The idea that the Executive was developing resolved itself into two main sequences: on the one hand, there would be the land and what the people achieved in the course of developing its resources; and on the other, the way of life that evolved as the people progressively resolved the diversity of their characteristics and fitted themselves into their environment. In addition to these themes of the land and the people, there would be a central feature which, in relating to both of these ideas, would tell the story of discovery. It would display the British outside their immediate environment, not only discovering and developing overseas territories, but discovering knowledge from all spheres of the universe.⁴⁵

45. Work 25/50, Report by the Director of Science on the contribution of the Science Directorate to the Festival of Britain 1951, 31 October 1951.

Such a theme had two advantages: as it was based on reality it offered a logical place for any item of subject matter proposed by the constituent bodies; and as it also adhered strictly to the Government's definition of intentions, it facilitated the selection of suitable material by providing only for subject matter within the terms of reference, thus excluding any material which might prove contentious.⁴⁶ Thus the existence of an agreed theme provided clear grounds for the rejection of irrelevant material and enabled planning to proceed without repeated revision of the basic skeleton. Furthermore, the theme provided the architects with a clear intellectual plan to interpret, and this meant that the pavilions they designed had to correspond to the requirements of the subject matter for which they were catering. On entering the South Bank Exhibition's 400,000 square feet of covered space, the visitor was treated to the experience of the variety and harmony of the pavilions which, as a whole, told a continuous story and which individually were subdivided into 'chapters' with each pavilion illustrating its own particular part of the story and thus, each having its own atmosphere: The South Bank was the first multi-pavilioned exhibition ever to use such a narrative form.⁴⁷

(See Fig. 6)

In creating a visual realisation of the theme on the site, the Hungerford railway bridge was used as a divider between the Upstream

46. See pp.29-30 for the initial discussions on the subject matter that various people wished to be included in the Exhibition.

47. Work 25/50, Report by Director of Science, 31 October 1951.

Section, which told the story of the "Land of Britain" in eight pavilions including the Dome of Discovery, and the Downstream Section of twelve pavilions which described "the People of Britain". Hugh Casson and his team decided to depart from traditional exhibition layouts because of both the constraints of the site and also the theme which had been given to the Festival. Having only twenty-seven acres on which to work made any grand manner plan such as was evidenced on the two hundred and fifty acres of Paris' Exposition Universelle 1937 inconceivable: "impressive vistas and monumental compositions were out of the question in an area which could be crossed on foot in a few minutes and whose extent could be wholly comprehended in a single glance". However, the narrative treatment of the theme dictated that the Exhibition had to unfold chapter by chapter, in a clear sequence. This meant "that each pavilion had not only to be a certain size, but it also had to be placed in correct relationship to those which both preceded and followed it."⁴⁸

The architects and designers searched within the roots of their country's design heritage and found a composition that solved all their problems with the site perfectly. In the eighteenth century, British gardeners pioneered the Picturesque theory of landscaping, and "this theory demanded that the latent possibilities of any site should be exploited to the full, in order to produce a layout with a character peculiar to that site alone".⁴⁹ As a result, the landscape was highly irregular and rich in surprise, for

48. Work 25/43, Lecture given by Hugh Casson to the RIBA, 24 March 1951.

49. J.M. Richards, "Foreword, The South Bank Exhibition", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p. 74.

the South Bank architects took this theory from its natural setting of the countryside and applied it to an urban setting. This was revealed on the South Bank in the structure of the buildings and landscaping of the site. The buildings of the Upstream Section were created to reflect the nature of the land of Britain: they were imposing, dynamic and imaginative, reminiscent of modern industrial plants or factories. These structures housed exhibits displaying the achievements made in power and production, agriculture, exploration and in transport and communication.

The buildings for discussion from this section are the Power and Production Pavilion, the Transport and Communication Pavilion and the Dome of Discovery. The criteria for their selection rests upon their architectural innovation, and their structural and theoretical connection to the Modern Movement.

THE UPSTREAM SECTION: THE LAND OF BRITAIN

The primary intention of this section was to convey "Man's mastery and use of his environment." It opened with the 'Land of Britain' Pavilion which portrayed the birth of the British Isles. The displays in this pavilion showed Britain in the remote past, the formation of slate, limestone seas, coral swamps, salt lakes, shallow seas in which iron ore was deposited, and the four stages of the evolution of the country's coastline. From here the visitor moved to the 'Natural Scene' Pavilion which showed the scenery of Britain, including live exhibits of the plants and animals of the country, the scenery and wildlife of St Kilda, the Cairngorms, the Lake District, the Pennines, Dartmoor, the Pembrokeshire Coast, Northern Ireland, the Norfolk Coast, the New Forest, Suffolk, the North Downs and a special display of the natural history of London. Following the 'Natural Scene' Pavilion was the 'Country Pavilion' showing what man had made of the 'Natural Scene'. This involved displaying the development of agriculture in Laxton, Northamptonshire, covering a two thousand year period, dairy farming in Cheshire, cattle farming in the Midlands; upland stock farming in Northern Ireland; and grain and irrigated vegetable production in East Anglia. Other displays in this pavilion included one illustrating research work in agriculture and horticulture; the country year, which highlighted the typical activities in the field and village monthly; rural crafts such as thatching, walling, basket making, weaving and saddlery; and also live poultry and husbandry, farm livestock (sheep, pigs, goats, light and heavy horses), live modern dairy farming, and the mechanisation of

farming. Another pavilion showed the modern blacksmith at work. forestry and land use, and the future of British agriculture. This pavilion, although highly specific in content must have been very interesting because of all the live exhibits.⁵⁰

From here, the visitor entered the 'Minerals of the Island' Pavilion which in essence formed the prelude to the 'Power and Production' Pavilion which traced the story from raw materials to the finished product. This pavilion outlined the major indigenous resources of Britain, such as coal, and with the aid of a representative coal mine, where it was found and how it was mined was shown alongside the substances made from coal. Iron was also illustrated: how it was extracted, its smelting, and the making of steel, alloys and chemical raw materials.⁵¹

The 'Power and Production' pavilion, designed by Grenfell Baines and H.J.Reifenberg, was in complete contrast to the Dome of Discovery which it faced. The pavilion had a dual function; it had to represent both an exhibition hall as well as a prototype of a modern factory. Its purpose was to house a display of British industry and commerce, the exhibits of which would tell the story from the raw material stage to that of finished products and, to achieve this, the exhibition area had to show the various stages of production: the harnessing of power and its uses; aspects of research and design; and the finished goods ready for export.

50. Work 25/21, The Director of Science to the Director-General, 1 May 1950.

51. Ibid.

The actual display included exhibits of power, metals, research, machines at work, craftsmen at work, how industry works, commerce and a showroom.⁵² The form of this pavilion's structure had been determined by the need to mount such a display as well as by the restrictions imposed by the irregularly shaped site which consisted of a long narrow wedge-shaped area between a service road and the Dome of Discovery.

The 'Power and Production' pavilion was designed to unfold gradually. It was composed of a large two-tiered central hall (The Hall of Production) which was flanked on either side by two smaller halls. (See Fig. 7) The hall on the eastern side consisted of the entrance at ground level, the 'Hall of Power' on the upper floor, and on the lower level, a metal-working section. The hall on the western side housed a two-floored showroom for finished products. (See Figs. 8 and 9)⁵³ The building achieved distinction by the construction of six large windows into the facade of the central hall. These windows aroused great interest because of their irregular shape, "which formed a saw tooth pattern in plan and elevation". This formation was attained by designing the main trusses to run at oblique angles. The form of the windows was a direct result of the placement of the building on a narrow and constricted site and the shape of the site also made a frontal approach to the pavilion impossible, so access could only be gained by deviating sideways or round a curve. The architects decided

52. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition The South Bank Festival of Britain Catalogue.

53. Work 25/43, Architect's Questionnaire on the Structures of the South Bank, Grenfell Baines and H.J. Reifenberg, 'The Power and Production' Pavilion.

therefore that the structure had to be designed to unfold gradually in changing aspects. A dynamic rather than static effect would be achieved, they concluded, by the six jagged windows which gave the pavilion height, and created a contrast to the horizontality of the side halls. (See Fig. 7)⁵⁴ In addition to this, different views of the site and the flow introduced into the building were bonus features of this structural device. The entire structure was three hundred feet long by one hundred feet deep and was fifty-five feet high. It had a light, delicate spider web appearance as most of its structural framework was of welded tubular steel. The external walls of the building were composed of yellow stock bricks, concrete panels and asbestos cement.⁵⁵

Inside the central hall, the first floor level was surrounded by cantilevered galleries on the long sides of the hall which were constructed with precast concrete slabs and reinforcing ribs. Jutting out from underneath the galleries were curved precast concrete slabs decorated with a bold pattern surrounded by plain borders. The ornamentation on these slabs was obtained by the use of exposed multi-coloured brick aggregate. The galleries themselves were finished in a light colour.⁵⁶ The walls of the lowest part of the hall, like the galleries, were also constructed with precast concrete slabs mixed with Portland stone or with the multi-coloured

54. "Festival of Britain 1951, The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p.670.

55. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire.

56. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p.670.

brick aggregate.⁵⁷ The ceiling of the hall was covered in asbestos sheets being alternated with inner socketed ribs to give the illusion that the ceiling had been architecturally designed: an illusion that was necessitated by the impermanence of the structure, and the scarcity of time. (See Fig. 10)

In the small side halls the roofs of both buildings were carried on extremely light space frames in order to fit in with the angular grid of the building. The steel members of these frames were constructed to form a fragile lacework design, which was painted off-white and the ceilings were painted a dark navy blue. (See Fig. 11)⁵⁸ As a result of using these frames, the side walls of these halls were non-load bearing cavities with skins eleven inches thick, and constructed in yellow stock bricks. The end of the west hall was finished with a large aluminium and glass screen from which the River Thames could be seen.

While the Power and Production pavilion may not have been as architecturally spectacular as the 'Dome of Discovery', it did have simplicity and elegance. Furthermore, despite the difficulties encountered on the site, the architects succeeded in constructing a building ideally suited to its displays, thus giving to both the 'house and the housed', a unity of purpose and a sense of harmony that would elude the Dome of Discovery.

The pavilion's considerably unadorned exterior, relieved solely by six jagged windows and the large window at the end of the western hall, was reminiscent of pre-Second World War Modernist

57. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire.

58. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p. 670.

philosophy of design. The interiors of the side halls displayed intricate pattern work in the space frames, accentuating the post-war desire for ornamentation.

The 'Transport and Communications Pavilion, the second pavilion to be discussed in this survey of Upstream Pavilions, was separated from the 'Power and Production Pavilion' by Basil Spence's Seas and Ships Pavilion which displayed the development of Britain's sea power. The 'Transport and Communications' Pavilion was designed by Arcon, an architectural firm, and was situated with its back to the Hungerford railway bridge and the Royal Festival Hall, and its facade facing onto the 'Dome of Discovery'. Its function was to illustrate British achievements in the two fields of transport and communications. Explaining the evolution of the design, the architects, stated that:

The form of the building was largely derived from the factor requiring full size examples of locomotives, cars, aeroplanes, and portions of ships. Broadly speaking the block form of the building evolved from the subsections within the general heading of "Transport". The endeavour has been to express the character of each form of transport differently but at the same time design the building as a whole. 59

This pavilion achieved drama, intimacy and daring. The architects response to the demands of the exhibition was the creation of a design of great eloquence, reminiscent of the Transport pavilion at Stockholm 1930 with the suspended Biplane in its facade. The main structure was a bold, sheer cliff-shaped building, with a facade composed entirely of glass: its roof was made up of six isosceles triangles and was covered in asbestos sheeting. The shape of the

59. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire, Arcon, The 'Transport and Communications' pavilion.

roof, in addition to the angle at which the facade was set, gave the building a sense of tension and a heightened illusion of sheerness which was accentuated by the false perspective of the aspect. (See Fig. 12) The pavilion's glass facade was raised on slab-shaped pilotis which created an overhang, the underneath of which served as the ground floor and the first phase of the exhibition, displaying large locomotives in the open space. On either side of the main structure there were rectangular-shaped buildings raised on slim pilotis. These two units formed a contrast to the verticality of the main building and served to highlight its projection. The pavilion consisted of three levels, with access being gained by a reinforced concrete ramp encased in glass. (See Figs. 13 and 14)

The framework of the structure was made of steel, which gave it a light appearance. The walls of the main building were made from panels of metal window sections filled in with glass or with painted asbestos sheets; plain bricks and aluminium were applied to the building's rear. The walls of the east and west wings were composed of patent glazing, used vertically, and of glass bricks; plain bricks were used on parts of the rear walls. On the gabled-ends of the two units aluminium was used, and the roofing was made of asbestos sheeting. The materials used in the interior of the pavilion were steel, asbestos sheeting and concrete, finished with textured paint; the ceiling of the main hall was, for example, covered with asbestos sheeting and painted blue; superimposed onto it was a subsidiary network of steel lattice work painted white with the main steel girders painted pink - there seemed to be a growing emphasis on colour differentiations as the projects on the site

progressed.⁶⁰

Apart from the elegance of the glazed facade, two striking features should be mentioned. In the central building three aircraft, two gliders and a sea plane, were suspended from the ceiling and were visible through the glass; it was picturesque and impressive, and particularly spectacular at night - even more so than the one bi-plane which was suspended from the ceiling at the Transport Pavilion at the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. The other noteworthy feature was the design factor which made it possible for the entire expanse of the glass front to slide open yielding another more direct and intimate view of the site. (See Fig. 15)

The interior of the Transport and Communications Pavilion possessed yet another interesting structural device - its staircases. Two types of staircases were created and used throughout the structure, both made from pre-cast reinforced concrete: the first was a conventional staircase cast to include its balustrade, while the second was cantilevered on either side of central spine, with the treads of the stairs being bent at right angles to form the balustrade. The balustrades of these staircases were made from plated steel and all of the staircases were finished in a mixture of granite concrete and carborundum, with the handrails made of aluminium, timber or steel. (See Fig. 16)⁶¹ The floors were composed of specially designed pre-cast concrete slabs. On the

60. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p. 661

61. J.M. Richards, "The Exhibition Buildings", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp. 128-129.

ground floor, cold asphalt was used in conjunction with terrazzo, patterned quarry, and ceramic tiles. The terrazzo finish was echoed on the staircase attached to the end of the main structure. The top floor was covered with cork tiles.⁶²

The exterior of this pavilion was an acknowledgement to the structural and theoretical developments of Modernism and beyond this, the creativity of the structure was a tribute to boldness and imagination. However, the interiors, in particular that of the main hall, degenerated into a cacophony of steel and aluminium rods, tubing, and ribbing. It was over-ornamented and fussy, in spite of some of the dramatic display effects, for example, the suspended aircraft. The displays included: recording and broadcasting, television, radio aids to navigation, car design, air transport, telecommunications, road vehicles, roads and bridges, public transport, and railway signalling. (See Figs. 17 and 18)⁶³ These numerous exhibits, like the decoration, became chaotic and confused.

The last building to be discussed in this section is the central feature that linked the two themes of the Land and People of Britain. The Dome of Discovery, designed by Ralph Tubbs, boasted the largest dome in the world - three hundred and sixty-five feet in diameter - and was the show-piece of this section; a building to be marvelled at. In contrast to the sweeping horizontality of the reinforced concrete and glass pavilions surrounding it, the Dome was solid, massive and bold, and was visible for every corner of the site, casting its shadow over all the other pavilions. According to

62. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p. 662.

63. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition The South Bank Festival of Britain Catalogue.

the architect, the design was based on "pure geometry part spheres, circles and conic sections, a major element of the design being the cutting of a great inverted aluminium cone at an angle, thereby giving a plan of eccentric circles."⁶⁴

The external covering of the Dome was constructed in aluminium sheeting; it rested on a circular ring girder of welded mild steel which was supported forty-five feet above the ground on its extreme edges by forty-eight light, diagonal-latticed tubular steel struts. (See Fig. 7) Placed in between the struts and the supporting girder was a solid circular curtain wall which was erected to form an enclosure. (See Fig. 19) The internal structure of the Dome had a complexity and intricacy that were in complete contrast to the stark simplicity of its exterior.

The interior of the Dome was composed of three reinforced concrete galleries. The top gallery, thirty-five feet above ground level, was cantilevered from a circle of wedge-shaped reinforced concrete fins, fifteen inches thick. (See Figs. 20 and 21) Below this gallery were two larger ones supported on steel frames, which were respectively twenty-two feet and twelve feet in height.⁶⁵ The function of these galleries was to house the numerous displays illustrating British inventions, discoveries and explorations. Access to them was made possible by delicately constructed staircases; the top gallery could be reached directly by escalator. The displays in the Dome were divided into eight

64. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire, Ralph Tubbs, 'The Dome of Discovery'.

66. J.M. Richards, "The Exhibition Buildings", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p. 122.

sections: the Living World, the Sea, the Polar Region, the Earth, the Land, the Physical World, Outer Space, and the Sky. The perimeter of the building was enclosed by a double-skin drum wall, the reason for which stems from the fact that the space between the two walls accommodated all essential services, as well as a number of emergency escape staircases. Incorporated into the drum wall were a series of ventilating chambers, housing inlet fans and filters. The intricacy of the wall was necessary, as the Dome had no windows and therefore had to be lit and ventilated artificially.⁶⁶ The walls of the Dome were sprayed with a substance that gave them a rough texture, and were then painted a deep green colour.

The concave side of the Dome was in contradiction to its smooth exterior, being built-up with 'ribs', intermediate rafters, purlins, and sheeting, all of aluminium alloy.⁶⁷ The resultant effect was a pattern of beautifully detailed fragile latticework. (See Fig. 22) Glazed in its metallic covering, the Dome of Discovery appeared as though it had arrived from outer space, lodging itself on the South Bank. It both influenced and controlled the tone of the Upstream Section's landscaping and the other pavilions could not compete with it, they could only serve as either a complement or contrast to it.

In the context of the South Bank Exhibition, the Dome of Discovery was most certainly novel. However, within the context of the Modern Movement it owed its structural existence to the works of

66. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p.659.

67. Ibid.

Pier Luigi Nervi, an engineer/architect, and Buckminster Fuller, a theoretician/inventor. Fuller invented the concept of the Geodesic dome. This was simply a dome which could "be expanded to encompass a considerable proportion of a sphere, while providing the maximum enclosed shelter within the minimum enclosing surface." Moreover, he devised a system involving the use of lightweight metals that enabled inexpensive manufacture and easy erection for a variety of purposes.⁶⁸

In contrast to Fuller, Pier Luigi Nervi explored and mastered the use of reinforced concrete in the construction of curved shapes and domes. In his 'Six Aircraft Hangars', built between 1938-41, the Exhibition Hall in Turin (1948-49), and later, the Palazzetto dello Sport in Rome (1957), he proved that huge interior spaces could, rapidly and economically, be constructed with curved and pre-cast concrete.⁶⁹ In his designs Nervi not only perfected the erection of domes in reinforced concrete, but he was also able to create, in the interiors, the finest lattice work patterns in the same material. These intricate designs were much in evidence not only in the Dome of Discovery but also in other pavilions.

Perhaps the most novel feature of Tubbs' design was the type of materials used to construct the Dome. The aluminium sheeting alloy and unadorned steel provided it not only with its shimmer, but it also gave the lattice work in its interior a delicately fine quality. A sense of luminosity was created by the lattice work and the supporting struts, conjuring up an ethereal futuristic feeling.

68. George Heard Hamilton, 'Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art, p. 437.

69. Ibid., p. 433.

Had reinforced concrete been used instead of aluminium and steel, these particular illusions could never have been created.

The displays in the Dome of Discovery were of a highly educational nature and as the unifier of the two themes of the Upstream Section's, "the Land of Britain", and the Downstream's Section, "the People of Britain", they deserve close attention.

In the Living World Section, the display included: the early biologists, Darwin and his contemporaries; examples of modern research; animal learning and reconstructions of extinct animals. Following the guidebook's strict instructions of the correct way to go around the displays, the visitor moved to the seas display which included: whales, life in the sea, exploring the sea, research ships, charting the seas, tides and the early navigators. In the Polar Region with its theatre, the display outlined scientific aims, methods of travel, a modern base hut, discovery in the polar region; and in the theatre, there were demonstrations of methods and equipment. The displays of the Earth Section concerned the minerals of the Commonwealth, the origins of minerals, the earth's interior, earth movements, the outer crust, and archaeology. The Land's displays included Commonwealth agriculture, tropical agriculture, pest control and tropical medicine, water engineering, maps and map makers, British explorers by land, the world of the ancients, Commonwealth links, cable and radio-ships, aircraft and railways. The Physical World was a display of Britain's scientific contribution demonstrating science in fine arts, new physical research, nuclear physics and its applications, great discoveries in physics, man-made chemicals, modern applications of physics, chemical structure and the birth of chemistry. The mysterious Outer

Space Section was displayed under the categories of: time, the earth as a planet, the planets, the moon, radio-astronomy, telescopes, the sun and the other stars. The last section was the Sky, its displays included exhibits showing how thunderstorms were located, forecasting stations, techniques of forecasting, weather instruments, British weather and the ionosphere.⁷⁰ The mystery and fascination of the subjects was enhanced and complemented by the structure in which they were housed.

The style and layout of the Upstream Section was governed and shaped by the demands of its theme and this area of the site was dominated by its buildings. Further, the landscaping of this section was defined and controlled by the buildings and their placement. The structures which were designed for this section captured the spirit and the essence of Modernism twenty years on: the Dome of Discovery, the Transport and Communications Pavilion and the Power and Production Pavilion. In addition to these structures, there was one other feature in this section which in its essence was a summation of the pre-war developments in Architecture, Design and Art. Skylon, the winning design for the 1951 'vertical feature' competition, was designed by Philip Powell and Hidalgo Moya and was reminiscent of Constantin Brancusi's 1925 polished bronze 'Bird in Space'. The three hundred foot Skylon, a cigar shaped aluminium structure suspended on cables was created as the central feature of the Exhibition, visible from every corner of the site as well as further afield. (See Figs. 23 and 24) It was in the tradition of

70. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition, The South Bank Festival of Britain Catalogue.

exhibition structures such as the Eiffel Tower (designed for the 1889 Paris Exhibition) and like that feature it was both memorable and dramatic. The feature was perceived by a cynical few as being like Britain without any visible means of support.⁷¹ But to others such as Margaret Sheppard Fidler, the woman who invented the name for the vertical feature, it was not only beautiful but highly symbolical and emotive. She said of this centre-piece:

When Mr Gerald Barry, Director of the Festival of Britain spoke on the radio about his hopes and ambitions for the Festival, he mentioned the proposed 'vertical feature' - vivid, bright and shining, hanging miraculously in mid-air on the South Bank of the Thames - a symbol of hope, triumph and gaiety, piercing the sky.

She went on to add that both she and her husband (then the Chief Architect on the New Town at Crawley) were both very involved in the makeup of the new Britain which they perceived was symbolised by the vertical feature. Thus, she decided to take up Barry's suggestion that a better name than the 'vertical feature' should be found for it. She described how she invented the feature's name:

As a poet, I love words, so I rallied my family to try and think up a good name for this inspired and inspiring design. We toyed with words like skyhook and pylon and of course, visualised it in the London sky. Suddenly it seemed that 'Skylon' would be a good name for this beautiful adornment of the London sky, shining by day and at night piercing the darkness with no visible means of support. We were, of course, very thrilled when this name was chosen. ⁷²

The area surrounding the 'Dome of Discovery', Skylon, 'Seas and Ships', 'Power and Production' and the 'Transport and Communications' pavilions formed an open concourse. However, the immensity of these buildings resulted in a sparseness of ornamentation in the area. The concourse was decorated with well

71. Banham and Hillier, A Tonic to the Nation, p. 72.

72. Ibid., p. 168.

aligned and spaced trees (originally the site had only one tree), unobtrusive flower pots, and large pieces of art work such as mobile and static sculpture as well as large murals. (See Fig. 25)

The openness of this concourse was interestingly contrasted with the area surrounding the introductory pavilion: the Land of Britain, the Natural Scene, the Country, and the Minerals of the Land. This section, defined as it was by its role of explaining how the land was formed and how its resources were created, was designed to have an aura of mystery and as such the pavilions were marked by their smallness and intimacy, the landscape artists creating an enclosed piazza which would emphasize and enhance the area's function. This area was decorated with natural devices such as rocks, boulders, shrubs, water, and at night the area was lit to heighten the sense of unfolding mystery, intimacy and magic. From this area the visitor moved to the open space of the concourse where his attention was further maintained by the constant alteration of the dimensions and clarity with which they could view the entire site and the landscape beyond. The perpetual shifting of dimensions was achieved by the use of screens: one screen was of coloured canvas stretched on a welded tubular steel framework forming a three-dimensional pattern which, in addition to the varying heights and levels of the structures, interrupted and changed the view the visitor experienced from any given vantage point. In the Upstream Section the landscape designers and the architects succeeded in creating a setting of constantly shifting moods and changing backdrops. Thus, on 13.75 acres of land, they managed to evoke a sense of enchantment and wonder, of spectacle and sensitivity.

The Upstream Section influenced the public by its directness, indeed it overawed and captivated them. From every corner of the site innovative and individualistic structures, heralding the advent of Modernism, demanded the visitors' rapt attention. The displays required concentration, for the architects and designers were conducting a public mobile school. The Downstream Section on the other hand, sought to make its impact in a calmer, less obtrusive manner, not by intimidating but by drawing the visitors into the new style through the relating of the story of the people of Britain with charm and whimsy.

THE DOWNSTREAM SECTION

THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

Downstream, the structures and the landscaping were calculated to induce a feeling of relaxation. As a result of this, the structures were not true descendants of the Modern Style. The buildings adopted the basic formulae and the new materials of Modernist construction, but their exteriors gave way to unashamedly ornamented, highly colourful, eclectic buildings. The largest building in this area was the Royal Festival Hall. Sponsored by the LCC, it was the first concert hall to be built in London after the war.⁷³ It was designed by the LCC's Architects Department, with architects Peter Moro and Robert Matthew in charge of the project. The building's exterior was constructed in reinforced concrete which made it look extremely heavy and bulky. Its interior was, however, fluid, well designed and well articulated. It was also distinguished by the use of a variety of materials and fabrics that gave it warmth and colour. Apart from the Royal Festival Hall, there were twelve pavilions in this section. The visitor was introduced to the story of this section through the 'People of Britain' Pavilion which displayed the origins of the British people as a whole, tracing their arrival in Britain, their early development, and concluding with displays of Britain at that point in the twentieth century. This led naturally into the next pavilion, the 'Lion and the Unicorn', the function of which was to display some aspects of the British character, and some of the major

73. See pp. 104-7, regarding LCC involvement in the building of the Concert Hall and the South Bank site.

ideas developed by British people. From here the visitor moved to the other pavilions: 'Homes and Gardens'; the 'New Schools'; 'Health'; 'Sport'; 'Seaside'; 'Television'; 'Telecinema'; '1851 Centenary Pavilion'; the 'Shot Tower'; and the "Design Review" Pavilions. The two pavilions chosen for discussion in this section are the 'Lion and the Unicorn' and the 'Homes and Gardens' Pavilions. They have been selected for a number of reasons: they both capture the essence of the spirit, mood and intentions, not only of the Downstream Section, but also of the Festival Organisers. The 'Lion and the Unicorn' Pavilion was the Festival Organisers' realisation of their original intention of putting on display those intangible aspects of the British character, which were perceived as being peculiar to the British alone. Furthermore, with the emphasis on post-war architecture, it is interesting to find out through the display in the Homes and Gardens' pavilion what developments were taking place in design.

The 'Lion and Unicorn' Pavilion, designed by R.Y. Goodden and R.D. Russell, was probably the most beautifully harmonious building on the South Bank site. This was because the architects had complete control over the construction of the structure as well as the setting up and designing of the interior display. This good fortune was not granted to all of the many architects who designed structures for the site. Most of the other architects (for example, Ralph Tubbs and the Dome of Discovery) had to work with interior designers, exhibition designers and theme convenors (who designed the story that each pavilion had to tell), all of whom had some particular aspect that they wished to see perfectly highlighted. The theme convenors were therefore determined that everything

should be shown and explained; the interior exhibition designers "tried to cram their gallon of exhibits into the pint pot of the buildings; and the poor architects screamed with righteous indignation as the mass of exhibits and display devices threatened to destroy the spatial quality of the buildings".⁷⁴ Thus on the site, more often than not the structure and exhibits were often at odds. This was especially so in the case of the Dome of Discovery where the problem as Misha Black (of the Presentation Panel and also coordinating designer of the Dome of Discovery) explained was most acute:

Ten theme convenors were determined that nothing should be omitted which did credit to Britain; the team of exhibition designers filled the Dome solid; the architect protested but packing-it-in continued. Eventually so much was displayed as to make comprehension impossible.

Only a general memory of creditable British exploration, invention and industrial capacity remained in the mind of even, the most devoted caption reader and exhibit viewer. The magnificent awe-inspiring interior space, designed with great sensitivity by Ralph Tubbs, was diminished to no useful purpose by the interior display. I should know as the interior was one of my special responsibilities. ⁷⁵

Thus the total control that Goodden and Russell were able to exercise over their pavilion enabled them to present a unified and balanced display and the structure and function of this pavilion never faltered or diverged from its initial conception.

The purpose of the Lion and Unicorn pavilion was to house an exhibition devoted to explaining the intangible elements that made up the British character and tradition: the exhibits which emerged, with titles like the English Language, freedoms, nature, skill,

74. Banham and Hillier, p. 84.

75. Ibid. Black's view is borne out in the reminiscences of people who went to the South Bank. When asked about it, they remember the Dome but not exactly what was in it.

eccentricity, and humour, reflected the difficulty of translating such ideas. The pavilion's form was determined by its position on the site: to its rear was the Hungerford railway bridge which obstructed the view from the building on its long south side. Thus the shape of the structure had to be such that one side would form a screen which would keep out the unsightly view of the bridge, while letting in some sunlight. The other sides of the building had to be structured to let in the maximum amount of light.

The architects designed a long, rectangular, steel-framed building with glazed walls on its north side, which formed the facade of the buildings. On its east side, were identical glazed walls; the glazing of these two slides was of polished plate glass, three-eighths of an inch thick, actually developed in the architects' office.⁷⁶ These windows provided the building with its main source of lighting. Resting on the steel frame was an arch-shaped oak roof, of lamella construction, forty-five feet wide and seventeen feet long. The lamella covering was made of a quarter of one inch thick resin-bonded gaboon plywood, and its surface was further covered with a layer of roofing felt, and finished with aluminium paint. The roof jutted out to form eaves of seven feet three inches in width on either side of the building, and the lamella covering was extended onto the eaves. The smooth effect of the lamella over the curvature of the roof was attained by the use of plated joints, which ensured a complete alignment of all its members and resulted in the formation of a perfect, clear diamond

76. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire, R.Y. Goodden and R.D. Russell, 'The Lion and Unicorn' Pavilion.

pattern. Although the roof rested on the steel frame, it was actually supported on both sides by a lattice girder two feet wide, which was in turn balanced on evenly-spaced columns. The west wall of the structure was composed of steel tubes which held up the end of the roof. (See Fig. 26)⁷⁷

The interior displayed a richness and a variety of textures and materials hitherto unseen in any of the South Bank pavilions. The materials used included oak, coloured wallpaper, and marble, as well as numerous shades of paint. The wealth of its finish and intricacy was reminiscent of pre and post-war interior design of the Scandinavian architects and designers. Every surface of the building was finished with either a coat of paint or a luxurious material. All visible steel work in the interior was painted with high gloss white paint. On the north and south walls a mixture of tyrolean and mica was applied and smoothed down; they were then painted with specially mixed colours.⁷⁸ The west wall was composed of a plastered wood float and painted to appear as if it had been finished in marble. The south wall, which faced the Hungerford railway bridge, was brilliantly constructed to block out that particular view, achieved by the piercing of small louvered eye windows into the wall. The genius of this type of fenestration was that it could be both functional and decorative at the same time: the sun's rays shone through the eyelets casting a distinctive pattern on the interior of the pavilion and the viewer was not distracted by the railway, instead, he was intrigued by the

77. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), pp. 679-680.

78. Work 25 /43, Architects Questionnaire.

fragments of trains and tracks that he was able to see. The south wall was elaborately and colourfully finished with a specially designed bright yellow flocked wallpaper by Richard Guyatt. Super-imposed onto this paper was the Royal Coat of Arms woven from chains of black wooden discs.⁷⁹ On the wall's lower portion was one of the two murals specially commissioned for the building - a large work by Kenneth Rowntree, depicting scenes from British History. (See Fig. 27)

The Pavilion, like most of the other buildings on the site, was constructed on two levels, but its circulation and spatial arrangements were better articulated than most. (See Fig. 28) In the original draft of the theme for this pavilion, the display area demanded subdivisions of the building into spaces of ten per cent, thirty per cent and sixty per cent. To attain these specific proportions, the circulation was planned to lead from the entrance hall up to the gallery and back down to the ground floor. The gallery, which housed the English language display, was raised on slim pilotis and spanned the length of the pavilion. The balustrade, formed by steel rods seven-eighths of an inch thick, was painted white and its handrail was finished in oak. The lower floor was covered with York stone and there were staircases and landings at either end of the pavilion made up from oak strips and lacquered with transparent wax.⁸⁰

The ceiling put the final touch to the sheer fantasy created by the interior decorations: it was formed from diamond-shaped oak

79. J.M. Richards, "The Exhibition Buildings", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p. 124.

80. Work 25/43, Architects Questionnaire.

members which were coated with a clear celluloid lacquer, and the diamond pattern echoed the same pattern on the exterior of the pavilion. Beneath the oak were steel members which ran latitudinally from one end of the ceiling to the other.⁸¹ The final touch was added from the western end of the gallery wall: a huge suspended wicker cage opened up and out of it flew a flock of plaster doves. The illusion of the doves in flight was obtained by their intricate attachment to the length of the ceiling. (See Fig. 29)

This pavilion achieved concurrently, both heights of frivolity and depths of solemnity. It was able to teach the people about their heritage, in a romantic and amusing atmosphere that was most conducive to learning. Its twin themes were explained to the visitor on entering the pavilion, by the gigantic figures of the Lion and the Unicorn placed high above on the west wall of the pavilion. The figures were made in straw and designed by Fred Mozen. Beneath them was a caption which read "we are the Lion and the Unicorn, twin symbols of the Briton's character. As a Lion I give him solidity and strength. With the Unicorn he lets himself go". (See Fig. 30) The exhibits, which were perfectly selected, included: a section on the English Language with displays of the Bible, which was introduced by a copy of the Oxford Lectern Bible laid open on a fifteenth century brass eagle lent from Cavendish Church Suffolk; the works of Shakespeare which included translations of the poets work in forty different languages, as well as a number of English editions including first and second folios

81. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p. 680.

lent by W.A.Foyle; and recorded examples of idiomatic English expressions of the day. Following the section on the English Language, there was a section on English Country Life which was dominated by a mural by Edward Bawden depicting scenes from country life in Britain; an eccentrics corner, presided over by a life size white plaster figure of Lewis Carroll's White Knight 'whose spirits were lifted by the only other use of recorded sound in the building - his own voice uttering a continuous stream of quiet self congratulation and encouragement.⁸² Other exhibits in the corner included an egg roundabout and a smoke grinding machine and a tea set - made entirely from fish bones. A section on British Craftmanship showed examples of the finest British work from eighteenth century furniture to a Rolls Royce engine, from fabrics and textiles to china as well as painting by Gainsborough, Constable, Turner and Nash, and also literature.⁸³

The final and most important display in this pavilion was on Freedom, illustrating the British tradition of freedom in government. The visualization of this highly intangible concept took the form of exhibits of the robes of a High Court judge and "a wig of heroic proportions surrounded by the great tomes of enacted law and of legal precedent". The constitution of the nation was symbolised by the Union flag and the contributory crosses of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick. There was also a display on the Dominion Parliaments which stemmed from the Westminster model, and was encircled by a quotation from the statute of Westminster. This

82. Banham and Hillier, pp. 97-98.

83. Work 25/21, The Director of Science to the Director-General, 1 May 1950.

section was dominated by the huge mural by Kenneth Rowntree which depicted twelve scenes from British history ranging from a Saxon 'mote' to the gaining of independence by India and Pakistan. There was also a display on Britain in International Government which outlined Britain's share in international organisations such as the United Nations Organisation, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, The International Labour Organisation, The Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Council of Europe.⁸⁴ The Structure, like the exhibits, remained deliberately simple, drawing only on the Modern Movement's basic methods of construction, and used only one shape, the rectangle. However, by using solid materials such as oak, marble, and steel in addition to luxurious wallpapers, and with its high degree of craftsmanship, this structure owed more to William Morris in its essence than to the Modern Movement. Its interiors broke every cardinal rule of good modern interior design and decoration, yet still managed to look uncluttered, unfussy and uniform.

The 'Homes and Gardens' pavilion, designed by Bronek Katz and R. Vaughan to accommodate an exhibition of a series of essays on the problems of homes and gardens, was the only other pavilion on the site whose contents were selected and designed by the architects. The primary constraint facing the architects was that the building had to be designed on a domestic scale, its interiors and exteriors had to look like a home that any of the visitors could and would live in. As a result of this factor the building's exterior was very simple with much more attention paid to interior design and

84. Ibid.

gardens layout. (See Fig. 31) The visitor's introduction to this section was prefaced by a small preliminary pavilion designed by Denis Clarke-Hall. It was a rectangular structure, with two end-walls composed of brick-work covered with a flint finish. The side walls were made from canvas stretched over square welded tubular steel frames, eight feet wide.⁸⁵ The canvas was colourfully patterned with double triangles that formed sharp diamond shapes. (See Fig. 32)

The Homes and Gardens pavilion consisted for the most part, of large dutch barns, made more interesting by its division into small enclosed courtyards which served as exhibition space for the Gardens section. The structure was a long rectangular building constructed in brick and Kentish ragstone, a substantial part of which was also clad with asbestos. The roof was made from tubular scaffolding which was then covered with asbestos roof decking and two layers of felt. The use of large canvas louvres gave the visitor yet another view of the site. (See Fig. 33)⁸⁶

On the inside of the pavilion, natural York stone was used on the floors and the ceiling was constructed with softwood. The deep space between the flat roof and the ceiling contained all the essential series needed to run the building, such as water, gas and electricity.⁸⁷ The interior design of the pavilion was not only inextricably linked to the demands of the theme but also to the realities of the time. The purpose of the pavilion was to inform

85. "The South Bank Exhibition", Architects Journal 113 (May 1951), p.676.

86. Ibid., p.674.

87. Ibid., p.674.

and educate; it was designed to inform the populace how best to live in flats and smaller houses (an architectural necessity after the War) and to provide them with new ideas from which they could draw their own details. The pavilion was divided into six subsections which displayed aspects of interior decoration and new household designs.

In the first section on the Child at Home, the child's needs were properly taken into account. The over-decorated nursery and miniature versions of the parents' rooms were exchanged for simplicity of style. The designers placed stress on furnishings that would grow with the child, and moreover they emphasised the necessity for accident-proof equipment, including in the display, some examples of safe heaters. (See Fig. 34)⁸⁸ The second section showed variations on the Dual Purpose Room, otherwise known as the Bed-sitter. (See Fig. 35) The aim of this section was to show how to create pleasant working and living surroundings within the minimum of space. The whole area was subdivided, with displays of a children's room which had adjustable bunk beds set at right angles, and easy to clean upholstered furniture. The Girl's room was designed on the assumption that the natural affinity of most young girls lay in the feminine pursuits of dressmaking, and as such, it possessed a full-length mirror and a fold-away iron. (See Fig. 36) The bed had a tray underneath it, in which the bed linen was stored during the day and the bed covers at night. The young Boy's room was partitioned by the use of a variety of floor materials: stripped

88. Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster, "The Festival is the Present", The Ideal Home Journal 63-64 (May 1951), p. 43.

oak was used for the living area, and P.V.C. tiles for the dressing and washing areas. (See Fig. 37)⁸⁹

The Old Lady's bed-sit had the minimum cooking facilities to prevent her from withdrawing altogether from family life. Her room was furnished with an updated version of the old-fashioned rocking chair in lighter materials and, for those who were confined to bed, the bed was designed with an upholstered headboard and collapsible arm rests. The Kitchens Section displayed the designers' creativity and colour sense. Their intention was to present the alternative kitchen, one in which the family could eat as well as cook, and this effect was achieved by zoning off the Living kitchen from the cooking and cleaning areas. The separation took the form of a textured room-high folding screen on runners; washable patterned spring blinds enclosed some shelves, while others were fitted behind cupboards. The kitchen showed how new materials, such as plastic, could be used by putting them on table tops, cupboard facings and on chair covers. In this section, the designers included a Rural Kitchen, set in a country home; it was envisaged with a heating unit in the centre of the room, as in medieval times. To make this display appear more realistic, a variety of traditional English woods were used. (See Figs. 38-41)⁹⁰

The Hobbies display area was also subdivided to show country pursuits and town activities: the Farmer had a special room created for his guns and trophies, while his wife had a room to display her embroidery and cases to house her glass and pewter collection; the

89. Ibid., pp. 43-44.

90. Ibid., p. 44.

Headmaster's study exhibited a novel type of lamp, known as the "Balancing Parrot", which could be attached onto the arms of chairs or onto the sides of tables, and in this setting the woman's room displayed floral decorations, traditional English pottery and most important of all her gardening implements.⁹¹ Home entertainments exhibited both the old and the new forms: television sets, radios, gramophones, musical instruments and home cinemas. The designers' conception of the Modern Parlour combined the nostalgia implicit in its name and the modern ideas on interior design. In their display, the best features of the Victorian Parlour were retained, such as china cabinets, nests of tables, and wing chairs. The treatment of these furnishings appeared to be rooted in modern design concepts; an illusion sustained by the new materials in which they were designed. (See Figs. 42-47)

The Gardens section of the exhibition was quite ingenious. It contributed not only to the designers' conception of gardens, but also to the general landscape of the Downstream area. Within the confines of the courtyards of the pavilion, there was a series of sunken gardens; the Herb garden designed by Peter Shephard consisted of a regular pattern of beds set within a square, surrounded by paving of various textures. (See Fig. 48)⁹² Formal gardens were made interesting by the arrangement of pebbles and broad flat squares of concrete which surrounded them. In addition to this, the designers used flower boxes and pots of various shapes and sizes which were placed indoors and outdoors. (See Fig. 49)

91. Ibid., p.46.

92. "The Exhibition as a Town Builder's Pattern Book", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p. 117.

The Homes and Gardens pavilion was clearly designed to introduce the people to good interior design. Its Gardening Section was highly influential; visitors were intrigued by the easy elegance of the little flower pots and window boxes, convenient to use especially in an urban setting. The interior showed off British craftsmanship and design, and many visitors felt compelled to go home and change their furnishings to fit in with the alternative designs they had seen. The designers' conception of interiors was, on examination, eclectic and lacking in originality, for while introducing good ideas on how to use space, they moved away from the elegantly clear, pure lines that had been pioneered in both wood and metal by Breuer, Aalto, and Mies Van der Rohe. Their furnishings, for example wallpapers and curtains, while colourful bore the hallmark of a revamped Modernist version of English chintz; the furniture was designed in the new materials such as aluminium and plastic, but was mainly for use in kitchens and in the children's rooms. The living room and parlour furniture used the new materials on the inside, while the exterior was upholstered in fabric and made to look like revisions of better Victorian pieces.

The Downstream Pavilions continued in this simple vein. The Telecinema, designed by Wells Coates, was the only other pavilion that was discernibly modern, with its innovative lobster claw shape. The feelings of charm and whimsicality were maintained by the Seaside section, the Sports section, the 1851 Centenary pavilion, a replica of Crystal Palace mounted on slim pilotis, and the old Shot Tower - all provided colour, gaiety, openness, and, moreover, a variety of views that fitted with the purpose of the site. The elegance and atmosphere of the Downstream section was

created primarily by the landscaping and the area was designed so that one moved from the enclosed piazza to the open space. The spatial concepts created by the landscaping provided different levels, allowing for alternative views of the site: cozy corners were designed where visitors could sit on Ernest Race's Antelope chairs and look at the scenery, the river, and the fine pieces of sculpture. This area's chief asset was the garden-scape: there was an abundance of floral work in boxes and huge circular pots, and miniature oriental gardens were created. In addition to the floral works, there were boulders and rocks combined with water and greenery to produce ornamental lakes which bordered some of the pavilions; the lighting was designed to produce an enchanted fairy tale effect. The simplicity and, in some cases, starkness of the pavilions enhanced the landscaping, and together they combined to maintain and heighten the elegance and enchantment of this portrayal on the People of Britain. (See Fig. 50)

There was little doubt on the opening day that the South Bank had achieved its aim: it generated excitement and praise from most quarters; the Beaverbrook press were, as was to be expected, muted in their praise, but regardless, the people were genuinely pleased and excited by the South Bank. The Daily Mirror, which had always supported the idea of holding the Festival, opened its review of the South Bank by stating:

Britain has done it. The Festival of Britain South Bank Exhibition is wonderful and exciting - a gay adventure as thrilling as the story of Britain that it unfolds. The Festival will be opened by the King on Thursday and on Friday morning he will open the Exhibition. In the afternoon the public will be admitted - and all nations in the world will judge. But Britain need not fear. For every man, woman and

child in Britain should feel proud of this great achievement of a first class advertisement for the nation's 'we fought back' effort.

The reviewer also wrote excitedly about the wondrous pavilions: the 'Dome of Discovery' sporting the biggest dome in the world; the 'Transport' pavilion whose front opened up like a Crystal Palace aeroplane hangar:

And everywhere are gardens of green and sparkling streams and fountains that have taken over from the mud and rubble of the South Bank. Flowers, gay and bright, paint the scene, and so do the multi-coloured murals telling the history of Britain, of the Commonwealth and of all aspects of the nation's life. There is an air of gaiety about this exhibition - and flags, score upon score of them, red and blue cafes, the pavilions, all are exciting just to look at. And inside the hall visitors from home and abroad alike will wonder. Britain has done a great job of work. ⁹³

In contrast, The Evening Standard wrote about the fact that the site was not yet fully ready for its opening, with some blank spaces being left in areas that were not on the royal route. "Many of the display windows are empty", the article continued, "displaying nothing but a strip of fluorescent lighting to the world. Piles of dust and empty packing cases may be seen pushed into unobtrusive corners. The 1851 Centenary Pavilion is closed: labels marked: WET PAINT hang inside". The article went on to say that the opening was rainy and wet and that the site was too crowded and cramped to cope with the large number of visitors in the wet weather. ⁹⁴

This sniping was fortunately the view of the minority. Harold Nicholson wrote of the wonders of the Exhibition with eloquence, for

93. The Daily Mirror, 1 May 1951.

94. The Evening Standard, 4 May 1951

the Spectator. He had been following the frenzied activity on the South Bank but had only expected to see on its opening "just an ordinary exhibition, just a repetition of the displays visited in distant years in Brussels or Paris, at Wembley or Earl's Court, but", he continued:

never shall I quite forget how suddenly it dawned upon me that this exhibition differs from all previous exhibitions because it has been conceived in high spirits. I had known that it was intended as the British Council is intended, to express the British way of life: I had foreseen that I should find exhibits illustrating the past history of our Island and the glories of our literature, industry and hygiene; I had been expected to be reminded of the solid virtues of the welfare state. What I had not counted on was that the master who has inspired this exhibition would have the imagination to see that it was the New Britain we wished to demonstrate not the old. I surveyed what for all of us will remain the centre of the Festival of Britain - the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon - surely the fattest and slimmest constructions ever devised by the ingenuity of man. From that moment my merriment expanded in ever-widening circles of surprise. I had expected the Exhibition to provide beauty and power: I had not expected it to be the very soul of wit.

The Exhibition with its "Alice in Wonderland" quality and its impression of innocence was he said "infinitely more delightful than that of any of the many exhibitions of the past". However even more importantly the evident youthfulness of the Exhibition was a triumph, for as Nicholson said "the whole world knows that we are a very venerable nation; what it needs to be told is that we are also extremely young."⁹⁵

"Everybody is aware", he continued, "that we are patient and enduring; the qualities that require emphasis are our ingenuity, our imagination and our resource". Thus the cry of the Exhibition

95. Harold Nicholson, "Marginal Comment", The Spectator 186-7 (11 May 1951), p. 616.

on the South Bank seemed to be:

"What sort of people", we shout across our old river, "do they think we are? I am glad, indeed, that we should show them that we are not all elderly people grumbling over the disappearance of our health and wealth; that we are not a pompous people with slow movements of mind; but, that we are alert, intent, ingenious, experimental, determined, and, in pursuit of our happiness; laughing each to each.

Thus he concluded that the South Bank, instead of being a monument to Britain's past greatness, as he had feared, was a manifestation of the Nation's present resilience:

Instead of becoming, as it might have become, a huge memorial chapel to past splendour it is a clamorous assertion of our infinite gifts of adaptability and resource. In place of the cemetery I had dreaded I found a maternity home, gay with pink and blue and resonant with cries and gurgles of the world that it is to be. I returned to the drab outside encouraged and entranced.⁹⁶

Visitors to the site, such as Margaret Sheppard Fidler and Dylan Thomas, described the site and the Exhibitions in glowing terms. Mrs Fidler said:

Later we visited the Exhibition very often, by day and in the evening, when it glistened with light in the darkness, for it was truly a living symbol of rejuvenation. Everyone felt the stirring of new hope, because all the buildings were touched with the magic of inspiration, all the exhibits were alive with novelty and ingenuity. They were full of life and colour and really suggested the rebirth of all our hopes. They were lighthearted too, and that is why even the most staid citizens began to dance in the open air by the Thames, in the very heart of our London that had suffered and survived so much. The names of the pavilions were magic - after Dunkirk and the Blitz - the Dome of Discovery and the Lion and Unicorn. Pubs, cafes, restaurants, with the Thames shimmering in sunlight or shining in the lights of London which had for so long been dark and secret, wounded and bleeding.

She concluded her praise for the South Bank by describing how on an evening visit to the Exhibition, whilst watching a glass blower making a series of beautiful glass swans, who paused after creating

96. Ibid., p. 616.

the most delightful objects, gave a slight bow in response to the applause and put a cigarette to his lips, twisted a spill of paper and looked for a light.

Then to our amazement, he touched his latest swan with the tip of the paper spill. The spill burst into flames and, to our enthusiastic applause, he nonchalantly lit his cigarette with great style. Somehow he epitomized the whole spirit of the Festival: effort carried out with seeming ease, the Phoenix proudly flaming from the ashes of war.⁹⁷

Dylan Thomas, with the best of Welsh robustness of expression painted a vivid picture of the pavilions and of the people going around the exhibition. Some people, he said:

Visit the twenty-two pavilions first, then glazed and crippled, windless, rudderless, and a little out of their minds, teeter, weeping, to one of the thirteen restaurants, cafes, bars and buffet to find it packed to the dazzlingly painted and, possibly. levitating doors.

Other people visit all thirteen restaurants, cafes, bars before attacking the pavilions, and rarely get further than the Dome of Discovery which they find confusing, full, as it is, of totem poles, real dogs in snow, locusts, stars, the sun, the moon, things bubbling, thunder and lightning machines, chemical and physical surprises. And some never return.

Most people who wish, at the beginning, anyway, to make sense of the Exhibition, follow the course indicated in the Official Guidebook - a series of conflicting arrows which lead many visitors who cannot understand these things slap-splash into the Thames - and work their way dutifully right through the Land of Britain, the Glaciers of twenty thousand years ago and the inferno of blown desert sand which is now Birmingham, or at last into the pavilion of Health - where perhaps, they stop for an envious moment at the sign that says Euthanasia - and on to the nettled and capstanned, bollarded, buoyed, seashelled, pebbly beautiful seaside of summer childhood gone.⁹⁸

97. Banham and Hillier, pp.168-169. Unfortunately for reasons of space one has had to be highly selective with the reminiscences of the public and participants on the Festival.
98. Dylan Thomas on the Festival. This piece by Thomas was given to me by the late Sir Huw Wheldon, when I went to interview him. It was part of his private papers on the Festival. It was to have been presented by Thomas on 19 June 1951 for the Welsh Home Service. However according to Sir Huw the recording never took place.

The people who managed to get around the South Bank's twenty-two pavilions would find, he said:

no braying pageantry, no taxidermal museum of culture, no cold and echoing inhuman hygienic barracks of technical information, no shoddily cajoling emporium of tasteless empire wares, but something very odd indeed, magical and parochial; a parish-pump made of flying glass and thistledown gauze, thin steel, a roly poly pudding full of luminous melodious bells, wheels, coils, engines and organs. Alembic and Jorums in a palace in thunderland sizzling with scientific witches' brews, a place of trains, bones, planes, ships, sheep, shapes, snipe, mobiles, marble, brass bands and cheese, a place painted regardless, and by hand.

He said that what everyone he knew and had observed seemed to like most about the Exhibition was its "gay absurd, irrelevant delighting imagination that flies and booms and sprints and trickles out of the whole bright boiling". He continued his review of the South Bank with highly colourful descriptions of some of the pavilions and concluded by evoking the emotions and images that this site aroused in most of the 8,455,836 people who visited the Exhibition:

Go to the South Bank first by day; the rest of your times at night. Sit at a Cafe' table in the night of musical lights, by the radiant river, the glittering Skylon above you rearing to be off, the lit pavilions, white, black and silver in sweeps of stone and feathery steel, transplendant round you as you sip and think: This is the first time I have every truly seen that London whose sweet Thames runs softly, that minstrel mermaid of a town, the water-streeted eight million headed village in a blaze, this is London, not the huge petty mis-shapen nightmare I used to know as I humdrummed along its graceless streets through fog and smoke and past the anonymous unhappy bodies lively as wet brollies. This Festival is London. The arches of the bridges leap into light; the moon clocks glow; the river sings; the harmonious pavilions are beautiful. And this is what London should always be like, till St. Paul's falls down and the sea slides over the Strand. 99

The excitement and emotion generated by the Exhibition was not confined to, or felt solely by the home population. The visitors from overseas, whom the Government and the Festival Organisation were so anxious to impress, were just as delighted as the British themselves. The Foreign Press, who were accommodated at the Press Club wrote very highly of the South Bank Exhibition and its architecture: From America the New York Times said:

It is clear that Britons shouldering the heavy load of a vast rearmament budget and drab restrictions will be stepping into another world as they enter the Exhibition. The emphasis on colour, architectural contrast, and often extreme futuristic design may well acquire a popularity with the people that will exceed best hopes.

The New Yorker said:

In spite of all the heckling the Festival has received on the grounds of expense, and suitability of the moment, the smallness of the main exhibition site, and so on, even the grumblers intend to turn out to see what's to be seen, and maybe cheer themselves up for the trials ahead by having a civilized good time.

From the Commonwealth, the Sydney Daily Telegraph of Australia wrote:

There's been no hidebound, blue-nosed, ultra conservative dead hand on this Festival planning. Youth has been given its head and the results they will achieve will make Festival visitors gasp. ... Despite those who clamour to have the whole affair scrapped; despite those who resent the Festival because its happening while the Labour Government is in power; despite those people who believe the world is too unsettled for such an event; there seems little doubt that the Festival....should be a roaring financial and prestige building success.

The Ottawa Citizen of Canada said:

As fellow members of the Commonwealth all Canadians take interest and pride in a Festival that is visible proof of Britain's astonishing recovery from war.

The European attitude to the Exhibition was expressed clearly by

Germany, Belgium and Portugal. The Berlin Volksblatt, said:

we are astonished that Britain, after two World Wars and in her present state of austerity, can still spare the energy to put on an exhibition of such all-embracing range.

The Reviewer of Le Soir, Brussels wrote:

No Exhibition (the South Bank) has even less resembled a commercial fair than this courageous corner of the Festival of Britain. It is an encyclopedia of science, of technique and of British institutions.

The Lisbon O Secuto Ilustrado wrote extravagantly that:

The great Exhibition of 1951 surpasses by far the one which took place a hundred years ago.....It will be the greatest that ever happened in England or indeed, in the world. It will demonstrate the economic vitality of the nation and their trust in the future¹⁰⁰

The visitors to the South Bank from America, the Commonwealth and Europe were as impressed as the foreign correspondents by the Exhibition. Dr. Krapf of Berne, Switzerland wrote that 'the Festival of Britain South Bank and the Gardens at Battersea were greatly appreciated. The Dome of Discovery and the Land of Britain were excellent, as were London's floodlighting and the general Festival air, Mr W. King of New York wrote:

The South Bank Exhibition is too abstract and 'above one's head' but I liked the standard of design and layout - it gives visitors confidence in Britain's future. Surely you won't want to demolish all the buildings at the end of the summer.

Mrs N.W. Newton of California said:

At the moment I can think of no improvements to your present excellent plan for the welfare of visitors, but I do wish to

100. Picture Post, 5 May 1951. Unfortunately I was unable to go through all the foreign newspapers and journals for their comments on the Festival. These comments as the footnote states were taken from the Picture Post Weekly.

thank you, and say how very enjoyable it has all been, especially the Festival buildings and layout. 101

Thus the comments continued, the foreign visitors had responded just as the Government had hoped they would. They left the South Bank believing that Britain, even if shorn of the magic of empire and divorced from its historical role as the leader on the world stage, had not only a role still to play in world affairs, but was going into its second stage of greatness. But this time the greatness and leadership would be, as Barry had hoped, based on culture and the humanities.

Thus most people, both foreign and British, came away from the South Bank, not only enchanted by the buildings and the exhibits, but believed (especially the British) that all they saw was new: they were encouraged to believe that it was a special innovation of the young British architects, in keeping with the original theme of the Festival. In a twinkling of an eye, a popular myth emerged: the architecture of the South Bank was perceived as inventive genius - and moreover, as being in a style that was novel and valuably British. This was, of course, largely untrue: to the trained eye, the pavilions of the South Bank, were built within the framework of international architectural exhibitions, in particular, those held in pre-war Europe, such as the Stockholm 1930. The designs and layout of the South Bank adhered closely to Gideon, Sert and Leger's thesis: the Nine Points of Monumentality (1943). The ninth point of this doctrine, which dealt with the type of materials to be used

101. Cab 124/1252, August 1951.

was observed in minute detail:

Modern materials and new techniques are at hand: light metal structure; curved laminated wooden arches; panels of different colours, textures and sizes, light elements like ceilings which can be suspended from big trusses covering practically unlimited areas.

Mobile elements can constantly vary the aspects of the buildings. These mobile elements, changing positions and casting different shadows when acted upon by wind or machinery can be the source of new architectural effects....Elements of nature such as trees, plants and water would complete the picture. 102

Every one of these points could be seen on the South Bank. The lack of originality on the site is further underlined by Misha Black, who was an architect on the project as well as a member of the Presentation Panel wrote of the Festival architecture.:

It remains true that there was little innovation, almost nothing on the South Bank had not previously been illustrated in the architectural magazines. Geodesic domes, random stone walling, laminated timber trusses, stretched canvas and glazed facades were already, in 1948, accepted idioms, the subject of study and argument in all architectural schools. Though the Skylon was new, the rest was the British issue of international architectural currency. 103

Many of the architects perceived their work for the Festival as a consolidation of ideas and a tying up of pre-1939 strands before embarking on post-1945 challenges.¹⁰⁴ The structures were seen as novel because they were now the preserve of the ordinary people, not the private pleasure of the cognoscenti. The Festival architects, middle class and radical, saw this as their opportunity to teach and expose the people to the principles of Modernism, but realising the potential for aversion to designs that were obviously alien, they dressed it up to appear British. The European masters

102. Banham and Hillier, p.192.

103. Ibid., p. 82.

104. Ibid., p. 70.

who were in England in 1951 for the CIAM Conference saw the picturesque South Bank layout simply as "an English version of their own corporate vision of the future city, perhaps even a welcome return of the British to the true path of Modern urbanism".¹⁰⁵ Most of them approved of the South Bank.

Le Corbusier, who came to the Festival thinking that Modernism was on the other side of the ocean, found a seriousness that was lacking in Europe. He was struck by the honesty of the exhibition and its unity of thought. He said of it: "the spirit in this exhibition is one of the nicely made materials, of well-constructed drawings with a judicious concordance of technique and imagination." For the architects and designers he had only praise; to him there were "people who have made observations and have been sensitive to them, they are poets; they have been able to see that nature is full of magnificent things placed by God at our disposal".¹⁰⁶ In spite of Le Corbusier's obvious delight, however, the Masters realised that the architecture was a version of what they had created twenty-one years before, though it was of course pleasing for them to see that the British had finally caught up, even if the structures were wrapped up in bunting and painted in extravagant colours.

However, despite the lack of revolutionary buildings or layout on the South Bank, it did make a contribution in the area of landscaping. This was, undoubtedly, its greater claim to originality and undeniable influence. The landscaping of the

105. Ibid., p.193.

106. British Broadcasting Corporation, "Impressions of London", Third Programme 19 July 1951.

Festival was omnipresent. The people saw it, walked on it and sat on it. Reyner Banham said:

It was probably more truly English and more genuinely innovating than much else that was more loudly praised at the time and more thoroughly forgotten since; almost alone of all that was in the Festival it has had, in concrete and growing reality, the kind of influence that the rest has had only in gentlemanly mythology.¹⁰⁷

The Festival style did influence the people - it was designed to have that effect. In the age of prosperity to come, the younger generation adopted the lightness in interior decoration and design which was first seen on the South Bank. Town planners and council officials for their part took the South Bank piazzas to every new town, along with the Race chairs and tables and Maria Sheppard's concrete flower pots: municipal gardening and layout was permanently changed. (See Fig. 51)

Beyond this, the South Bank as a whole did, as Hugh Casson explained twenty-five years after the Festival, give a lift to Architecture, for as important as the content was, it was the packaging that everyone remembered even though if it was not revolutionary. Architecture, for so long the Cinderella of the Arts, finally came into her own in Britain, becoming the Princess of the Festival. Furthermore the South Bank exhibition produced ideas that were, as has been stated, to be adopted by designers of Britain's environment. Those designers who were fortunate enough to work on the exhibition were given a chance to show what they were capable of when challenged, and the nation as a whole was shown in concrete terms the possibilities and opportunities hitherto

107. Banham and Hillier, pp.197-198.

undreamed of. The real achievement of the South Bank, as the Director of Architecture, Hugh Casson saw it:

was that it made people want things to be better and to believe that they could be. It was noticeably unboastful and nobody was taught to hate anyone. Beneath the flags and the fireworks it had, in retrospect, a spiritual quality which is good to remember. 108

108. Ibid., p. 81.

CHAPTER 7

THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN IN LONDON

The theme of the Festival of Britain, "Britain's Contribution to Civilization, Past, Present and Future, in the Arts, Science and Technology, and Industrial Design", was reflected in the multifariousⁱ tapestry of pavilions which graced the South Bank in 1951. The South Bank was transformed into the symbolic heart of the Festival wherein all the various aspects of the essence of Britain and of Britishness were unified. Murals and pieces of mobile and static sculpture were in abundance, and the displays themselves took many forms.

Science and Technology ^{were} ~~was~~ represented in the Dome of Discovery; Industrial Design was represented all over the site in the form of litter bins, lighting, lettering, seating and in the pavilions including the "Design Review" pavilion which grew out of the Council of Industrial Design's 'stocklist' for 1951.¹

However, the exposure these composite parts of the South Bank received was necessarily limited, largely because of the size of the site. As a result of this and also because the Festival was to be presented as a display which would involve the nation, unlike previous one-site exhibitions, additional exhibitions were spread out on sites in London and other parts of the country, mounted and organised by both the Festival Organisation and the appropriate constituent bodies. Therefore, subjects such as the Arts, Science and Technology which were treated in a limited manner on the South Bank, were enlarged and dealt with in more depth at separate locations. The additional Science and Technology Exhibition was

1. For further information on the Stocklist and the COID, see pp. 516-517.

housed at the Science Museum, South Kensington. Although already displayed in twenty-two pavilions on the South Bank, architecture was extended to include an additional 'Live' Exhibition at Lansbury, which was designed to show its more practical elements, such as, the on-going research into building methods. Heavy Engineering, which was shown as part of the Transport and Communications display, was given a separate exhibition at the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow. Agriculture, which was displayed within the Country Pavilion, was further highlighted in the 'Farm and Factory Exhibition' in Belfast, and the reclaiming of agricultural land was shown in practical form at the Dolhendre Hillside Farm Scheme in Wales. In addition to these exhibitions there was also the Battersea Park Festival Gardens and funfair; the Exhibition of Books at the Victoria and Albert Museum; the Sea Travelling Exhibition on board the converted aircraft carrier "Campania" consisting of a miniature South Bank Exhibition; and the Land Travelling Exhibition which highlighted aspects of industrial design and production seen at the Combined Exhibition at the South Bank.

THE SCIENCE EXHIBITION

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON

When the doors of the Science Exhibition opened, the visitors were confronted with a visually stimulating and educational display which the Science Council and its Director, Ian Cox, had planned. The aim was to rekindle enthusiasm in those who already possessed some knowledge of scientific matters as well as to inspire those who had little or no knowledge of the subject and therefore had to be initiated into the achievements the nation had made in this area. There was amazing potential in the field of scientific enterprise, endeavour and achievement. (See Fig. 52) In planning this exhibition, which had no precedent in Britain, the Science Council turned to the Exposition Universelle, Paris 1937, where for the first time science was displayed as a separate entity in its own pavilion - the Palais De La Decouverte (The Palace of Scientific Discovery). Developed from an idea by Jean Perrin, it was designed to illustrate how scientific discovery had played a part in everyday life and how it had contributed to civilization. The basic concept and style of Paris' Palais De La Decouverte was to be repeated in 1951 in the South Bank's Dome of Discovery and also at the Science Exhibition, South Kensington.

The Palais was subdivided into various sections embracing the conventional sciences such as Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Medicine and Microbiology. A special section was devoted to microbiology on account of the work carried out by French scientist Louis Pasteur. These various subjects were further

divided into smaller subsections which were displayed separately either in smaller halls, galleries, rooms or as a series of wallcharts and experiments.²

In a report commissioned by the Science Council, the workings of the Palais were explained very clearly, and it concluded by "recommending most strongly that every officer of the Festival of Britain Organisation who was responsible for a given scientific subject should personally visit the Palais and closely inspect his own field of interest". There were two reasons for this: the report reasoned that all those people from the continent who intended to visit the 1951 Exhibition and who were interested in scientific matters would have, in all probability, visited the Palais and would therefore be acquainted with the material presented there. It was vital that there should be no duplication of material at either the Dome of Discovery or the Science Exhibition in South Kensington. It was also essential that the Festival's scientific display be a credit to British scientific thought and display techniques, and the organisers should therefore be given the opportunity to improve upon the display and demonstration methods seen in Paris in 1937. The report explained that this would only be possible if the designers, in conjunction with the Scientific Officers, visited the Palais and examined the ideas and methods used there, because "the whole approach of the Palais was entirely different from the static science display as it was known to most people in the Science Museum, South Kensington". The fundamental

2. Work 25/50, Report by A.R. Michaelis for Science Council on The Palais De La Decouverte.

idea underlying the Palais was, the report continued, that it was a unit of scientific experiment being explained to the visitor. In each subsection a number of 'living experiments' were permanently displayed and a demonstrator was attached to the section to explain how the experiment was operated and to give further theoretical explanation if necessary. In addition to the 'live' experiments, certain 'automatic experiments' were displayed, each of which had a synchronised recorded explanation. In the optical section, for example, there was a series of approximately twelve of these automatic experiments following each other in logical sequence. The experiments were arranged so that when one ended the next one began and the visitor was able either to stand in front of one particular experiment and watch it repeated several times or follow each experiment through the sequence.³

The report explained that the Palais was an entirely flexible and living concept, with the various sections being continuously rearranged, new experiments added, out-of-date ones removed, and others altered by internal rearrangements when new discoveries made this necessary. In addition to the exhibition there was a modern cinema seating two hundred people, where scientific conferences and discourses were held twice a week at which both French and foreign scientists delivered lectures, hosting discussion periods afterwards. These lectures were printed and put on sale at the Palais. The subject matter of every section of the Paris Exhibition was highly visual, educational, novel and stimulating. For example, the Astronomy Section was reached by a stairway from ground level to

3. Ibid.

the first floor, arranged in such a way that the visitor felt as if he were climbing to an even higher level. In this section on the stars, the visitor was confronted by what the report described as one of the most outstanding displays of the Palais - a photograph, sixty feet long and fourteen feet high, of the Milky Way. This photograph was specially prepared by the University Observatory. Further on the visitor was able to look through two small telescopes mounted in the centre of the room, to see photographic representations of certain star formations. The Astronomy Section concluded with an interesting and amusing model of a space-ship. The Medicine Section showed a considerable number of both normal and abnormal organs. The report pointed out that such demonstrations had never been displayed in Britain outside the medical museums of teaching colleges. The Surgery Section was composed of drawings, surgical apparatus, chemicals, and photographs of operations. Blood transfusions were demonstrated by means of a small laboratory where the visitor could donate some of his blood to a blood bank. Another novel display was of an ophthalmological operation involving the removal of a cataract. This was demonstrated by the use of cardboard drawings of eyes, several layers deep, into which surgical instruments were inserted. This exhibit gave a very real three-dimensional impression of the series of steps required in this intricate operation which the visitor could easily follow. The report concluded by stating that "the whole idea of the Palais De La Decouverte is an inspiration to anyone

who is charged with the task of presenting science to the public".⁴

The theme of the Festival's Science Exhibition which was devised by Ian Cox and eight other members of the Science Directorate (Kenneth Chapman, Nigel Clayton, Arthur Garratt, James Lawrie, J.L.P. Macnair, Jan Read, S.A.A. Watkins and Sonia Withers) and ratified by the Science Council on 26 July 1949, was arrived at after the coverage of scientific matters on the South Bank was reviewed. Further it evolved after the Science Council had been forced to accept the enforced cut to its budget from £750,000 to £400,000 in July 1949, which was part of the overall reduction of the Festival budget ordered by the Chancellor.⁵ After reviewing the science at the South Bank, the theme convenors felt that the subjects which needed additional coverage at South Kensington were physics, chemistry, metallurgy, physiology and medicine. They decided that a common theme had to be developed to ensure a worthy demonstration of these disparate sciences in a single exhibition. Thus it was decided that the Exhibition would explore the "Advances made in the understanding of the structure of matter, living and dead, with special attention being given to the application of such knowledge to human and technological problems". The method adopted by the display designers, Brian Peake, Ronald Dickens and Eric Mansfield of translating this cumbersome theme into reality, was to

4. Ibid. When this report was presented, 14 June 1949, the Palais was still open to the public each weekday except Friday. It was thought possible for Festival Officers to visit the Palais over a weekend, each concentrating on a specific subject for two days.
5. WORK 25/50, Report by the Director of Science, 31 October 1950. See pp.186-188 for a discussion on cuts to the Festival budget.

present moving display techniques which told their story without the necessity for lengthy written descriptions, which they felt were always an obstacle to popular understanding of science. To this was added a few items of immediate human interest and appeal such as a pair of mechanical tortoises and Nimrod, a calculating machine with which visitors could play the game of Nim. Further, the circulation of the Exhibition was designed so that on either side of the main gangways through the Exhibition a narrative story was told in its simplest form; bays leading off these gangways contained displays for those members of the public who wished to satisfy their interest further.⁶ (See Fig. 53)

At the South Kensington Exhibition, the public was drawn into the complex world of scientific advancement with an Introductory Section which explained the nature of matter. This was followed by sections on: Atomic Structure; How Atoms Form Substances; Living Structures; 'Stop Press' which presented a summary of modern understanding of matter and life and the objectives of research and enquiry already in progress, and lastly the Science Cinema.⁷

On entering the Introductory Section to the Exhibition the visitor found himself in a gallery which was subdivided into five rooms: the first showed a familiar object - the graphite of a lead pencil at its natural size; the second room displayed the object enlarged to ten times its natural size, with its surroundings similarly enlarged; the third room showed the structure enlarged

6. Ibid.

7. Work 25/230, The 1951 Exhibition of Science South Kensington Festival of Britain Catalogue.

another one thousand times. The visitor was able to see that the graphite was made up of 'blocks' which did not fit together and thus, for the first time was able to appreciate that it was not solid. Further, at this magnification the visitor was able to see that light had a wave form. The fourth room showed the graphite enlarged yet another thousand times, opening out its structure to the extent that atoms appeared as clusters arranged in a regular three-dimensional pattern with nothing visible between them; and in the fifth room the graphite was enlarged a further thousand times to disclose the atoms proper structure. To put the visitors in the right frame of mind whilst viewing these increasingly novel exhibits, there were distinct changes from room to room: in acoustics, for the verbally recorded messages; the lighting decreased from room to room; and temperatures and smells varied. In addition to this, the designers managed to create an illusion of the gradual disappearance of all boundaries, i.e. the walls, ceilings and floors. These effects were designed to enhance the visitors impression of being in a new and different world.⁸

With the growing concern, interest and emphasis on the future, especially in the atomic sphere, the section dealing with atomic structure set out to explain in detail how such knowledge had been acquired and, apart from war, the uses to which it could be put. This section began with some diffraction experiments performed in mercury ripple tanks, with corresponding optical experiments alongside. This led on to the evidence for the existence of atoms

8. Work 25/44, The Science Exhibition at South Kensington, 19 January 1950, and Work 25/248, Science in the Festival.

which involved displays of elements such as rare gases - helium, neon, argon, krypton and xenon, and also specimens of elements including representations of radioactive elements. The theory of Brownian Movement was explained in this section, by means of a diagram designed by Gordon Andrews. The Kinetic theory of gases was demonstrated by experiments with ice, water and steam. This section was followed by displays illustrating the evidence for the existence of the electron: the display traced the history of its discovery by showing in colour the results of passing electricity through gases at various pressures until, when the pressure was decreased, the only glow was that from the glass of the tube itself. Following this section, there was a section devoted to positive ions and the conception of isotopes. The next subject to be covered was radioactivity, which introduced the Bohr atom with its quantum restriction on permitted orbits. The visitor was then initiated into the wave theory of structure and was given an explanation of Bohr orbits on wave mechanic theory. The story carried on to explain the application of x-rays to the study of atomic structure.⁹

From this general introduction to atomic structure, the emphasis shifted to the nucleus of the atom. The display began with Rutherford's concept of the nuclear atom, which was followed by further details of the scientist's work such as the artificial disintegration of nitrogen, "the first transmutation of the elements", and the postulation of the neutron. This was followed by

9. Work 25/44, The Science Exhibition at South Kensington, 19 January 1950, and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Science South Kensington Festival of Britain Catalogue.

demonstrations of the work of Cockroft, Walton and others on linear accelerators, which led on naturally to the conclusion of the Atomic Structure Section which dealt with nuclear fission where 'the splitting of the atom' was fully illustrated and explained. This last segment was designed to emphasize that nuclear fission offered the possibility of bettering man's condition, both by the production of great amounts of power and by the great gift to medical and allied research of relatively cheap radioactive and tracer materials. To further emphasise the positive uses of atomic energy, the visitor was shown ways in which it could be utilised, in electronics, medicine and the physical method of dating the age of the Earth.¹⁰

After the unfamiliarity and complexity of this section, the section on 'How Atoms Form Substances' brought the visitor back to reality, opening with a central display of the Earth's crust and the elements from which it is composed. It was linked to the previous section by way of a periodic table, and from this followed a detailed display of mineral substances, metals, organic substances and the uses to which all these substances could be put, including the manufacture of plastics, artificial and synthetic fibres (new textiles such as rayon, nylon, terylene and orlon - fabrics which are common-place today but were not so in 1951), the production of turbine blades, jet engines, light aircraft, alloys, stainless steel, alloys for conducting electricity, condenser tubes for ships,

10. Work 25/44, The Science Exhibition at South Kensington, 19 January 1950. The work of other scientists seen in this section included Dalton, Faraday, Bragg, Maxwell, Thomson, Prout, Soddy, Wilson and Chadwick.

and corrosion-resistant alloys for chemical and food plants. (See Fig. 54) The display of these developments not only highlighted the Festival's continuous concern with emphasising the future, but it also showed the Science Organiser's concern with initiating the public into their world by showing them how science affected and contributed to their everyday lives.¹¹

The planners of the Exhibition cleverly managed to educate and interest the public by introducing them to unfamiliar and difficult concepts in both sections by using objects with which they were more familiar and with which they could easily identify. This was especially evident in the sections explaining the everyday use of atomic energy, minerals and organic substances. The final segment of this section, which formed a bridge between this and the next section on the living structure, showed displays concerning modern knowledge of the chemistry of substances associated with life, starting with proteins, the basis of animal and vegetable life and leading on to enzymes. As an important contribution to British science, also displayed in this sequence was haemoglobin, the red oxygen carrying pigment in the blood's red corpuscles, as well as viruses and neglected cells.¹²

The 'Living Structure' section, like an advanced biology lesson, explained the structure of the living cell using numerous models. The centre-piece of this section was the structure of the living cell, largely discovered by contemporary work carried out in Britain. (See Fig. 55) It contained displays based on electro-

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

microscopic and phase-contrast studies of cells, and demonstrated amongst other things, the transplantation of nuclei from one cell to another; the behaviour of cells with nuclei, the locomotion of single-celled animals, and the structure of the cells of multicellular plants and animals. These aspects were displayed in the form of moving transparencies of, for example, trypanosome and liver cells. Also shown were cells of the apple tree, and of other types of trees and drosophila. The intricate subject area of chromosomes and genes was studied in this section with the aid of models of man, oak, mouse and drosophila, as well as a model of 'genes as characteristics'. Mutations and their causes were also investigated through models which showed three fundamental aspects; there were models of a cancer growth in comparison with a benign growth; examples of normal and mutated penicillin growths; two specimens of mice, one normal, the other mutated; and models of mutation effected by chemicals and radiation. Also investigated was morphogenesis and how the different parts of a complicated organism function by working together to produce co-ordinated results. This section was concluded, as previous ones, by the outlining of present day applications of the knowledge attained in this area, including the production of new race mould such as penicillin by chemical methods; cancer research, and the mechanism of inheritance such as that applied to plant and animal breeding.¹³

The penultimate section, 'Stop Press', dealt with "the modern understanding of matter and life" and contained exhibits relating to

13. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Science South Kensington Festival of Britain Catalogue.

important current research in all fields relevant to the exhibition's terms of reference and also indicating future trends in research. There were seven highly visual sections, the first one of which was entitled 'How We Know'. (See Fig. 56) This section opened with a sculpture group by A.W. Farmer entitled 'Man and his Growing Knowledge', which encapsulated the essence of this segment. There were three-dimensional diagrams of human sense organs, the human brain and nervous system, as well as photographs of the different parts of the brain. The other sections were 'the problem of life' (which was depicted on a mural 'The Problem of Life' by Peter Ibbetson) and showing electron micrographs, photomicrographs of the liver cell, diagrams of proteins, and crystal models of tyrosine and a albumin linked by a stretched peptide bond; a folded polypeptide chain and glycogen. The Computer Machine Section housed the computer Nimrod against which the visitor could pit his skills; Electrons in Crystals; Metal Structure; Cosmic Rays and the Universe, which showed in model form the formation of galaxies and stars from interstellar gas, the energy of stars and the formation of planets.¹⁴ (See Fig. 57)

The visitor's final port of call at this exhibition was the Science Cinema, where forty minute programmes were screened throughout each day. These programmes illustrated the three main applications of cinematography in science: as a research tool; as a method of teaching; and as a medium by which the findings of science could be clearly shown to the general public. The majority of these films were made in Britain and included: "Chemistry - The

14. Ibid.

Hydro-Carbon Story"; "Atomic Physics"; "Biology - Science Fights Cancer"; "Mites and Monsters"; "Cinema Helps Science"; "Mixed Chemistry, Colour, Plastics"; "The Discovery of Oxygen"; "Mixed Physics"; and "British Commonwealth Science".¹⁵ How successful the Science Exhibition at South Kensington was is open to question, for even though the planners tried hard to initiate the public into their world by demonstrating scientific theories with familiar objects and by devising some spectacular exhibits, the exhibition still seemed highly specialised and although this was not the intention, predominantly for those who had some definite basic knowledge or a predisposition toward scientific matters and inquiry. That the public were not as captivated by the Science Exhibition as they were by the South Bank, can be seen from the fact that during the first month of the Science Exhibition's opening from 4-31 May 1951, from 10.00 am to 10.00 pm weekdays and 2.00 to 10.00 pm on Sundays, the total attendance was 40,177. This comparatively poor turnout was not what the Science Exhibition planners had expected. Thus by the end of May, with the number of people attending the exhibition in the evening particularly small, it was evident that the attendance level would not reach assumed expectations. The Exhibition's management decided, therefore, with the permission of the Science Council and the Lord President, to close the Exhibition daily at 6.00 pm instead of 10.00 pm, from 4 June 1951, and there was

15. Ibid. and Work 25/3, Exhibition of Science Management Report, 12 October 1951.

a consequent reduction in staff.¹⁶ From its opening on 4 May 1951 to its close on 30 September 1951, 213,743 people visited the Exhibition.¹⁷ This attendance figure can be compared with that of the Palais from which, as we know, the exhibition planners received their ideas. The Palais opened in May 1937 and by the end of November that year it had been visited by two and a half million people, a daily average attendance during these seven months of 10,000 persons.¹⁸ Thus we can see that the figures at Paris 1937 were infinitely higher and were probably the kind of attendance figures that the Science Directorate in London had hoped for. Perhaps ultimately, the poor attendance at South Kensington was due to the fact that, as in the case of the 'Dome of Discovery' on the South Bank, the planners tried to 'cram' too much high-powered technical knowledge into one exhibition, which would really only interest the knowledgeable, and in attempting to do so, became rather 'heavy-handed' with the story they were attempting to tell. The reverse impression was created at Paris, for although serious scientific matters were demonstrated, one gets the impression that planners created exhibits that were, in most sections,

16. Work 25/3, Exhibition of Science Management Report for May and June, 12 October 1951. The Management Section further reported that although the Exhibition was much appreciated by the visitors, there had been criticisms that a number of working models and demonstration exhibits were out of order. The manager of the exhibition E. Swaine weakly defended this problem by stating that it had to be borne in mind that there were over two hundred working models and exhibits in the Exhibition and that it was very difficult to maintain them so that they were all working simultaneously especially for a long period.

17. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

18. Work 25/50, Report by A.R. Michaelis for the Science Council on the Palais De La Decouverte.

participatory in nature, thereby entertaining while educating. One gets the impression that in Paris in 1937 the visitor was encouraged to learn and thereby conquer, through participation. However, in London in 1951 he was lectured to, despite the protestations of the organisers to the contrary. A feeling of awe was induced rather than a feeling that this was a world for all to conquer and truly be a part of.

THE EXHIBITION OF ARCHITECTURE, TOWN PLANNING AND

BUILDING RESEARCH AT LANSBURY POPLAR

The 'Live Architecture' Exhibition which was situated on one hundred and twenty-four acres at Lansbury and was designed to house some 9,500 people was created by the Architecture Council to demonstrate the many possibilities inherent in good town planning, architecture and building. The redesigning of a complete neighbourhood would have been too large a project to facilitate a manageable exhibition, so it was decided to exhibit a cross-section of a neighbourhood which would be much more suitable in size yet still large enough to demonstrate satisfactorily how the proper planning of open spaces and buildings could ultimately shape the East End and perhaps later, other parts of London. (See Fig. 58) The Architecture Exhibition was composed of houses and flats, arranged in four sites - East site, Central site, North site, and West site - accommodating about 1,500 people in approximately four hundred dwellings, and providing associated services. The display opened with an exhibition enclosure, above which, towered a giant crane as a symbol of Britain's reconstruction programme. The enclosure contained temporary buildings; an Administration Block, the "Rosie Lee" Cafeteria, the "Gremlin Grange" and two exhibition pavilions.¹⁹

The "Gremlin Grange", as the name suggests, was a full-sized demonstration model displaying the many things which could go wrong

19. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Architecture Poplar Festival of Britain Catalogue

when scientific principles in building were ignored. (See Fig. 59)

The external structure of "Gremlin Grange" showed such faults as structural cracks, leaning walls, external plaster peeling, rising damp, and leaning chimney stacks. Internally there were smoking fireplaces, leaking tanks, cracks in the walls and poor artificial lighting. Each of the two pavilions concentrated on highlighting one aspect of architecture: one dealing with Building Research; the other with Town Planning. In the Building Research pavilion, it was shown how science could aid the building industry. The displays dealt with the problems of stability, rain penetration, heating, lighting, noise and maintenance. Following this there was a display of how the knowledge acquired in these areas could be successfully applied in the actual building process, and a further section showing how the faults demonstrated in "Gremlin Grange" could be avoided by scientific application. The Town Planning display was housed in a large tent on a frame of tubular steel scaffolding; it showed the scope of the principles of town planning and the need for new towns. The sections in the display illustrated the 'Battle for Land', 'The Needs of The People' and 'How Can These Needs Be Met', 'Work in Progress', and 'The Heart of The Town'.²⁰

Leaving the enclosure, the visitor entered the live part of the exhibition which consisted of houses, terraced and linked maisonettes, two churches (one Roman Catholic, one Protestant), schools, a shopping centre and market place, old people's homes, public houses and open spaces. Houses were constructed on four parts of the site: the East site (the largest in the exhibition),

20. Ibid.

the North site, the Central site and the West site.

The East site, designed by G.A. Jellicoe, consisted of flats, terraced houses and maisonettes, in a wide variety of sizes, totalling 166 dwellings in all. (See Fig. 60) The emphasis in this area was less on layout and more on interior planning. There were sixteen different type of plan with variations in each type. The houses were constructed of load-bearing bricks faced with London stock bricks; the roofs were covered with Welsh slates and the door surrounds were finished in reconstructed Clipsham stone. The windows were standard metal casements within wooden frames. The facades of all the buildings were uniform in character, thereby giving a feeling of unity. Within the housing section there were terraces of two-storey houses with their own gardens, comprising three bedrooms, a living-room, kitchen, bathroom and toilet and covered ways giving access to the gardens. (See Fig. 61) There were three-storey terrace houses, each with its own front garden and, like the two-storey houses, they had three bedrooms, a living-room, kitchen, bathroom and toilet. These houses were combined with one-roomed ground floor flats and, above them, three bedroomed maisonettes.²¹

Facing the Ricardo Street School were two connected blocks of four-storey dwellings, each consisting of two sets of maisonettes, one above the other, combined with a smaller number of one and two room flats. The upper dwellings were reached by means of an access balcony on the second floor. Each maisonette had between two and four bedrooms, a living-room, kitchen, bathroom and toilet etc. as

21. Ibid.

well as its own private garden and drying green. In Bygrove Street there was a three-storey block consisting of three bedroomed maisonettes with private gardens, above which were flats. The staircase to each pair of flats was located at the rear of the building and each flat consisted of two bedrooms, living-room, dining-room/kitchen, and like the others were provided with a garden. The living-rooms in all the dwellings were equipped with open smokeless fuel fires and immersion heaters were provided for use in the summer months. The bedrooms were heated by the provision of built-in electric panel fires. Provision was made for old people who could still manage by themselves in a two-storey building of one room flats. Each flat consisted of a bed-sitting-room, a kitchen and a combined bathroom and toilet; the upper floor flats had separate sun balconies on one side and an access balcony on the other. The gardens on the site were provided with seats situated in sheltered spots and were laid out with the older person specially in mind.²²

The housing on the North site, designed by Norman and Dawbarn, consisted of a continuous terrace of twenty-one dwellings in all with a public house set forward at one end. This structure was composed of load-bearing brick with dark plum-coloured brick facings to the top of the window level on the ground floor and mild stocks above this. The terrace was composed of three similar sections, each with an interesting arrangement of three flats over four maisonettes. The maisonettes had either three or four bedrooms with built-in cupboard space, a kitchen, dining-room, living-room and

22. Ibid.

bathroom. Each maisonette was provided with its own private gardens to front and rear, with access to the rear gardens being gained from the dining room. The two and three bedroomed flats, each with its own balcony, were set out in groups of three, access to each group provided by a rear staircase.²³

The houses on the Central site were designed by Bridgewater and Shepherd. They consisted of terraced and linked houses and blocks of flats, situated behind the Roman Catholic Church and the temporary Festival buildings. The structure was composed of load-bearing brick with yellow Uxbridge flint facing-bricks, and the roof was covered with asbestos cement slates. There were thirty flats in two irregularly shaped three-storey blocks, each having between one and four bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and a sun balcony with flower box. In addition to this, the flats were equipped with accessories we have since come to expect, but to the visitor in 1951, these flats must have seemed not only extremely modern and progressive, but the height of luxury. Accessories included: refuse disposal by chute; perambulator stores at the foot of each staircase, drying rooms with gas-heated cabinets in each block and three garages, and although separate gardens could not be provided, the surrounding area was landscaped around existing trees.²⁴

The twenty-seven houses on this part of the site were distributed in four terraces, three of them containing nineteen four-roomed, two-storey houses, the other containing eight linked houses of two storeys, each with its own garden. (See Fig. 62) In

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

the terraced houses the kitchens were situated to the front of the house to give direct access to the back door, dustbin and coal shed from the street without necessitating a tunnel passage through the house. The living-rooms in the linked houses ran the full depth of the building and were connected to the kitchen by a hatch, enabling one half of the room to be used as a dining area.²⁵

The dwellings on the second largest housing site in Lansbury, the West site, were designed by Sidney Howard, the LCC's housing architect, as a group of six-storey and three-storey flats with gardens and children's play spaces. (See Fig. 63) There were one hundred and fifty-eight flats, each having one to four rooms with kitchen, bathroom and separate toilet. Two of the smaller six-storey blocks were to be extended when the older houses facing Canton Street were demolished. All the structures were built with brick and externally faced with London stock brick. The six-storey blocks had low pitched roofs with brick parapets; the three-storey flats had purple slated roofs with gables and eaves; the six-storey flats were equipped with lifts large enough to carry perambulators. Most of the flats had sun balconies attached to the living-rooms as well as other modern conveniences including waste disposal chutes, laundry rooms, and cycle and perambulator storage rooms.²⁶ The flats were heated by means of a solid smokeless fuel fire with back-boiler to provide hot water and one bedroom of each flat was serviced by means of an electric panel fire. The surrounding open space was laid out with trees, grass, flowerbeds and pedestrian

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

walks and a well-equipped children's playground was also provided.

The other features in the Exhibition's ideal community were a shopping centre and market place, designed by Frederick Gibberd, which provided open spaces for the stalls of street traders and in order to avoid danger from traffic and congestion, was restricted to pedestrians only. (See Figs. 64 and 65) There were shops on two sides, set back beneath maisonettes and flats (which shop owners could rent from the LCC) to form arcades over the shopping precinct, thus affording shelter in bad weather. On the south side a covered market was provided for the sale of fish and meat, and along the southern boundary there was a landscaped garden where weary shoppers could take a restful break in congenial surroundings. The buildings were constructed mainly of London stock brick and dark red brick and reinforced concrete columns were used to carry the beams over the shops so that the load-bearing brick walls of the maisonettes above were adequately supported. The columns of the arcade's facade were faced with blue faience tiles, the roofs were composed of grey-green slate and the paved areas were of reconstructed stone in a variety of colours.²⁷

Three schools were designed for the site: the Ricardo Street Nursery and Primary Schools, designed by Architects Yorke, Rosenberg and Mardall; and the Cardinal Griffin Secondary School, designed by David Stokes. The Ricardo Street Nursery School which was custom-built to accommodate eighty children between the ages of two and five years, was a one-storey building laid out in an 'L' shape, structured to enclose a small courtyard. It had four playrooms, a

27. Ibid.

large cloakroom, a fully equipped kitchen and staff rooms and paved playing areas with sandpits, gardens and trees. (See Fig. 66) The Primary School, a completely separate building for children between the ages of five and eleven years, consisted of two narrow blocks erected side by side and joined by four bridges, thus making it possible to provide light airy classrooms with windows on both sides. The ground floor consisted of five classrooms for the infants, a large dining room to be shared by both the infants and juniors, a kitchen, entrance hall and the ground floor of the administration block. The first floor comprised eight classrooms for the juniors, a second assembly hall and a continuation of the administration block. The second floor of the building contained the caretaker's flat. Trees and gardens were provided as well as a paved playground.²⁸

The Catholic Cardinal Griffin Secondary School, a mixed school which would cater for 450 boys and girls between the ages of eleven and fifteen years, was set behind the Roman Catholic Church and served the high quota of Catholic children in the Poplar area. The school was built on two floors with its main entrance on the east side. Its facilities included a gymnasium, a dining room, kitchen, staff rooms, medical rooms, an assembly hall with stage, and classrooms.²⁹

When reviewed by the architectural press, the Architecture Exhibition at Lansbury did not receive the consistent level of praise that was bestowed upon the South Bank. For example,

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

J.M. Richards, the Editor of the influential Architectural Review, pronounced the Exhibition as "worthy but dull". The housing on the site was, in his opinion, "completely orthodox in construction" and the display lacked "refinement of modelling and the kind of rhythm that gives unity to a whole street facade while maintaining a human scale".³⁰ Many years after he had participated in this Exhibition, Frederick Gibberd wrote that:

compared with the Exhibition on the South Bank Lansbury was a pretty tame affair. Town planning and architecture, let alone building science, are not subjects of wild interest to the public and the site was very much out on a limb. In terms of architecture it was all too modest and lacking in exciting 'architectural statements' like the Dome of Discovery to attract the younger generation of Architects.³¹

In spite of this, however, Gibberd regarded Lansbury as immensely important, believing that everyone who was involved with the rebuilding of Britain was influenced by it. Furthermore he added that as an environment, it was bright, cheerful and human in scale, forming a contrast with its drab and derelict setting. In planning terms, it showed the advantages of comprehensive development, illustrating the way in which a variety of buildings could be arranged to form pleasant urban spaces and the creation and control of both traffic and pedestrianized shopping precincts.

30. J.M. Richards, "Lansbury", Architectural Review 110 (December 1951), pp. 361-3.

31. Banham and Hillier, A Tonic to the Nation, p. 141.

In Gibberd's estimation, perhaps the most important thing about Lansbury was its permanence:

It did not go ^{to} the breakers; even the vertical feature, the tower crane, went on to move many thousands of tons of building materials. It accelerated development enabling a start to be made on rebuilding the devastated East End. As soon as the exhibition was over it became a living organism and continues to be so; the houses are still homes and the market square still thrives as a social focus. The rest of the neighbourhood has since been rebuilt and the 'Live Architecture' is buried in a vast wilderness of tower blocks and slabs of every conceivable shape and size. Alas, the exhibition did not prove to be the pattern for Lansbury as a whole. Even though it has been cruelly neglected, the development still has an air of quiet distinction and, though it may be dated architecturally, it is a place with its own character: an intimate, friendly and human character, which planners and architects are now seeking to revive elsewhere.³²

32. Ibid, p. 141.

THE 1951 EXHIBITION OF BOOKS

As an essential part of the theme "The British Contribution to Civilization", the literature which had carried the English language and the British way of life to all parts of the world throughout the centuries was exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum in two galleries which were designed by Hulme Chadwick. The Exhibition was organised by the National Book League with the assistance of a grant of £32,000 from the Festival Office vote. The Book Exhibition was described in The Story of the Festival of Britain booklet as "perhaps the greatest collection of literary treasures ever shown in one place collected from national libraries and private collections".³³ This view was echoed by Alan Bott the representative of the National Book League Festival Committee. He said:

There has never been an Exhibition of books that compares with it. As much, I remember was said about the "1000 years of French Books" which the National Book League presented in 1948. Yes, but that was restricted to a hundred items in a small gallery where the display had to be formal and static.³⁴

Headed by the King and Queen, two hundred and forty organisations and private owners lent books ranging from the illuminated manuscript of the Benedictional of St Aetheold, to first editions of modern authors, as well as a manuscript of Boswell's "London Diary" lent for the occasion by Yale University.³⁵

33. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

34. Work 25/232, Alan Bott. The Festival Exhibition of Books, Victoria and Albert Museum.

35. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain, 1951.

As the galleries in the Victoria and Albert Museum had just been newly decorated, the Exhibition structures could not be fixed to the walls. Hulme Chadwick therefore had a rigid aluminium ceiling framework erected, thirty-five feet above the floor, which supported curving drapes of pleated casement cloth, thereby enclosing the two galleries. A backbone plan was used with fourteen bays opening off a central gangway at varying angles to enable the subject titles for each section to be picked out at the entrance of the Exhibition.³⁶ The Exhibition displayed eight hundred books in first editions from Chaucer to modern books of 1951, together with illustrative material such as portraits, prints and manuscript pages. These books were arranged along the fourteen aisles which collectively represented British Thought and Character and were concerned respectively with: The Venturer; The Thinker; The Spectator; The Divine; The Artist; The Londoner; The Countryman; The Poet; The Playwright; The Scientist and the Inventor; The Story-teller; The Historian; The Free Citizen; The Sportsman; and Uncommon People.

There were also displays showing examples of British printing, illustration and binding. The section on printing displayed the work by Caxton and Baskerville, and books from the Kelmscott, Ashendene, Doves and Nonesuch Presses. There was also a separate section of books written for children from the seventeenth century to the modern books for children written in 1951. This display was

36. "Festival of Britain Exhibition Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951) p.199. The Architectural Review cites ten bays, but the official story of the Festival of Britain cites fourteen and I am using this as a guide, since it was written after the Festival and was the official record of the Festival of Britain.

highlighted by a special attraction which took the form of a colourful peepshow - panorama, and 'magic' books with illustrated pages turning 'by themselves'.³⁷

The Organisers were extremely satisfied with this highly-colourful exhibition which 63,132 people visited. Their satisfaction stemmed not just from the excellent diversity of material presented which included: Caxton's first printings in the English language (including his "Canterbury Tales" and "Morte D'Arthur"); the "Coverdale Bible"; the First Quartos of 'Hamlet' and "Richard the Second", with the first folio of Shakespeare; Francis Bacon's "Essayes" (1597); Milton's "Paradise Lost" (1667); Newton's "Principia Mathematica" (1687); "The Temple of Flora"; Gould's "Humming Birds"; Gray's "Elegy"; Boswell's "London Journal"; Shelley's "Ode to the Westwind"; and leaves from the first draft of "Origin of the Species". From what Alan Bott described as the "breath-taking impact" that came from showing "the sum-total of what a race has thought and recorded through its poets, philosophers, playwrights, storytellers, venturers, historians, scientists, free citizens, illustrators and the rest", the effect of the Exhibition was "of an oratorio unmatched in eloquence", which would "inspire many and convert some to faith in what looked like a dim future".³⁸

37. Work 25/232, Book Exhibitions in the Festival of Britain 1951.

38. Ibid., and Alan Bott, The Festival Exhibition of Books, Victoria and Albert Museum.

THE PLEASURE GARDENS AT BATTERSEA PARK

From the commencement of planning towards the Festival in 1948, the Festival Organisation wanted to stage a funfair as part of the Festivities. They did not want a fair which only had the usual dodgem cars and similar attractions, they wished to create in the centre of London a permanent amenity comparable to the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, the eighteenth century gardens at Vauxhall and Ranelagh.³⁹ The Gardens they envisaged would hark back to a period when elegance was the by-word and fun could be had without the intrusion of vulgarity. Furthermore, the Gardens would be for everyone, of every age, and from all walks of life. Thus, from the excitement of the South Bank, and the highbrow displays at the Science, Architectural and Book Exhibitions, the visitor would be able to relax and unwind in the Battersea Park Pleasure Gardens, experiencing both the elegant charm of their surroundings and the heady fun of the fair. The visitors could dance in James Gardner's tented dance pavilion, listen to music, go to the theatre to watch ballets, revues, or marionettes; they could eat at a choice of indoor and outdoor restaurants; ride the 'big dipper', or just sit and appreciate the setting of the Gardens with its flowers, fanciful architecture, ornamental lakes and fountains, all of which were designed to bring surprise, refreshment and enchantment.⁴⁰ (See Fig. 67).

39. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951.

40. Ibid.

The job of designing the Gardens was contested by two men, Oliver Messel, the theatre designer, and James Gardner, a member of the Design Panel working with Hugh Casson on the Downstream Section of the South Bank. The latter had begun his career as a jewellery designer for Cartier and then moved to advertising. During the war he was a designer of camouflage and from there he moved into what he described as the "exhibition racket", designing the 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition, 1946. According to Gardner's account of his appointment, Barry wanted Messel for the job, perhaps feeling that he was better suited to the club-like atmosphere at Festival Headquarters. Gardner said that his Willesden Junction background and occasional "slips from grace" troubled Barry whom he described as a Garrick Clubman. Gardner concluded that Messel was more desirable because he came from Barry's "world".⁴¹

Although the layout was already planned, Barry decided to mount a competition between the two men, allowing the results to be presented before the Board in order for a choice to be made. The date for the presentation arrived and Messel showed his sketches of "white pavilions peeping through a tapestry of trees, elegant Canaletto-style figures grouped in sun-dappled glades, even a gondola on the lake". The perspectives of these sketches had been done for Messel by Gardner. Gardner was interviewed after Messel, concentrating his remarks mainly to Sir Henry French, the Chairman, he recalled the scene:

I decided that the way to win was to look practical. I described the features introduced to give pleasure, but then I went on to discuss the key practical considerations, car-parking, circulation, cost and timing - the last item

41. James Gardner, 'Elephants in the Attic', p.74.

being critical as there we were after starting eighteen months late, discussing a revision of the layout. With that I won the day, I suspect, much to the chagrin of Gerald Barry who was sitting next to French.⁴²

Having won the contest, Gardner and his team which included Osbert Lancaster, John Piper, Hugh Casson, Ferdinand Bellan, Guy Sheppard, Hans Fisdall, Rowland Emmett, Fred Muller and Lewitt-Him, set about creating on their allotted thirty-seven acre section of Battersea Park a magical palladian atmosphere with pavilions, arcades, towers and pagodas that echoed the fantasies and gaieties of the late eighteenth century. This was not an easy task for these designers, plagued as they were by inclement weather, poor construction management, strikes, and financial problems within the Company.⁴³

Despite these difficulties, however, they managed to fulfill Barry's wish that the Gardens were to be a place where people could come from the highbrow cerebral atmosphere of the other Festival Exhibitions to relax and have fun - elegant fun - and when it finally opened on 28 May 1951, without ceremony, three weeks later than all the other Festival exhibitions, it was pronounced a great success by the architectural reviews and visitors alike. Dr Krapf of Berne, Switzerland, said that the Gardens at Battersea Park were greatly appreciated and should be kept on as a permanent attraction in London.⁴⁴ Christopher Hussey of Country Life wrote of the Gardens:

Mr Gerald Barry (upon whom a Knighthood was conferred in the Birthday Honours) can be congratulated on the quality and taste of the Gardens. They are lighthearted, gay, charming and imaginative without a lapse (that I could see) into the

42. Ibid., p. 75

43. See pp. 256-8 for a discussion of the problems at Battersea.

44. Cab 124/1252, Comments about the Festival of Britain, August 1951

tawdry or merely funny, and with little that one could criticize as dull. 45

Gasping in delight at what he saw, Abner wrote in the Building and Architect News that:

the Pleasure Gardens must become a permanent feature of the London scene. Let us make quite certain that the authorities are made to learn their lesson a very large number of designers had a hand in the Festival Gardens and to one and all I raise my hat. I shall go again, often, but whatever else happens, the Gardens must remain. 46

On the Eastern side, the Gardens could be approached from the river by water-bus where the visitors were deposited at one of three gaily decorated piers, made from Bailey Bridges, leading to the Funfair. The Western half of the area was devoted to the Gardens, which could be defined as a social centre, with its many promenades, restaurants and entertainments. (See Fig. 68) The prominent feature in this area was Piper and Lancaster's 'Main Vista', a two hundred and fifty yard long series of pavilions, arcades, towers, pagodas, terraces, gardens and fountains, providing the visitor with a spectacular view. (See Figs. 69 and 70) Decorated in bright colours, the pavilions and other structures exuded modern wit and a pastiche of styles; which evoked many periods, the follies and temples built in parks by eighteenth century gentlemen; the Regency Period as seen in Brighton to this day; and both Gothic and Chinese styles. At the far end of the vista there was a lacy screen of the nineteenth century Crystal Palace which was backed by trees, and in front of which there was a platform surrounded by a lake. From here

45. Christopher Hussey, "The Festival Gardens", Country Life CIX (June 1951), p. 367.

46. Abner, "Round the Battersea Pleasure Gardens with Abner", Architect and Building News 199, (June 1951), pp. 696-7, 701

the visitor watched the brilliant firework displays which graced the London skyline nightly during the Festival. The visitor left this area by descending a stairway which was flanked on either side by arcades of well stocked shops, decorated with huge wicker lanterns and ending with pavilions surmounted by life-size figures modelled in wickerwork. From here the visitor could perhaps stop in the Crescent Restaurant, one of the five restaurants on the site, or in one of the three public houses. The next feature to capture the imagination was the Dance Pavilion, designed by James Gardner. (See Fig. 71) Of this structure he said:

After a visit to a Scandinavian Pleasure Garden, I designed a large circular dance hall which turned out to be the biggest single-pole tent ever erected in the world and which John Edgington, the top tent-maker, said just wasn't practical - true in a way, as I had made the canvas top cantaloupe (like a melon). So I went to their competitors, Benjamin Edgington who made it work.

The tent was of brown and yellow striped canvas, mounted above low movable walls of white trellis; within this tent there was another inner tent. Instead of the more usual guy ropes, the main tent was supported on a steel pole with vertical lattice girder stays set in concrete with four main guys supporting the centre pole. The dance floor was a standard 'floating' wooden floor. It turned out, however, as Gardner recalled:

that the English were too shy to dance in public, so professional dancers had to be employed to get the people up from their seats, after this the dance floor was a great success.⁴⁷

Other features which further heightened the fantasy of the Garden complex, were the Tree Walk and the Far Tottering and Oyster

47. Banham and Hillier, pp. 121-122.

Creek Railway Station, designed respectively by Bruce Angrave and Rowland Emmett. The Walk took the visitor from ground level right up into the trees; it ran a distance of four hundred feet, linking seven trees and a pylon, and was composed of a series of Bailey Bridge-like gangways which at their meeting point with the trees, branched out into small observation platforms where the visitor could pause to enjoy the view. Situated at either end of the walk there were two towers, each between thirty and thirty-five feet in height; the entrance tower was topped by a conical 'Whether House' standing approximately eight feet high, with four open porches and an ogival roof. In and out of the porches moved Angrave's three feet high carved wooden figures of a farmer, a stout lady, a slim lady and a businessman. They were set looking suspiciously upwards to the sky, wondering what the weather was to be - hence the name 'the Whether House'. Further along the Tree Walk the visitor encountered 'Branchville', a row of houses, shops and offices built out on the limb of the tree. One of these houses drooped over, hanging down, reminiscent of the droopy watch in Salvador Dali's painting "Persistence of Memory". Underneath the branch of 'Branchville', ran the Underbranch Railway which connected one end of the town to the other, but the pièce de résistance of the Walk was the suspended forty foot long fiery hanging dragon. Angrave's dragon, based on the best Chinese models, had bared teeth framed between curling tusks, barbed horns and a lizard-like serpentine body with large bat wings and outspread talons. (See Fig. 72) It was built on a steel frame covered with spray-on plastic (normally used for cocooning battleships). Chains of caterpillars, snails, squirrels and ladybirds, ran up and down the trees. The exit tower

of the walk was surmounted by a birdcage filled with fluttering metal birds, some of which were pouring out of an open door and soaring upwards into the sky.⁴⁸

The Far Tottering and Oyster Creek Railway was designed by Rowland Emmett. Drawing exclusively for Punch, he had featured the goings-on of the Far Twittering and Oyster Creek Railway, "a courageous though desperate system with its locomotives becoming more and more snuffling and long-funnelled", and its bemused personnel being "too late for the past and too early for the future". Emmett received a letter from Gardner asking him if he could design his Punch railway for conveying passengers around the Exhibition, and thus, on a five hundred yard line, three locomotives, the 'Neptune 10', 'Nellie' and 'Wild Goose', ran along the southern boundary of the Gardens, with a station at either end, a tunnel, a serpentine cutting (which became Twittering Wood) and a bridge. Harry Barlow of Southport, a specialist in the building of miniature passenger railways (used at various resorts in the north of England) provided the trains with diesel-electric powered frames onto which were to be erected the hand-beaten engines designed by Emmett. Neptune 10 was a nautical engine for fishermen and smugglers, with a brass-bound mahogany slatted boiler and a rum barrel cylinder connected to paddle wheels; Wild Goose had a funnel with flapping wings, a pink, green and yellow balloon body, retained by a white rope net, and a flywheel with tablespoons for turbine blades. "From spidery ink squiggles, Nellie emerged into three

48. Ibid., p.128.

glorious dimensions of beaten copper and polished mahogany".⁴⁹
(See Figs. 73 and 74)

The stations at either end of the line were built with weathered brick, flint and old weatherworn planking. The main station at the western end of the line, Far Tottering, was equipped with a small separate booking-office and a long platform which accepted trains on either side. The station contained some interesting touches such as: a luggage crane based on a wooden roller mangle from which hung a wealth of Gladstone leather bags and silk hat boxes; a wicker birdcage containing a depressed seagull consigned to Oyster Creek, and a water tower comprising an old hip-bath which was poised aloft on the branches of a tree growing out of a striped lamp-post, bearing the sign 'Engine Water - Bathing Prohibited'. In addition to these features, the station carried more than its fair share of 'do not' notices: "do not tease the engines"; "do not feed the bats"; (this one was placed at the tunnel entrance); "passengers must not cross here, so there!"; and finally, "it is forbidden". All these strictures carried the normal railway penalty of forty shillings.⁵⁰ At the other side of the town, the Oyster Creek Station had a booking-office in the style of an old Cornish net loft, hung with ancient pilchard nets and a multitude of green glass net-floats. The platform canopy and the roof-ridge were

49. Ibid., p.125. Emett's railway was to be called "Far Twittering and Oyster Creek Branch Railway". However when this was made public in a preliminary announcement a communication was received from the philosopher and radio comedian Gillie Potter mentioning that there was a village called Little Twittering in his area. The railway name was changed therefore to Far Tottering. Banham and Hillier, pp. 125-6.

50. Ibid., p.126.

edged with giant scallop shells. Next to the booking office was a weather predicting machine encased in glass: varnished skipping-rope handles, advancing and retreating along their string, turned the weather dial and were controlled by the expansion of a measure of R. White's gingerbeer tightly sealed in a marbled-glass bottle. Like Far Tottering, Oyster Creek had its share of peculiar warning signs. Along the platform a large lobster hung moodily from a signal-arm which stated "warning, when red lobster is hoisted, tide is out". A little further along, there was a fire-engine flanked by a red-painted, glass fronted case with a large chained hammer hanging from it. Inside the case, there was a wad of crumpled newspaper, two sticks of firewood, three lumps of coal and a box of matches. The accompanying notice said "in case of fire, break glass, remove contents and light fire in fire-engine".⁵¹ On opening day, the railway was besieged and the trains, including a spare, never stopped - this went on throughout the Gardens operation. The railway also generated world-wide interest and, second only to Skylon, it managed to get newspaper and magazine features from fifty-eight countries.⁵² In all this time of activity, disaster only once befell the trains. On 11 July at 7.15 pm, there was a collision on a single line between Wild Goose and Nellie, one woman was killed - probably from shock or heart failure as no external injuries could be found - twelve other persons suffered minor injuries.⁵³

Apart from these extraordinary features, the Gardens included

51. Ibid., p. 126.

52. Ibid., p. 127.

53. Cab 124/1303, Joseph to Lidderdale, 23 July 1951.

a beer garden, boating pool, children's zoo and pet corner, two theatres, one of which was open-air and permanent, the obligatory funfair, as well as acrobats, Nell Gwyn Orange Girls, a Punch and Judy Theatre, a mechanical elephant and a Festival Band.

When initially planned the funfair was to be unlike any other existing funfair in the country, novel, if only by virtue of most of its features and equipment having been purchased from the United States. It had come to the attention of the Officers of the Company that no new funfair features had been imported into Britain for over ten years and on his own initiative and at his own expense, Major Joseph, Chairman of the NAC, and a Member of the Board, travelled throughout the country looking at existing features which might be new to London. He was able to find some which could be used but reported to the Board that he was strongly of the opinion that the funfair in Battersea Park would lack attractiveness and appeal unless features were introduced which had never before been seen in this country. The Board, willing their venture to success, naturally agreed with Joseph's view and decided that it was not merely desirable, but essential, that the Gardens should have new features. On the strength of this, the Board decided that an application should be made to the Treasury for up to £30,000 of dollars (i.e. \$84,000) to enable new features to be purchased from America; if granted, they proposed that Joseph and Hill of the Showman's Guild, should go to America as agents of the Company to purchase new equipment for the Gardens. Surprisingly, the Treasury agreed to the Company's request and informed Morrison of their decision. In the event, Hill was unfortunately unable to go to America, so Joseph was to be sent on his own, at the Company's

expense. Having made this decision, the Board, attempting to look practical, took this matter a step further; they suggested that Joseph should be accompanied to America by large funfair operators, (at their own expense) who might be interested in buying equipment from America. The Company would in the first instance purchase the equipment and the operators would then buy it from the Company at cost price plus transport costs, without having to pay import duty or purchase tax. If the equipment was bought in this manner, the Company would make the condition that the equipment would be operated in the Gardens on terms that would not only make the Company the normal profit for renting space, but would enable it to recoup the cost of the equipment's import duty and purchase tax. This arrangement was arrived at by the Company because it was advised that the funfair operators objected in principle to the purchase tax and import duty but were willing to pay the same amount in another form, for example, by paying the Company an additional percentage on takings over and above that already agreed.⁵⁴

On 16 November 1950, Joseph and four large funfair operators left for America, Iles, representing Dreamland in Margate and Bellevue in Manchester; Makin representing Merrie England, Ramsgate; and Moorhouse and Griffiths representing Kursaal, Southend-on-Sea. The Company had managed to keep this arrangement quite private, a measure which, Lidderdale told Nicholson, was very necessary:

All concerned should be given a special warning not to make it public. It would be very unfortunate, just when we are at last beginning to get across the serious purpose of the Festival, to have attention focused on this side line.⁵⁵

54. Cab 124/1302, Funfair Equipment (no date given).

55. Cab 124/1302, Lidderdale to Nicholson, 7 October 1950

As in most things concerning the Festival, however, secrecy was not maintained. The Daily Express of 13 November 1950 stated, "Nearly \$90,000 (£30,000) may be spent on funfair equipment for the Festival". Naturally the article maintained that contrary to the Company's claims that the equipment could not be obtained in the country, there were about four or five big manufacturers capable of giving the Company the rides it wanted, but had never been approached.⁵⁶ On the same day, The Daily Graphic carried an article about the dollar purchases quoting Mr Teeling, (Conservative MP for Pavilion, Brighton) as intending to question Morrison in the Commons as to why British firms had not been given priority, and stating that:

the Festival is supposed to show people from overseas what Britain can do, but it seems we are spending a great deal of money to show what America, Germany and Denmark can do".⁵⁷

The Daily Mail of 13 November 1950 said that the Company was asking the Government for \$100,000 to buy a new kind of roundabout, and then went on to outline the questions Teeling would be putting to Morrison. On 15 November 1950 a telegram was sent to the Ministry of Food from the Nottinghamshire housewives, which asked, "if no dollars available for purchasing eggs and other food, why use same for funfair equipment - should be all British - we protest strongly".⁵⁸

Despite the adverse criticism, the plan to purchase equipment with dollars was not abandoned. By 2 February 1951, Campbell of the

56. The Daily Express, 13 November 1950.

57. The Daily Graphic, 13 November 1950.

58. Cab 124/1302, Telegram to Minister of Food from Nottingham housewives, 14 November 1950.

Festival Office wrote to Stephenson of the Treasury informing him that purchases amounting to \$43,608 had been made and further dollars would be spent on shipment and insurance.⁵⁹

According to Gwendoline Willis, a visitor to the Gardens, the funfair was "a mad whirl of merry-go-rounds of all kinds and traditional side-shows of a fair". Her particular favourite was 'the Water Splash', a feature with "half a dozen cars which ascended a steep ramp circled on the level at the top, and then descended a slope at ever-increasing speed to splash down in a large pool of water!" sending up a spray which she described as exhilarating. There was also a 'Crazy House' in the funfair which she described as "leaning drunkenly to one side in a rather endearing manner". This feature brought about much hilarity as people encountered incongruities and absurdities - such as cobweb curtains - not usually associated with a house.⁶⁰

In spite of all the organisational and management difficulties during the early planning of the Gardens, they turned out to be an enchanting, stimulating and exciting place to be. The people absolutely loved the Gardens, as did the gentleman who ran the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, who James Gardner invited over to see the Festival Gardens.:

He was thrilled to bits with it and wanted to know why the people were so self effacing in Britain, because it was a marvellous garden, better than anything they had in Denmark, and as such ought to be kept.

59. Cab 124/1303, Campbell to Stevenson, 2 February 1951. The equipment bought was: Flyo Plane costing \$10,096; Bubble-Bounce - \$15,600; Hurricane - \$11,500; Bazooka Cannon - £1,000; Pressure Gun Gauge - \$2,412; and Skywheel (for which there were drawings for manufacture in Britain) at \$3,000.

60. Banham and Hillier, p. 181.

The Gardens gave the people pleasure, removing them from their drab surroundings, and as Gardner would say in 1976, it added "a moment of dreamworld into a lot of peoples lives". ⁶¹

61. Ibid., pp 122-124

CHAPTER 8

THE PARTICIPATION OF THE REST OF THE NATION

THE FESTIVAL IN THE TOWNS AND CITIES

From the inauguration of the Festival of Britain, one of the earliest expressed intentions of the sponsors and the planners was that it should fulfil the implication of its title by becoming, without doubt, a show which would be experienced by the whole nation. To this end, the Festival Organisation devised a tripartite approach to the problem of the spreading of the Festival message: they organised the mounting of two travelling exhibitions, one by land, the other by sea which, combined, visited fourteen cities throughout the United Kingdom; secondly, the regional committees of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were created so that Festival events and exhibitions could be mounted in these three major parts of the country; and finally, the Festival Organisation, through directives to and meetings with the heads of local authorities in England and Wales, initiated projects that could be carried out by the local authorities for 1951.¹ This approach, combined with the necessity of locating the Festival Exhibitions in various parts of London, ultimately gave the Festival a distinctive quality from the usual static, one-location national and international exhibitions. The Festival of Britain was not solely the South Bank which was admittedly its outward symbol, the beacon the people could follow - the Festival was, the South Bank combined with the other London exhibitions, as well as the travelling exhibitions which told aspects

1. For further discussion of this tripartite approach see pp. 55-56 on the regional councils, and pp. 143-7, 152-7, on the travelling exhibitions and the 'approach to the country'.

aspects of the South Bank story, and the regional and local activities. Each of these exhibitions had its own identity and life. Inextricably connected to the visual heart of the Festival at the South Bank, each part was essential to the unique national effort that made the Festival of Britain 1951.

THE TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

The Land Travelling exhibition was constructed to display a smaller version of the "People of Britain section" of the South Bank, with emphasis on industrial design, due to its visits to four Midland towns - Leeds, Nottingham, Birmingham and Manchester.² The display covered an area of 35,000 square feet, making it the world's biggest transportable covered exhibition ever to be constructed. The structure which transported this display, designed by Richard Levin, was constructed from welded tubular steel which supported a canvas covering. The entrance facade, made from steel and plastic, was 120 ft. long and 50 ft. high and was faced with laminated and translucent plastic.³ (See Fig. 75) At the entrance there was a group of plaster statues representing industry, communications and effort. The lighting for the exhibition was provided by twenty-one ex-naval, red, white and blue search lights, of 40 million candle power. The display contained 3,000 exhibits ranging from aircraft engines to ladies brooches, and was transported (packed, crated and guarded in transit) on eighty 60 ft. long articulated lorries which made sixty journeys, or ten round trips each to the sites to convey the whole exhibition. Thus with military precision for which the Festival Organisation showed a

2. Banham and Hillier, A Tonic to the Nation, p.148. For the initial discussion on the Land Travelling Exhibition and F.S. "Campania" see pp. 143-7. Also for the dates of the visits to these towns see p. 274.
3. "Festival of Britain Exhibition Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp.197-199.

talent, the exhibits were despatched to each site in the right order, and on time for erection.⁴ The Exhibition was housed in Manchester (the City Hall) and Birmingham (the Bingley Hall), in existing structures. In Leeds and Nottingham it was housed in tented structures specially erected for the purpose.⁵

Travelling as it was to the Industrial Midlands, the emphasis of the exhibition was on industry and production. Displays therefore told the story of the skill of the British people and the resources of Britain. It was told visually in six main sections: Material and Skills, in the Corridor of Time; Discovery and Design; People at Home; People at Play; People at Work; and People Travelling. (See Fig. 76) The story of Material and Skills, housed in the Corridor of Time, developed the story of Britain's resources throughout the ages. It was visualised dramatically by a series of power drum pendulums (which the visitors actually walked under), with the effect of infinity being achieved by the use of large facing mirrors (see Fig. 77) Moving from this area, the visitor entered an arena which was an information centre staffed by officers of the COID. From here the Exhibition began. The Discovery and Design Section was the first area entered: this section was divided into five groups: measurement, lighting, plastics, dyes and things in the home. The aim of this section was to show how present day machinery had helped supplement traditional British craftsmanship with scientific knowledge and new techniques, aiding

4. Ibid. and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition The Land Travelling Exhibition Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Nottingham. The Festival of Britain Catalogue.

5. Work 25/3, Exhibitions Report April 1949-1951. See Annex 3 for a list of the designers of the Land Travelling Exhibition.

in the production of domestic equipment and objects made from plastics. To visualise this idea, the ceiling of this section was covered with thousands of yards of dyed rayon and upright transparent red plastic tubes which contained freely suspended displays of various every day articles such as hairbrushes, spectacles and batteries. The lighting was controlled by the spectators by using a dimmer switch board.⁶ (See Figs. 78 and 79)

The People at Home Section, sought to illustrate modern solutions to specific domestic problems using all the rooms of an ordinary house: The small living-room, the best room, the bed-sitting room, the nursery and bathroom, the kitchen and the garden room (see Figs. 80-85). The exhibits showed how the designer and scientist could for example combine their resources to make the most of a small living-room: in order to arrange space for a television, to keep warm, as well as to take advantage of appropriate furnishings, floor coverings, light fittings and other essentials. This section also contained a 'house of the future' which speculated as to what the house of the future would look like (see Fig. 86). The People at Play Section devoted its space to showing British sports and pastimes which included field sports, camping, indoor and outdoor games, recreational toys, hobbies and leisure wear. (See Fig. 87) Each section was handled by individual designers: The Toys segment was designed by Peter Judge who also

6. "Festival Exhibition Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp. 197-199 and Work 25/230 1951 Exhibition Land Travelling Exhibition The Festival of Britain Catalogue. As the titles are essentially self-explanatory the People at Home, People at Play, I do not think it is necessary to give details of the exhibits as such.

designed a special display of a model theatre; Hobbies were designed by Richard Levin; the Outdoors display and Games were designed by Dorrit Dekk; the Indoor display and Games were designed by Bruce Angrave; the Leisure Wear was designed by Natasha Kroll displayed on figures moulded by Ethelwyn Baker, and also modelled by live mannequins; the theme of this section was devised by Col. B.W. Rowe.⁷

The People at Work section embodied a single theme, that of the evolution and design of the Whittle Gas Turbine Engine, its development and production being used as a symbol of the enterprise of British industries, the skill of its engineers and the scientific research in which they were involved. The display showed the growth of the engine and the research work being carried on. (See Fig. 88) In addition, the visitor was shown how the gas turbine was being applied to other forms of transport, thus forming a prelude to the last section on People Travelling. This section showed the comfort of modern air travel, the story of passenger travel by rail from 1830 to 1951 (designed by Richard Levin), the story of the omnibus (designed by John Pearce) and British achievement in every form of ocean travel from liners to yachts (designed by Leonard Manasseh). The Railway Travel exhibits included a specially designed observation car which was divided by dual seats running laterally, separated by a central gangway which opened out in the rear to a cocktail bar with couches arranged along the side walls.

7. Ibid.

The roof of the car was made from laminated plastic sheeting.⁸
(See Fig. 89)

On its tour of four cities, the Land Travelling Exhibition received 462,289 visitors. In the reports by the management of the exhibition, the general feeling of the visitors was one of appreciation and enjoyment, but, however, the management reported that at the Manchester showing, there were a large number of complaints made about the Exhibition's "gloomy atmosphere and appearance". In Leeds there was disappointment "that the exhibition was so much of a 'shop window'"; and in Nottingham and Birmingham the management reported that the public was satisfied with the content and design of the exhibitions.⁹

8. Ibid.

9. Work 25/3, Land Travelling Exhibition Management report.

THE FESTIVAL SHIP CAMPANIA

Like the Land Travelling Exhibition, the exhibition mounted in the Festival Ship "Campania" - an aircraft carrier - was the largest of its kind ever to be staged on a ship. (See Fig. 90) The Exhibition was housed in the 300 ft. long hangar which was 24 ft. high with galleries added to increase the area of the display. (See Fig. 91) In addition to this area, the flight and shelter decks (which were 520 ft. long and 70 ft. wide and 50 ft. above the water line) were also converted to carry open air exhibits of motor boats and yachts, and an amusement and recreation area. Amidship there was a large awning covered space which housed demonstrations of sports displays as well as dances and other functions. The forward part of the flight deck was converted into an open air cafe with tables arranged amongst the exhibits. The uniqueness of using "Campania" in this manner was further highlighted by the fact that she herself served as an exhibit of an aircraft carrier, with her character being closely maintained by keeping all her usual fittings such as life boats, windlass and capstans.¹⁰ Extra features such as bars, restaurants, masts, handrails and stairways were all designed in the traditional marine idiom with bright red being the prevalent colour.¹¹ The conversion of the "Campania" which was led by James Holland the Exhibition's chief designer and his team,

10. The Continental Daily Mail, Festival of Britain Supplement, May 1951.

11. "Festival Exhibitions Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp.197-199.

had its difficulties. Holland said of this process:

I had working with me on general assignments a group of young architects and designers. These included several Polish architects, serious and dedicated young men, who sometimes found it hard to reconcile their precise and detailed approach with the traditional rather slap-happy rule-of-thumb interpretations of the northern shipyard that handled the conversions and installations. Indeed what the shipyard would make of perhaps over ambitious plans was unpredictable, and we were relieved when eventually several hundred workers came down the gangplanks for the last time, albeit they seemed to have rather many of our door handles and other small fittings inadvertantly packed into their tool boxes.

Apart from a difficult conversion crew, there were problems with an irascible Captain and assorted crew and catering staff. The instability of the ship meant that when designing the internal structures, the architects and designers had to multiply by several times their usual tolerance margins; and the hull of the ship, large as it appeared, could carry little extra weight on top of the necessary life boats.¹²

The Exhibition on board "Campania" was a miniature replica of the South Bank, telling its story in three sections: The Land of Britain; Discovery; and The People at Home. (See Fig. 92) On boarding, the first section the visitor entered was the Land of Britain, which outlined the ancient history of the land of the country as did the next section the visitors entered, the Origins of the Island. The Agriculture Section was unable to use live animals, as were seen on the South Bank, because the exhibition was sea borne, so instead, the sum of Britain's agricultural achievement was presented on a relief map where the great range of husbandry, and cropping were shown as if viewed from an aircraft. The Minerals of

12. Banham and Hillier, p.151.

of the Island Section included displays of coal, steel, chemical and mineral material, which when made up formed the basis of a range of products from drugs and dyes to paints and plastics. The industry segment, showed engineering works. The display showed production methods and how metal sections and its components were machined and fabricated. Illustrations were given of the foundry and forge, the machine shop, a large electrical engineering works and the role of the scientist and engineer in machine design. Further, this section on Industry showed exhibits of converted raw materials (derived from chemical materials) into usable products. This display was illustrated by examples of plastics and rubber. (See Figs. 93 and 94) The glass industry showed its scientific, architectural and domestic uses. This was followed by a display of the story of ceramics and wood working showing examples of modern furniture. This section was completed by further examples of the work in the textile industry, the importance of industrial design which was illustrated with reference to the domestic gas cooker, and the role of science in industrial research.¹³

The section on Power, displayed exhibits on the harnessing of steam, the steam turbine, modern heavy oil engines, gas turbines, and a modern electric power station. The Transport Section, like the Transport Pavilion on the South Bank, told, with the use of models, the story of Britain's development by Road, Rail, Sea and Air. (See Fig. 95) The last section Seas and Ships, like the Seas and Ships Pavilion on the South Bank displayed Britain's long and

13. Work 25/21, The Story the Exhibition tells F.S. "Campania". See Annex 3A for the list of the designers of the F.S. "Campania" Exhibition.

outstanding tradition as a sea faring nation. From these segments the visitor moved to the second part of the exhibition - Discovery - which was in essence a miniature version of the Dome of Discovery and, as such, showed exhibits dealing with the 'Land' which involved displays of making maps, control of water and communications systems; the 'Earth' which showed exploration, geological surveys, new tools, minerals and ores of the Commonwealth. The 'Living World' which explored the biology of sea animal behaviour, and concluded with a demonstration of how the human nervous system worked; the 'Physical World' dealt with the discoveries of scientists who had explored the nature of matter and the natural laws which govern its behaviour, as well as showing the close relationship between discovery and application which was illustrated by the display of the components of a television set.¹⁴

In the section on Outer Space, the majority of the displays were based on the older science of astronomy and its principal tool, the telescope. The visitor also saw new presentations of the solar systems of some of the planets, of fixed stars of the Galaxy and of the nebulae beyond it. Also shown was the "life history of the star". This section ended with two highly practical applications of astronomy in determining time and navigation.¹⁵ From the outer space gallery, the visitor emerged onto the flight deck where he saw displays of small craft, a modern life-boat and similar exhibits. From here he made his way to the third and final part: The People at Home. The first part of this segment, the Homes and Gardens as its title suggests, had the same concerns as the pavilion devoted to this

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

subject on the South Bank. The displays included the child in the Home, the bed-sitting room, home entertainment, hobbies, the Garden, and a kitchen display was arranged in the middle of this section forming, as it did in the home, a focal point. From here the visitor moved to the Health section which showed British work in medicine, surgery, public health and nursing. From this segment on the People at Home, the visitor moved to the pictorial panels (nine in all) of the rural scene. The panels showed the months of the year, and the activities that took place for example, sheep shearing in May; and in June and July, harvest making and the early fruit harvest. The last two sections of the exhibition explored the British fascination with the sea and the Great Britons, (Drake, Raleigh, Cook and Anson) who, by mastery of the sea, had defined Britain's achievements.¹⁶

This exhibition was criticised for being confused, with the story unfolding rather hurriedly because of the confined space. James Holland, the co-ordinator of the exhibition, felt that there was difficulty in reconciling the requirements of the theme and those of subject specialists and designers commissioned to handle particular sections. Some designers were, he said, particularly obdurate about abandoning a concept that was striking and elegant even though it presented a misleading picture. He said:

Hindsight inclines me to think that often we were trying to tell too involved or too technical a story. The mixture of instruction and amusement was not always easy to maintain.¹⁷

16. Ibid. and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition F.S. "Campania" Southampton, Dundee, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Hull, Plymouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Belfast, Birkenhead, Glasgow, The Festival of Britain Catalogue.
17. Banham and Hillier, p.151.

Regardless of this however the Festival Ship was visited by 889,792 people in the ten towns it visited. It may perhaps be surmised from the attendance figures that more people not only visited the "Campania", as opposed to Land Travelling exhibition, but that this was probably because they were captivated by the novelty of visiting an exhibition on board an aircraft carrier. The numbers might even have been higher had the weather (which was very poor in Southampton and especially so in Belfast) been better - only two days out of the sixteen day itinerary were free from rain. The management of this exhibition reported high attendance and appreciative audience in Newcastle, Bristol, Birkenhead and Glasgow.¹⁸

18. Work 25/3, Management Report for F.S. "Campania".

CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGIONS:

THE LOCAL ACTIVITIES FOR 1951

Following the Festival Organisation meeting on 8 June 1949 of the Heads of Local Government, and the despatching of the booklet by the organisation on how best the authorities could participate in 1951, the Festival Office was inundated with ideas from interested authorities.¹⁹ By 29 September 1950 Barry was able to report to the Festival Council that to date the Festival Office had been contacted by 1,173 local authorities in England. In his report he showed how their interest had grown in the period from September 1949 to September 1950; in September 1949 there were only 61 local authorities considering creating programmes with the help of either a special committee or by using a section of their councils' administrative department. This figure rose to 98 in December 1949, 352 in March 1950 and 764 at the beginning of September 1950. The number of local communities that had formed Festival Committees had risen from a mere 29 in September 1949, to 38 in December 1949, to 155 in March 1950 and 318 in September 1950. Furthermore, Barry was able to report on what some of the local communities were actually doing for 1951: the Borough of Chesterfield planned to beautify derelict sites and to change the town's lighting from gas to electricity; Tewkesbury planned to create a Garden of Remembrance in the town centre in memory of the American Allied Forces who died

19. See pp.152-157 for the meeting at the Guildhall of Heads of Local Government and for the ideas the Festival Organisation sent out to Local Authorities in the booklet 'Approach to the Country'.

during the two wars; Bedfordshire County Council decided to renovate Moor Hall, the home of John Bunyan, as well as erecting signs, composed of the County Crest and the Festival symbol, in all its towns and villages; Tavistock Urban District Council planned to make their contribution by the extensive planting of trees and shrubbery; Dover Rural District Council intended to plant giant floral Festival symbols on the cliffs; Gainsborough Rural District Council decided to erect six pairs of bungalows, to accommodate old people, in six different villages with Festival of Britain commemorative plaques on them; and the Parish Council of Gillingwest (North Yorkshire) proposed to create a recreation area for both adults and children.²⁰

By February 1951, Barry was able to report further to the Council that out of 1,530 Local Authorities, 1,211 were actively engaged in projects for the Festival, 519 of which would be of a permanent nature, and by 1951 this number had risen to 591.²¹ By May 1951 the Festival Organisation was rewarded with the participation of some 2,000 cities, towns and villages in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales organising at least one event and in some cases a series of events, or making a permanent contribution, all on their own initiative and from their own resources. The events put on by local committees ranged from exhibitions of city history, as in the case of Canterbury whose exhibition displayed the City's history from the year 200 BC to 1951; exhibitions of local industries and crafts; arts festivals;

20. Work 25/44, Council Papers, Report by the Director-General on local activities, 29 September 1950.

21. Work 25/44, Festival Council Papers 21 February 1951.

sporting displays; fireworks displays; the floodlighting of parish churches; making seats for the village green; compiling public records and clearing and repairing public buildings. Almost every town, village or city indulged in planting special flower arrangements in streets and public places and "a journey across Britain in any direction that summer took the visitor through town after town bright with flowers and gleaming at many points with fresh paint."²² In looking at the contributions made by the local communities it becomes clear that a great deal of effort was made by the smaller and often poorer towns and villages, to create celebrations worthy of the year. Cirencester arranged an exhibition of Cotswold tradition; a music festival was held at Hedingham North Riding; the festival at Tenterden in Kent, the reputed and disputed birth place of Caxton, included an exhibition of printed books and manuscripts; the Festival for the whole county of Sussex which displayed a wide variety of events continued in one town after the other; Rochester arranged a Dickens festival; and three Essex villages Finchingfield, Thaxted and Great Bardfield arranged displays of local crafts, music, sport, drama, a pageant, concerts in churches and a book exhibition was arranged. In Chawton, Jane Austen's house was opened to the public; at Abinger, playing equipment for children, seats and litter bins were provided for the village and trees were planted; at Battle, the Festival programme devised, included visits to local country houses, tidying up of the town centre, sporting events and a pageant performed in the grounds of the Abbey.²³

22. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

23. Ibid.

In Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, as in England there was a wealth and variety of events independent of the exhibitions sponsored by the Festival Organisation and arranged by the Regional Committees. In Scotland, 150 local authorities and voluntary organisations held special celebrations and events for the summer of 1951. In some cases normal annual events such as the Cowal Games, the Border Ridings and the British Legion "Masque of Scotland" were held as part of the Festival, but in many other cities something new was organised. From the Orkneys and Shetlands to the Borders, programmes ranging from pageants, drama, music, exhibitions, civic weeks, sport gatherings and the planning of permanent projects such as the rehabilitation of the Culzean Castle Garden (noted for its rare and exotic shrubs) were organised. In Northern Ireland, 51 local centres held their own celebrations, there were 29 festival weeks or civic weeks, 8 festival days and 14 other special occasions, some of which marked the inauguration of a permanent feature, such as the new Civic Headquarters at Bangor, or the permanent Rose Garden at Coleraine. The typical local programme in Northern Ireland combined Protestant religious services, processions, exhibitions of industry and handiwork, plays, dances, fancy dress parades, firemens' demonstrations, sports and children's competitions and treats. The local agricultural show, usually one of the highlights of the Northern Ireland year, was frequently the centre-piece of local celebrations around which a Festival Week was created. Aside from these events, the local authorities, encouraged a great deal of decoration, re-painting, tree planting and tidying up, as well as giving impetus to the acquiring of new civic amenities

such as town halls and civic centres.²⁴

In Wales the local festivals in which over 100 local authorities participated celebrations were predominately musical. A Welsh Festival Choir of 180 voices drawn from 50 Welsh towns and villages gave concerts in Caermarthen, St. Davids, Llanrwst and Tredegar as well as at the Royal Festival Hall in London.²⁵ Apart from singing, a cottages and hillside farm scheme - part of the development at Dolhendre, were created with the help of the Welsh committee. Thus, throughout Britain, in city, town and village, effort was made to celebrate the Festival no matter how small. In most cities, towns and villages, many tangible and enduring amenities were brought into being as a direct result of the Festival. Some of them were modest, having regard to the economic difficulties of the time and the poverty of the area, but regardless of this they left their communities a little better off at the end of 1951 than they had been since 1945. Some of the enduring amenities, completed in time for the Festival included the reconstruction and restoring of buildings: the city of Bristol reconstructed Colston Hall; Manchester reconstructed the Free Trade Hall, which had been blitzed during the war; the 18th century Assembly Rooms were reconstructed in both York and Norwich; Plymouth restored Buckland Abbey and reopened it as the Drake Museum; Liverpool restored and re-hung the Walker Art Gallery in St. George's Hall; Cardiff created the New Sophia Garden pavilion; a new Community Centre was created in Inverness in the wing of a disused

24. Work 25/3, Report by Scottish and Northern Ireland Committees on the Local Festivals in Scotland and Northern Ireland, 8 November 1951 and January 1952.

25. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

18th century school; and the Rural District Council of Cheltenham built a pair of Cotswold cottages in the village of Stanton.²⁶

The City which ultimately benefitted most from the Festival was London, thus making good the Lord President's earlier statement to the LCC that London would get the 'lion's share' of Festival activities, events and benefits. The benefits to London fell into two categories: those that were necessitated by the Festival exhibitions and paid for out of the Festival budget, such as the Exhibition of Architecture at Lansbury which left behind habitable dwellings, schools, churches and public houses; the Pleasure Gardens at Battersea Park, and the Royal Festival Hall. Further, the South Bank was cleared and made ready for permanent development, transportation improvements were made, as well as a new wing of the Science Museum at South Kensington being completed and made ready for the occupation of science exhibits. Aside from these contributions, there was the second category of benefits, which were made as part of the Festival Organisation's 'approach to the country' and as such were London's contribution to the Festival. The London Transport Executive had parts of Charing Cross and Waterloo Stations redesigned; gardens were laid out at St. Paul's and Parliament Square; the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park were cleaned and painted and tourist accommodation was improved.²⁷

Thus it would appear the Local Communities of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, responded to the Festival Organisation's

26. Ibid.

27. Sir Gerald Barry, "Three Cantor Lectures on the Festival of Britain 1951", Journal Of The Royal Society of Arts c (August 1952), pp.701-702.

directive and produced events as well as initiating permanent projects that were worthy of the year. However, in addition to the local contributions, there were major Festivals arranged in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales by their respective Festival Committees. Being major parts of the Kingdom, these areas were not only entitled, and expected, to mount major displays, they were fully supported financially by the Festival Office. The displays mounted in these areas were, by far, more complete than any of the 'local initiative' exhibitions mounted away from the South Bank. Scotland exhibited, amongst other things, a display of Heavy Engineering at the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow; Northern Ireland mounted an exhibition of Farm and Factory in Belfast; and Wales created the Dolhendre Hillfarm Scheme.

SCOTLAND

The main exhibition in Scotland, the Exhibition of Industrial Power, held at the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow, was, like the other Festival exhibitions designed to tell a story, in this case, the story of Britain's contribution to Heavy Engineering. (See Fig. 96) Its theme as the Guide book simply stated, was: "Heavy Engineering is the conquest of power." This theme developed man's conquest of power in terms of the twin sources of power for heavy engineering: coal and water. The display set out to show the machines in this field and the men who made them, as well as the people who used them.

The exhibition, designed by Basil Spence (the co-ordinating architect) covered 100,000 square feet with the main sections enclosed in 30 ft. high steel frames filled in with fire-proofed hard-board and studding. The visitor was led through a series of exhibits all of which told a particular segment of the story beginning with the Hall of Power, followed by the Halls of Coal, Steel, Power for Industry, Electricity, Railway and Shipping. The basis of the engineering theme - coal and water converged in the Halls of Civil Engineering and Irrigation and Hydro-electricity. All this then culminated in the Hall of the Future.²⁸ (See Fig. 97)

The Hall of Power, was a large oval chamber 60 ft. long, 56 ft. wide and 35 ft. high which served as an introduction to the whole

28. Work 25/3, Final Report Exhibition of Industrial Power, Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. See Annex 3B for a list of the designers of the Exhibition of Industrial Power.

Exhibition in its displaying of the twin themes of water and coal, as used in engineering. At the entrance was a huge bas-relief by Thomas Whalen, stretching 105 ft. in length and was, as the Festival Exhibitions Guide claimed, by far the biggest piece of sculpture ever executed in Scotland. (See Fig. 98) On one side the God of nature arousing man to his mission, was depicted in the form of a miner, and on the other side the miner was portrayed active at work.²⁹ Between the mural, the visitor was led up the steps to an illuminated doorway leading to the Hall of Coal Exhibition. (See Fig. 99) The other side of the Hall of Power explored, in a highly dramatic fashion, the theme of water. In contrast to the dark oppressiveness of the Coal section, the visitor was led into the water sequence through a shining glass tunnel where, above the glass roof, 20,000 gallons of water per minute crashed noisily overhead, thus attempting to portray to the visitor just how powerful water can be. According to the Architectural Review's assessment in the Festival Exhibitions Guide, this was not, however, completely successful because there was not enough water to capture the full force of its power. (See Fig. 100) The exhibition in the Hall of Coal consisted of three sections, of a highly visual nature, showing how coal was formed, a coal mine of 200-300 years ago, illustrated primitive working conditions, ventilation and technique, followed by a section of a modern mine illustrating modern mining practice, mechanisation and improvement in safety precautions. The visitor first entered a primeval swamp the effect of which was created by

29. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951., and "Festival Exhibitions Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p.194-195.

the use of cleverly arranged foliage, dim lighting and sponge rubber underfoot, all adding to the sensation of being in a swamp.³⁰

He progressed from this to displays of four pictorial models which showed the growth of the coal industry between the 13th century and the Industrial Revolution and following this, the visitor approached Keith Godwin's high bas-relief mural showing the progress of both men and women as miners. From here, the visitor descended into the mine in a cage which seemed to drop 1,000 ft., but which in reality dropped only 16 ft.: the first mine he saw showed the mining conditions of 200 years ago and the methods of mining during that period; the second mine was a full size section of a modern mine with up-to-date machinery at work, demonstrating four methods of coal cutting. The realism of this segment of the Hall of Coal Exhibition was further enhanced by the fact that the machinery in this segment was not only full sized but it was manned by a team of Scottish miners. (See Fig. 101) The visitor emerged from this section into a high, brightly-coloured structure, which had a sky-blue quilted ceiling cloth, where the miners welfare projects were displayed.³¹ Leaving the Hall of Coal the darkness was illuminated by the glitter of the Hall of Steel. The entrance of this section was panelled with sheets of stainless steel and the floor was a mosaic of steel sections, demonstrating various types of steel construction. This part of the Hall symbolised the two great

30. "Festival Exhibitions Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp. 194-195.

31. Ibid., pp.194-195. The Continental Daily Mail Festival of Britain Supplement, and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power, Kelvin Hall, Glasgow Festival of Britain 1951 Catalogue.

arts of the steel worker - the ability to handle the metal in enormous quantities, and the skill to machine it accurately to the finest fraction of an inch. The centre-piece of this section was a half-scale model of the largest ingot made in Britain. It was constructed of 'perspex' and was lit up in such a way that it appeared to be white-hot. Behind the ingot were displays illustrating high precision articles made from steel, as well as six display panels showing the pioneers of the steel industry (Darby, Huntsman, Cort, Neilson, Bessemer, Siemens, Bearley and Hadfield), whose inventiveness had made steel cheap, reliable and abundant, and which had also paved the way for the machine age. The inventions of these men in their modern form were focused on in this section.

The story moved on to the handling of steel, from the raw material to its transformation into machinery. Finally it dealt with the standardisation of steel and research being carried out in this field. Standardisation showed how, in the near future, a nut made in India would be able to fit a bolt made in England, and how a piston made in America would fit precisely into a cylinder, cast and machined in Australia. In the Research Display two products of modern research were shown: the heat resistant steels for gas turbine blades and the new special cold resistant steels which were in the process of being developed.³²

As in the Hall of Coal, the ambience of a steel plant was simulated by the presence of teams of skilled blacksmiths who were demonstrating the skills required for hand working steel. In

32. Ibid.

addition, the final section contained a display of a full-size modern hydraulic press at work, and to further enhance the realism of this section, it was arranged like a factory workshop with large machine engaged in actual production, and overhead cranes shuttling to and fro.³³ (See Fig. 102)

The displays in the Power for Industry Hall began at a time when man had to depend either on animals, the weather or on his own exertions to provide the power necessary to carry out his work. From this point the exhibition went on to demonstrate how new power inventions emerged as older methods became less practical. New inventions and their forerunners included: Hero's discovery in Alexandria of the eolopile, which formed the basis of the jet engine; the florence flask, the steam ball, an engine for softening bones, discovered by Papin in 1679, which became the basis for the first pressure cooker. A pump which could work in mines, developed by Thomas Savery. Also displayed was the work of Thomas Newcomen who, in 1705, produced a greatly improved engine from which the modern steam engine descended; the separate condenser by James Watt; and the high pressure engine by Trevithick. From these displays dealing with the discovery and history of the steam engine, the emphasis moved from the arena of discovery into that of the quest for efficiency in the use of steam. Finally there was a display showing the newest power unit evolved by British invention - the gas turbine, which was shown full-scale with its outer skin cut away so that the inner workings were exposed. Like the three previous sections, this display was decorated with a mural by Alexander Lyn

33. Ibid.

which further complemented and reinforced the subject matter of this section.³⁴

A full-length portrait of Michael Faraday, alongside an electric pylon, announced the electricity section which began its story with the earliest origins of electricity, then moved on to the inventions of Faraday; the turbine engines of Sir Charles Parsons - a model of one of his original turbo-generators formed the central display. The organisation of the grid system and the various stages through which the current passes from generator to consumer, and finally, displays of electricity at work, showing electric motors (large and small) and the wide range of home and industrial appliances reliant upon electricity were effectively presented. A long glass tunnel over a staircase led to the section dealing with Hydro-Electricity, whose exhibits were housed in a structure with curving walls faced with grey rough-cut stone. The exhibits told the story of the rapid growth of water power, particularly in Scotland, starting with a brief introduction detailing the achievements of British engineers in harnessing the power of water throughout the world. From here the story moved to Scotland, dealing with the drift from the Highlands to Central Scotland where new industries were being established, and the large power schemes which were built for the production of aluminium (notably in Kinlochleven and Lochaber) and for general electrical supply in Rannoch and Galloway. (See Fig. 103) Further sections dealt with a simple lesson in Hydro-Electric engineering on the working of a dam,

34. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power Kelvin Hall Glasgow The Festival of Britain 1951 Catalogue.

the work that has to be done before the dam can be built, the changes that Hydro-electricity would bring to the Highlander's lives was illustrated, by showing a crofter's cottage before and after the installation of electricity. This section was lit by a novel device - lights in the shape of pylon terminals (See Fig. 104) and as in the other sections, this subject was further highlighted by two murals by Lawrence Scarfe, a copperfoil sculpture of 'The Spirit of the Lochs' and a water sculpture and water horse by Alan Farmer.³⁵

The outer gallery of the Hydro-Electricity section led the visitor beneath a great waterfall to the Hall of Civil Engineering which was approached through a side gallery by an asymmetrical staircase. The far wall was decorated with perforated sheet metal grilles in different designs and strong colours. The floor had a red and white chequered pattern and its roof was composed of yellow, red and blue canvas. The Civil Engineering display showed how new materials were being used to their fullest capacity in this field. The upper part of the entrance gallery displayed some of the creations of earlier builders: an Egyptian rock-cut temple; a Greek temple; and a medieval cathedral built in stone. In the lower gallery, materials such as cast-iron, wrought-iron and steel were exhibited. As the visitor left the lower gallery he encountered a display on the uses of pre-stressed concrete - a new material in the fifties. Following this, there was a display devoted to bridges, with the centre of the hall showing an extensive display of different types of Civil Engineering construction ranging from huge

35. Ibid.

buildings like the Barbazon Hangar to steel frame buildings and graving-dock gates. Also included in this display was the story of the Mersey Tunnel. The highlight of this section was a display of how civil engineers changed the face of the Nile Valley. This particular story was developed on three levels: the uppermost level, which the visitor could see from the distance, displayed the whole terraine of the Nile Valley from source to delta; the visitor then walked underneath the first level to the second sequence of the story which included a moving map of the Nile and showed the flooding caused by the Nile of Egypt and the Sudan; the third part of the sequence showed the modern Nile with its barrages, hydro-electric schemes, and new methods of irrigation - brought under control by the modern engineer.³⁶ (See Fig. 105)

In the Hall of Shipbuilding and Railways a huge ship-like structure ran the length of the hall with galleries on varying levels dealing with different subject matters; access to these levels was gained by stairways. (See Fig. 106) Shipbuilding, which was dealt with on the upper level, overwhelmed the visitor, if only by its sheer immensity, with the reinforcement that Britain was the greatest shipbuilding country in the world. The exhibition displayed outstanding examples of all the different vessels, such as large passenger liners, cargo vessels, whalers, dredgers and trawlers. From here the visitor was led towards the second stage of

36. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power Kelvin Hall Glasgow The Festival of Britain Catalogue; "Festival Exhibitions Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), pp.194-195; and The Continental Daily Mail Festival of Britain Supplement, May 1951.

the shipbuilding story, which showed how the British shipping industry transported essential goods to millions of people throughout the world and also outlined the routes which the industry had pioneered. Having established the size and scope of the industry in modern times, the display went on to show how all this was achieved. A large screen at the end of the gallery showed the inventors, administrators and adventurers who had built up Britain's sea-power. Further displays included an outlining of the life-story of a ship from its inception to completion, and yet another showed the art of navigation.³⁷

The Railway Exhibition, situated directly below the Shipbuilding Display, introduced the early history of railways and, in particular, British domination of this field, showing examples of modern locomotives and in the centre of the hall, exhibiting displays of locomotive development from its early engines and open trucks to the streamlined expresses constructed in 1951, as well as a section devoted to the Civil Engineering aspect of railways. (See Fig. 107) There were further displays showing: the effect of the railways on people's lives and how the railways catered to human needs; on display for the first time to the British public were the specially-designed coaches for use overseas; and an all-aluminium coach built for the London underground. The exhibition ended with the visitor looking at a large locomotive which was to be exported to the Government of Victoria, Australia, at the end of the exhibition, and an elaborate model railway which showed in accurate detail most of the main types of locomotives and railway stock used

37. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power Kelvin Hall Glasgow The Festival of Britain Catalogue.

in Britain at the time of the exhibition.³⁸

The last Hall of the exhibition was the Hall of the Future which dealt primarily with atomic research. The hall was so constructed that on entering, the visitor, walked into the present and could look down below onto the past and up above to the future. In five pits below ground level, the works of Watt, Trevithick, Faraday, Parsons and Rutherford were displayed. On the ground floor there were displays of present day atomic research, and between these two levels rose a cone of light pointing towards a curved starlit night sky, emphasising the limitless potential of atomic energy.³⁹ (See Fig. 108) From the descriptive records of the Exhibition at Kelvin Hall one can understand why the attendance figures (282,039) were higher than, for example, those of the Science Exhibition at South Kensington (213,744). The Heavy Engineering Exhibition seemed to be by far more spectacular, stimulating, illustrative and orientated towards human interest than the Science Exhibition in London. The organisers of the Kelvin Hall Exhibition managed, unlike their counterparts at South Kensington, to create a display that was closer in inspiration, style and concept to the Palais De La Decouverte in Paris and as such was the much more successful and spectacular exhibition.⁴⁰

Apart from the Exhibition in Kelvin Hall, there were three other noteworthy exhibitions which were part of the official Festival programme: the Exhibition of Living Traditions in

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. See pp.362-366 for the discussion on the concept and style of the Palais De La Decouverte.

Edinburgh; an Exhibition of 18th Century Scottish Literature, housed in the Signet Library in Edinburgh; and an Exhibition of Modern Scottish Books displaying the nation's finest printing and book binding which was housed in Glasgow.

THE LIVING TRADITIONS EXHIBITION

The Exhibition of Living Traditions, housed in the Royal Scottish Museum, was divided into three sections: Architectural Background which told the story of Scottish Architecture in stone, casts, models and photographs. The exhibits ranged from the 'black house' of the Highlands and the simple homes of the people to the mansions of the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, there was a section showing historic castles and churches; and there were models of two new towns in Scotland - Glenrothes and East Kilbride. The second section, to which the first formed a background, showed traditional Scottish Crafts; and the third part of the exhibition showed contemporary Crafts.⁴¹ The long low-ceilinged loft interior of the Museum was transformed into an area of 15 sections showing all sorts of articles from within the three categories mentioned. (See Fig. 109) On entering the Exhibition Hall, the visitor was faced with a 23 ft. replica of Sueno's Stone from Forres, as well as 9th century carvings. Whilst on the other side, there was a display of 20th century architecture and craftwork. The exhibits of Scottish Architecture and Craftsmanship together were mounted against a background of large photomurals of characteristic Scottish Architecture. In addition to this visual aspect of the exhibition, the visitor was also treated to a musical side; in one section there was a string orchestra playing traditional lowland tunes, whilst in another, a young girl sang

41. Work 25/3, Final Report Scottish Committee, The Living Tradition Exhibitions, 8 November 1951.

Gaelic airs unaccompanied.⁴²

Cautiously the organisers of this exhibition anticipated a daily attendance of 1,000 but were gratified that the exhibition was such a great success from the outset. The organisers had expected strong support, in a limited way, from members of the community who were specifically interested in Craftwork and Scottish History. However, as the exhibition progressed, it became increasingly clear that the exhibition was attracting wide support from the general public as well as from the specialist audience. Consequently, the target was raised, almost immediately, to 10,000 per week and over the whole period of the exhibition attendance figures averaged 11,500 persons per week. Of the total 135,000 visitors to the exhibition, many visitors were from overseas who, the organisers reported, were enormously impressed and stimulated by the many treasures of Scottish traditional and contemporary crafts which were on view. Further, these many visitors expressed a desire for the exhibition to be shown in their own countries as they considered it of exceptional interest. Requests came from a representative of the Museums of North America and also from the French Consul-General, and after the exhibition closed, the organisers reported that many letters were received referring "in most gratifying terms to the interest created and to the success of the Exhibition, which not only stirred the public interest in Scottish craftwork to a much

42. "Festival Exhibitions Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p.195.

higher pitch than for many years, but seemed to have touched a deep chord in many Scottish hearts."⁴³

43. Work 25/35, Final Report Scottish Committee, Living Traditions Exhibition, 8 November 1951. The attendance figure of 135,000 comes from Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

THE SCOTTISH EXHIBITION OF BOOKS

The 18th century Scottish Books Exhibition, housed in the Signet Library in Edinburgh, was designed to illustrate the Scottish 18th century in its literature, printing and book production. All the books (approximately 780 titles) were, because of their value, shown in glass showcases which were constructed to fit into the setting of the Signet Library. Using the works of Hume, Smith, Boswell, Ramsay, Burns, Scott, Black and Hutton and under sections such as The Darien Scheme, The Union of the Crowns, The History of Scotland and Great Britain, The Bible and the Church in Scotland, Plays and Novels to mention but a few; the exhibition told the story of a century of political confusion and rebellion, of a continued warfare against inherited gloom and rigidity carried on both within and without the church, and by a newer spirit of tolerance in all things. Further, the story was told of those in Scotland who were anxious to bury the past in the new found glory of becoming North Britain, while there were others more determined than ever to remain Caledonia, "but most especially, the selection of books in this exhibition spoke of a century during which Scotland, from being poor in spirit moved mysteriously, and without doubt to her finest hour."⁴⁴

In Glasgow an exhibition of 20th century books was displayed: it was decided by the organisers that this exhibition should display 20th century books in all fields - books by Scotsmen, books about Scottish subjects and books printed or bound in Scotland. Unlike the

44. Work 25/232, Book Exhibitions in the Festival, Scotland.

Signet Library exhibition, though some of the more valuable books were placed under glass, most of the books were placed on open shelves and the public were able to handle all but a few of them: chairs and tables were provided, thereby allowing leisurely and detailed examination. There were about 5,000 books selected for the exhibition 2,000 of which showed a heavy preponderance of being produced since the war. Many of the publishers approached by the organisers of the exhibition reported that their stock of books produced before and during the war had been destroyed and the paper shortage had militated against reprinting.⁴⁵ The books in the exhibition were arranged according to subject matter, and were divided into 33 main sections which dealt with a wide variety of Scottish subjects such as its history, both general and local; customs and folklore; the church; education; government and administration; science and medicine; agriculture, arts, crafts and architecture; Scottish 20th century literature; great Scotsmen of the 20th century; and bookbinding and printing.⁴⁶ Some of the highlights of the exhibition were provided in the form of original manuscripts lent by well-known authors such as Neil Munro's "John Splendid" and "The Broach"; James Brodie's "Tobias and the Angel"; Eric Linklater's "Magners Merriman" and "Private Angelo"; Compton Mackenzie's "Whisky Galore"; "The Killing", a poem specially written for the Exhibition by Edwin Muir; Neil Gunn's "Off in a Boat"; and John Buchan's "Huntingtower" and "Montrose". Also on display were a

45. Work 25/3, Final Report Scottish Committee, Scottish Book Exhibitions, 8 November 1951.

46. Work 25/232, Book Exhibitions in the Festival, Scotland.

number of translations of books by Scottish authors into modern European languages, which illustrated the reading of Scottish literature abroad. The organisers concluded in their report that general reaction to the exhibition was very favourable.⁴⁷

47. Work 25/3, Final Report Scottish Committee, 8 November 1951.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The contribution of Northern Ireland to the Festival took the form of a farm and factory exhibition (whose agriculture section was the largest in any of the officially promoted Festival Exhibitions in the United Kingdom) which was held in Belfast and arranged by the Northern Ireland Festival Committee, in conjunction with the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce, and financed by the Government of Northern Ireland. Designed by Willy de Majo a 'Yugoslav Englishman', the Farm and Factory Exhibition was like most of the other Festival exhibitions, narrative in style, and dealt specifically with two sections highlighted in the Land of Britain Pavilion at the South Bank. Thus the exhibition in Ireland was primarily concerned with Northern Ireland farms and factories as distinctive parts of the pattern of British industry and agriculture. This Exhibition, was first of its kind ever to be held in Northern Ireland, within the realms of the farm and factory, and suggested a pattern of future progress. The entire exhibition was centred in specially adapted newly-built factory premises, part of a Government industrial estate at the foot of Castlereagh Hills on the outskirts of Belfast. It extended over 20,000 square feet of floor space and about 3.5 acres of adjoining ground.⁴⁸

The Exhibition was divided into two sections: one indoors and the other outdoors. The Indoor Exhibition included displays which

48. Work 25/3, Final Report Festival of Britain 1951 in Northern Ireland January 1952. See Annex 3C for the list of the designers of the Farm and Factory Exhibition.

reviewed the history, achievement and potentialities of various forms of production and craftsmanship, with examples of industries traditionally associated with Northern Ireland, as well as new industries being developed. Outdoors, there were agricultural features, including a reconstructed Ulster Farmstead of 1851, and a Farmhouse of The Future.⁴⁹ (See Fig. 110)

The entrance to the exhibition was defined by the characteristic vertical feature of the Festival Exhibitions this, in the form of a 50 ft. high metal tower. de Majo was adamant that the exhibition should have this type of feature because, "it was good as a landmark and the factory itself was a bit out of Town; it was in one of those soulless factory estates".⁵⁰ (See Fig. 111).

The visitor entered the indoor display area (designed by de Majo) which had an average height of only 12 ft. from the floor to a yellow stripped velarium, which was chosen to create the illusion of light. For contrast and height variation, a honeycombed timber frame was suspended over some sections. Most of the displays were mounted, without encasement, inside the structure.⁵¹ (See Fig. 112)

The Exhibition's subject matter was displayed in 30 sections: 18 in Industry and 12 in Agriculture. The first section the visitor

49. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

50. Banham and Hillier, p.156. The Ministry architect who designed the factory complex, expressed strong doubts as to the strength of the feature for he believed that it would be blown down, but de Majo stuck to his point and, after considerable argument, the feature was built and fortunately it was not blown down, despite being battered by gales which on one day reached the speed of up to 60 miles per hour.

51. "Festival Exhibition Review", Architectural Review 110 (August 1951), p.191.

entered within 'Industry' was the textiles section which highlighted the manufacture, methods and process of modern production of a range of materials as well as the modern research ideas and future prospects for the selected materials. The textiles included linen, rayon, poplin cotton, and woollens. (See fig 113) Also in this section there was a display of shirtmaking for which Londonderry had been a centre for 120 years, with more than 40 factories operating in the city in 1951. Following textiles, subsequent sections were devoted to industries traditionally associated with Ulster, such as ship-building, rope making, pottery (with an emphasis on china), whisky, mineral waters, tobacco manufacture and machinery and aircraft production. The section on industry concluded with a display of the pioneers of Ulster industry.⁵²

The Agricultural segment of the indoor displays, formed an introduction to the major agriculture section outdoors and set out to show how, during the past 80 years, Ulster farmers had become the owners of land and how the advances in agricultural education and techniques had brought a tremendous increase in production. The section began with an introductory segment on the history of agriculture in Northern Ireland; followed by a section highlighting development in individual areas such as that of eggs and poultry, oats and potatoes, milk and fruit. Subsequent aspects dealt with in the exhibition included food processing, agricultural machinery, livestock, country life and a press button illuminated display of agricultural exports.⁵³ From the conclusion of this section the

52. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition Ulster Farm and Factory Belfast Northern Ireland, Festival of Britain Catalogue.

53. Ibid.

visitor was led in natural progression, to the outdoor display. The outdoor exhibition was made up of two main features; the 1851 Ulster Farmstead, and the Farm of the Future. The 1851 farmstead was, as its name implies, an authentic reconstruction of an 1851 farmhouse complete with byre, stable and cart shed and fully equipped with the implements of the period.

This structure was contrasted very neatly with the complete full-size farmhouse and farm yard of the future, which was equipped to accommodate a 40 acre farm - the average size of Ulster farms at the time. (See Fig. 114) These features were custom-built for, and also contained as part of the exhibition, dairy cows, calves, pigs, poultry and all the latest farming equipment, as well as all the implements required for small scale arable farming. The farmyard of the future was designed by Henry Lynch-Robinson, and was highly modern and unusual in its structure. The buildings were arranged, as far as possible, as one complete unit. This arrangement reduced the capital outlay, in that fewer external walls were required. It also meant that animals could be tended under cover and the feeding house and hay shed could be approached without the farmer or farm hands having to go out of doors. Direct access was also possible from the feeding house to the cow-byre, calf-house, loose box, hen-house and piggery. The buildings were all carefully designed so that neither ventilation nor light were sacrificed by the layout. Thus, all the buildings were designed to take standard window casements, and the roofs were covered with asbestos units and were supported on light-steel joists. Hygiene in these surroundings was maintained by the use of concrete floors in the animal houses and shed, as well as by the necessary falls to ensure proper drainage.

Further, the bottom of all doors were fitted with one-sixteenth by eighteen inch rat plates.⁵⁴

The Farmhouse of the Future, also designed by Henry Lynch-Robinson, was a modern structure. (See Fig. 115) The kitchen, living-room and bedroom were on the first floor and could be approached by both the internal and external staircases. From the living-room and balcony, the farmer had an uninterrupted view of the farm buildings and surrounding fields. The house was connected to the farm buildings by an open covered way. The roof of the house was of asbestos cavity decking laid to a double pitch, thereby providing storage space, additional insulation as well as accommodation for a water tank. The kitchen, partitioned off from the living-room by a wing wall, had fitted cupboards and storage cabinets along its wall surfaces as well as built-in sinks. Three small windows on the south side gave light to the working area. The living-room had sliding folding windows, which provided complete access to the balcony, and its south and east walls were fully glazed from floor to ceiling. Apart from one full grate fire, the house was heated by electric heaters.⁵⁵

Apart from the main exhibition features, there was on the site, a cinema which showed three different programmes on an hourly basis. The principal films shown were "Land of Ulster" a documentary film on farming, in colour, commissioned by the

54. "The Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland", Architects Journal 114 (26 July 1951), p.110 and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition Ulster Farm and Factory Belfast Northern Ireland, Festival of Britain Catalogue.

55. Ibid., p.116 and Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition Ulster Farm and Factory Belfast Northern Ireland Festival of Britain Catalogue.

Government of Northern Ireland for the Festival; "Family Portrait", Humphrey Jennings' film made for the Festival; and the Irish Linen Guild's Irish Symphony.⁵⁶ There was a bandstand, an open air restaurant and a play centre which looked after 2,000 children (254 between the ages of 2-6) during the exhibition. de Majo had insisted upon the first two features because 'Belfast', as he was to explain years later, "didn't have anything like the Battersea funfair in London. I wanted something which people could enjoy. Not only to be educated, but also to have fun, and I wanted people to come mainly to relax, which was the great thing I found at the London Festival". The officials thought de Majo's idea was 'crazy', bearing in mind, they said, that Northern Ireland had more rain than any other part of Britain with the exception of Scotland and, not only would the bandstand and Restaurant be flooded out but no-one would come. de Majo persisted in this, as he had with the vertical feature, telling the officials that he had a special arrangement with God guaranteeing sunshine. In the end, they relented and de Majo won over, and apart from one day, just before the opening of these two features, there was no rain. Moreover, the people came and enjoyed a day out.⁵⁷

156,760 people visited this exhibition during the 80 days it was open; a figure, the organisers stated in their final report which was 50% higher than the original estimates. The exhibition received enthusiastic notice from Gordon Russell, the Director of the COID, in the organisation's magazine 'Design'. He summed up the

56. Work 25/3, Final Report Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland, January 1952.

57. Banham and Hillier, p.158.

exhibition as a "stimulating and entertaining exhibition which I would have been most sorry to miss". Further, he added that it was handled "with both imagination and commonsense". The exhibition was, Russell said, "revolutionary to many people who will see bright, pure colour, good lettering, carefully selected and well designed articles, good lighting and so on, all combined for the first time."⁵⁸

58. Work 25/3, Final Report The Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland, January 1952.

WALES

The contribution made by Wales to the Festival was predominantly artistic, with a wealth of talent displayed at Festivals in Cardiff and Swansea as well as the National and International Eisteddfod. Cardiff hosted, the Welsh Industries Fair, an Exhibition of the Rural Industries; exhibitions of scientific and artistic interest; English and Welsh book exhibitions and a photography exhibition. In addition, there were sporting events; hockey; international soccer; seven-a-side rugger; the Cardiff Horse Jumping Show; National and International Inter-Varsity sports; archery tournaments; swimming galas; and cricket tournaments.

Wales did, however, make an offer to the Festival's category of a permanent contribution to commemorate 1951, the Hill Farm Scheme at Dolhendre. The Welsh Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Wynn Wheldon, had difficulty in deciding what Wales' contribution to the Festival should be. There were, of course, obvious choices such as the National Eisteddfod, but beyond this, they were at a loss. In the course of Festival planning, however, the Organisation's interest and commitment to live architecture made an impact on the Welsh committee and they decided that their hillside and upland farms should become the focus of attention in 1951, for, though picturesque, these areas and the farms within them were in desperate need of rehabilitation. The majority of the farms and farmhouses lacked most, if not all, of the modern amenities. The committee consulted the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as other relevant bodies, to discuss their ideas on how to tackle the task they had in mind, and from the resultant meetings,

the project began to take shape and the Dolhendre Hillside Scheme emerged.⁵⁹ The scheme planned to improve the living and working conditions of the hillside farmers and small holders, and to raise their levels of production. In addition to the rehabilitation of the existing farms, the Forestry Commission had decided to accelerate their building programme to include the provision of four new cottages in the area. When completed, the Hillside Project would contain model farmsteads and outbuildings, new cottages, improvements in road approaches and forestry and agriculture.

The project was well received not only by the Welsh people of the area but by the reviewers who went to visit the scheme. In The News Chronicle (Barry's former newspaper) of 26 October, 1951, Stanley Baron described a scene filled with great hope of future prosperity. Thomas Williams, who farmed 120 acres at Dolhendre, explained to the Chronicle that the year before the improvements were made, he had kept only 3 cows, but now he also had 3 calves, in what he called the "nursery", the first of a batch of 8 or 9 that would be born and reared at Dolhendre and would be kept in their own place in the brand new buildings. With the arrival of a new water supply system, which would supply cooling water to the dairy, Thomas Williams' income would go up by two-pence per gallon for the TT milk which he would then be able to supply. Mrs. Williams was also affected by the changes; the refurbishment of her house had now provided her with a new heat-storage cooker. At one stroke, it seemed the years of decay had been eradicated: the low, dark, badly

59. Arts Council, Report by Sir Wynn Wheldon on Dolhendre.

ventilated buildings for farm stock, poor facilities for storing crops and implements and poor domestic accommodation and equipment had been changed. Work on 10 farms was almost complete; new rooms, baths and buildings had been added to the farms as well as water and electricity facilities. All this had been done at Dolhendre and was quickly becoming an example which was being followed by other Welsh communities, the new young agent explained, because "the Festival authorities took the scheme under their wing as a demonstration of what could be done with Welsh land and granted £10,000 to help us get off to a flying start at Dolhendre."⁶⁰

Thus Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales made their contribution to the Festival. It could be argued that the contribution of Scotland and Northern Ireland were, as the Scottish Committee never tired of explaining to the Festival Organisation, regarding their contribution that it was "a U.K. show held in Scotland". But despite this argument, the exhibitions in the respective parts of the Kingdom did reflect their major concerns and interests. Moreover they showed the areas as expanding, viable, economically-sound communities which fitted in with the picture the Festival Authorities wished to present - of a Britain which had a strong past but an even stronger and brighter future.

60. The News Chronicle, 26 October 1951.

CHAPTER 9

THE ARTS AND DESIGN IN THE FESTIVAL

THE IMPACT UPON THE ARTS COUNCIL AND THE COID AS A
RESULT OF THIER INVOLVEMENT IN THE FESTIVAL

For the constituent bodies, the Arts council and the Council of Industrial Design, the Festival "marked a coming of age" and its impact on them was one of the lasting triumphs of the Festival. After the success of 1951, the Design Council became surer of itself and more established in its role as the country's arbiter of good taste and design; the Arts Council "was confirmed in its role of leading public taste in the arts to the light, and acting as a judge of artistic quality".¹ Had it not been for the Festival which drew the public's attention to their work, the success of these two organisations might not have been established so quickly and conclusively.

THE ARTS COUNCIL

THE ARTS FESTIVALS IN 1951

The Arts Council was set up in 1940 with a grant from the Pilgrim Trust of £25 thousand, and was further subsidised by the coalition Government who recognised the importance of bringing culture to the people of war burdened Britain. The Arts Council was seen as the authority and leading light for the encouragement of music and art. Before 1945 it had been known as CEMA, the Committee (later changed to Council) for the Encouragement of Music and Arts, but it was not until 1945 when it became known as the Arts Council

1. Robert Hewison, In Anger, pp.55-56.

that its success was confirmed. It was responsible to, and financed by the Treasury and in 1946, under a new Constitution, was allowed to make capital grants and interest free loans instead of just providing guarantees against loss. The aim of the reconstituted Arts Council would be, according to its Director, Lord Keynes, "to carry the arts through the countryside and to maintain metropolitan standards".² Moreover, Keynes hoped that the Arts Council would be able to feed the public's newly aroused and widely diffused desires. Apart from this, however, he considered the first task was to solve the problem of the shortage of suitable theatres, concert halls and galleries which affected most parts of Britain. When this was achieved, the Council could then begin to decentralize and disperse the dramatic, musical and artistic life of the country, building up provincial centres and promoting an interest in these areas in every town and country. He stressed that it was not the Art Council's intention, in this endeavour, to act on their own where it could be avoided; collaboration with local authorities and participation of local enterprises, societies and institutions would be encouraged. He said the Arts Council hoped that in every blitzed town in the country, the local authority would provide a central group of buildings for drama, music and art, thus anticipating the time when the theatre, concert hall and gallery would be a living element in everybody's upbringing, with regular attendance at the theatre and concerts as an integral part of the organised school curriculum. Within London, the Arts Council wished to create "a great artistic metropolis, a place to visit and wonder at". This

2. The Arts Council Papers, The First Ten Years, p.9.

would be achieved by the refurbishing of existing theatres, concert halls and art galleries, and the building of new ones where cultural events could be properly housed. Ultimately the purpose of the Arts Council was, Lord Keynes concluded:

to create an environment to breed a spirit, to cultivate an opinion, to offer a stimulus to such purpose that the artist and the public can each sustain and live on the other in that union which has occasionally existed in the past at the great ages of communal civilized life - home service.³

Thus it would appear that the early ambitions of the Arts Council were not dissimilar to the overall aspirations of the Festival Organisation and therefore the Arts Council's programme contributed substantially to the fulfilment of the Organisation's wish that the Festival should raise and establish cultural standards.

Perhaps not forgetting that they had initially been asked by the Government to organise the national exhibition, the Arts Council felt from the outset, much to the chagrin of the Festival Council, that their task of organising the Festival of Arts would be much simpler if they were relieved from the burden of participating directly in the arranging of the Festival Exhibitions, and were allowed to do so as part of the expanding Arts programme. This was outlined in a letter to Ismay, the Chairman of the Festival Council, by Ernest Pooley, the Chairman of the Arts Council, in which he stated the Council's wish to function independently of the Festival Organisation, and that they felt more able to contribute if their "special position" in relation to the Festival Organisation was

3. Arts Council, First Annual Report, 1946, "The Arts Council its policy and hopes" by Lord Keynes (First published in The Listener, 12 July 1945).

recognised. He proposed therefore "that the Council's representatives (Huw Wheldon) should attend meetings of the Executive in the capacity of an observer only". He said:

This does not of course mean that the Festival of Arts would be removed from the purview of the Festival Council; we fully recognise our obligation to cooperate fully with the Executive Committee in this aspect of its work but it does mean that our representative would cease to have any share in the responsibility for the plans for the Exhibitions. His function will be to submit from time to time to the Festival Executive for preliminary discussion the Arts Council's plan for the Festival of Arts and to cooperate with the Executive in ensuring that there is no clash between those plans and all other arrangements.⁴

In view of the fact that the Arts Council was not merely constituted for the life of the Festival, but was an organised independent body with a specific programme to fulfill, this attitude was in some aspects understandable. However, Lord Ismay, on behalf of the Festival Council, expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. He responded to Ernest Pooley's letter by stating that he could not agree to the differentiation upon which the Arts Council was insisting. He further wrote to the Lord President on 19 and 21 January 1949 to explain the Art Council's position. He stressed his reluctance to accept Sir Ernest's proposals because they "struck at the root of the team spirit which he felt was so essential if the Festival of Britain was to be a success".⁵ As one of the two truly established bodies within the Festival's Executive, and because of the specialized nature of this assignment,

4. PRO, EL 6/21, Pooley to Ismay, 10 January 1949.

5. Ibid. Ismay to Morrison, 19 and 21 January 1949. The letters in the Arts Council papers end with Ismay's letter to the Lord President on 21 January 1949. How this matter was resolved is therefore not entirely clear.

they were in the event given some leeway within the Festival Organisation to arrange their contribution, while through Huw Wheldon, keeping the Executive Committee informed of their plans and ideas which the latter would ensure were in keeping with the expressed purpose of the Festival.

Having established the role it was to play within the Festival Organisation, the Arts Council turned its attention to arranging a series of Festivals throughout the country which would display Britain's contribution to Fine Art, Music and Drama. Adopting a three part plan, they decided to promote a season of the Arts in London between May and June 1951 and to foster Arts Festivals in twenty-three centres in England, Scotland and Wales. These Festivals would either be developed around existing Festivals such as those in Edinburgh, Stratford-upon-Avon, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham and Canterbury, or brought into existence by the creation of new Festival Centres. Lastly, they decided to stimulate local effort to produce artistic endeavours in other towns and cities for this special occasion. The Arts Council would promote this last category of Festivals by working with established organisations wherever they were needed (thereby not taking on further responsibility) and, in some cases acting as an intermediary between groups and individuals who would normally have little contact but who wished their town or city to participate in the Arts Festival. In addition to this they would, as their Constitution permitted, offer grants and guarantees against loss on schemes which they agreed to.⁶

6. Arts Council Papers, Sixth Annual Report, 1950-51, p.4.

Closely following the expressed intentions of their Charter, the Arts Council would not be drawn into dealing with anything other than the Arts. Their monies would, they decided, be put into fine arts, drama, and classical music which would embrace opera and ballet.⁷ In a detailed proposal to the Executive Committee, the Arts Council outlined their plans for the Festival in these areas: there would be music at all the Festival Centres, with the most important contribution taking place in London where concerts and other musical events would be sponsored directly by the Arts Council, music societies and independent promoters. In some Festival Centres music would take a predominant role, in the form of orchestral concerts, recitals, choral works, festivals of chamber, Elizabethan, and folk music. The Executive would, in the case of London, be responsible for the booking of concert halls and buildings that could be used for the Season. As far as the local Festivals were concerned, the Arts Council, acting either in an advisory or intermediary capacity, proposed to cooperate with music societies who would be asked to arranged a series of concerts for their own Festivals. Furthermore, the Arts Council planned to maintain the tradition of commissioning music for Festivals, offering as an inducement an ex-gratia payment together with a guaranteed first performance, or a number of guaranteed performances, with reputable artists. They emphasized that it would be desirable to commission work on all musical levels including

7. Interview with Sir Huw Wheldon, 120 Richmond Hill, Richmond, England, 29 January 1983.

piano concertos and larger choral works.⁸

The Council's plans for the Fine Arts were tied in with those of the Museums and Galleries. They said that in London the national collections would undoubtedly have their own plans for 1951 and therefore there was nothing they could usefully do but to ask the Directors to supply their proposals as soon as possible in order to prevent overlapping with the plans of the smaller galleries. They felt that a contribution could be made by the mounting of an exhibition, under their direction and management, in Burlington House, which they considered to be, without doubt, the finest exhibition building in London. However, they realised there would be some difficulty in obtaining this venue as it was used for the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy, which was to be staged as usual in 1951. The Executive Committee was therefore asked by the Festival Organisation to approach the Council of the Academy (in their official capacity of overall sponsors of Festival programmes) with the suggestion that an Exhibition should be staged, illustrating the history of the Royal Academy from its inception in 1768 until 1951, instead of holding the usual annual exhibition.⁹

8. Cab 124/1334, Memo from the Arts Council to the Executive Council, 6 April 1948. It is not explained in this document why the Executive were responsible for booking concert halls. One assumes it was because the halls were required by the Festival Organisation for Festival performances and not by the Arts Council who were acting solely as agents - organising soloists, orchestras and other performers. This would also explain the role the Executive would play in the fine arts, specifically in approaching the Royal Academy to suggest the possible staging of an exhibition illustrating the Academy's history from 1768 to 1951.
9. Ibid. The Burlington Galleries did not accept the Arts Council's suggestion, choosing instead to retain their traditional summer exhibition from 5 May-26 August 1951.

Added to this, the Arts Council expressed the intention of arranging a number of special exhibitions both in London and the regions, and in this connection, they would approach all the art collectors from the King downwards to borrow suitable pictures and objects. They added, however, that they did not wish to hold the monopoly in such exhibitions and would give every assistance to all galleries or societies in every part of the country who wished to organise exhibitions.

The Arts Council further reported that they were in direct and close touch with all the provincial art galleries and museums and, with all the help of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Museums Association whose sole function was to act in liaison with the Arts Council, discussions were taking place to decide the best way of approaching the curators of the provincial museums and galleries to ask them to submit their plans for 1951, thereby ensuring there would be no overlapping and that the scope would be as wide as possible. The Arts Council also proposed to commission paintings and sculptures which they said might be exhibited in any of the pavilions designed for the Festival.¹⁰

The Arts Council's plans for drama were somewhat different from those for music and the fine arts. In this area they encountered a number of difficulties: theatrical productions, unlike concerts and art exhibitions, needed to be housed in buildings designed specifically for that purpose and the theatres in London and the regions were already 'tied up' in complex agreements and contracts. Under the terms of the Arts Council's Charter, it could

10. Ibid.

only make grants to non-profit-distributing bodies. This ruled out the possibility of grants being made to these theatres and the Arts Council was therefore not in a position to tell them what plays to stage during the Festival.¹¹ The West End theatre managers would, the Arts Council said, resent any suggestion that they should stage "something special" for 1951, arguing that the shows put on in their theatres were first-class standard. The Arts Council suggested to the Executive that the best way to approach this group would be to tactfully outline the Festival's plans and aims and hope that they would become enthusiastic enough to do something on their own initiative.¹²

The situation in the regional areas was, fortunately less complex. There were a number of established theatre festivals, such as those in Stratford-upon-Avon, which could be asked to put on either a new play or special production for 1951. In addition to this, the repertory companies, already in touch with the Arts Council through the Conference of Repertory Companies, had expressed their desire to be a part of the 1951 activities. The Arts Council intended to approach these companies to help make arrangements and offer financial assistance where necessary, thus ensuring that contributions would be of a high standard. The Arts Council also informed the Executive Committee that it would be prepared to act as an intermediary for those towns who wished to stage plays as part of local festivals but who did not have the necessary theatrical connections.¹³

11. Sir Huw Wheldon, Interview, 28 January 1983.

12. Cab 124/1334, Memo from the Arts Council to the Executive Committee, 6 April 1948.

13. Ibid.

The Arts Council's report on the plans for drama concluded by explaining that, unlike music and art, they would not be placing any commissions for plays because they believed that these were seldom, if ever, particularly remarkable. Rather, they wanted theatre managers and playwrights to be informed of the purpose of 1951 and, on the basis of this information, to produce first-class results in the Festival year.¹⁴

14. Ibid.

THE LONDON SEASON

After outlining their plans to the Executive Committee, the most formidable enterprise facing the Arts Council was the creation of a London Season. Their aim was to display, during the first eight weeks of the Festival, "The Genius of the Nation in the Creative Arts". In the music section of the Season, the Arts Council set out to give full representation of the history and practice of British music, in the staging of almost three hundred concerts. These included: three historical series involving six recitals of English songs arranged by the BBC; eight concerts of the work of English composers from 1300 - 1750; as well as eight concerts devoted to the work of Henry Purcell. The contribution made by the English Church music was acknowledged by a series of daily presentations at St. John's, the Festival Church, and also at Westminster Abbey and other London churches. The highlight of the music sections was, however, the opening ceremony at the newly-built Royal Festival Hall attended by the King and Queen. At this event a programme of triumphal music was performed by members of the BBC Symphony, the London Philharmonic, the Philharmonia and the New London Orchestras, which included Handel's "Zadock the Priest", Vaughan Williams' "Serenade to Music", Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance No 1", Arne's "Rule Britannia", and Handel's "Hallelujah and Amen". The Season continued for two months in which over two hundred orchestral concerts were performed in both the Albert Hall and Festival Hall. The repertoire included familiar classical pieces as well as contemporary works by British composers, some of which were commissioned by the Arts Council, such as "The

Festival March" by William Alwyn, and "The Festival Te Deum" by Edmond Rubbra.¹⁵

The music at these concerts was provided by national and regional orchestras, including contributions from those in Birmingham, Manchester and Scotland, which were conducted by a glittering array of national and foreign talent. In addition to the orchestral concerts, there were concerts of choral works: participating in these events were groups of every size (including the massed choirs of over one thousand voices) from London, Wales, Scotland, the Midlands and the North of England. There were also string orchestral reviews, chamber music recitals; serenade concerts at Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, Kenwood and the Victoria and Albert Museum; and programmes of madrigals and Bach cantatas.¹⁶

The Church, and religion in general, played an active role in the Festival programme. Apart from the recitals in St John's there were Free Church services, missionary society meetings and discussions every day with the exception of Saturdays. There were also lunch-hour services. The Festival Church was thus in constant use, with between 75-80,000 people paying it a visit during the Festival summer. Afternoon services were held on eleven Sundays at

15. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951. and Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

16. Ibid. The conductors invited to conduct the various orchestras included Barbirolli, Beecham, Boult, Sargent, Krips, Klemperer, Kubelik, Monteux, de Sabata and Stokowski. This group was also matched by a corresponding list of famous international musicians and soloists who gave song and sonata recitals: Victoria de Los Angeles, Claudio Arrau, Clifford Curzon, Suzanne Danco, Kathleen Ferrier, Jascha Heifetz, Pierre Fournier, Myra Hess, Joan Hammond, Leon Goossens, Eileen Joyce, Yehudi Menuhin, William Primrose, Cyril Smith, Solomon and Jennie Tourel. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951.

Festival Hall, two of them by the Roman Catholic Festival Committee. The attendance at these services averaged approximately two thousand.

Thousands of people also took part in religious meetings held in the Amphitheatre of the Pleasure Gardens. Social History pilgrimages visited such places as Jordans, Gersley, St. Pancras, Wesley's preaching house, Milton's birthplace, and Canterbury and Winchester Cathedrals. Great interest was shown in these journeys and a number of visitors took part, some of them from Africa, India and China.¹⁷

The Church also contributed to other aspects of the Festival's Arts programme. There was a successful exhibition of contemporary church art held in the Great Hall at Lambeth Palace; at Registrar House in Edinburgh, a collection of historical documents was displayed to illustrate the theme, "Church and Nation"; and in the Crypt of St. Paul's, a dramatic narrative Exhibition was held entitled "The Faith of Britain", drawing a crowd of nearly 100,000. There were also performances of religious plays in local festivals: in London, Christopher Fry's religious play - "A Sleep of Prisoners" was performed. At the end of the Festival, with the evidence of the religious activities to support him, the Archbishop of Canterbury was able to say, that "the Church still stands for and creates something abiding in the heart of England".¹⁸

The contribution of the opera to the Music Festival was as formidable as the orchestral section. The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, presented Vaughan Williams' new opera "The Pilgrim's

17. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain, 1951.

18. Ibid.

Progress", as well as their own Festival programme which included Wagner's "Der Ring des Niebelungen", "Parsifal" and "Die Meistersinger". The Sadler's Wells opera included two English operas in their programme - Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" and Vaughan Williams' "Hugh the Drover", as well as Wolf Ferrari's "The School for Fathers" and three of Verdi's operas, "Don Carlos", "Simone Boccanegra" and "Falstaff". The English Opera Group presented the whole of its repertoire of operas by Benjamin Britten which included "Albert Herring", "The Rape of Lucretia", "Let's Make an Opera", and also Britten's new realisation of "Dido and Aeneas". There was a season of Gilbert and Sullivan at the Savoy Theatre; the Mercury Theatre presented productions of Intimate Opera by Purcell, Arne, Mozart and Offenbach. Glyndebourne presented a special Mozart season, performing four of his works: "Don Giovanni", "Così fan Tutte", "Le Nozze di Figaro" and "Idomeneo". In addition to all these works, the Arts Council commissioned a number of new operas: Benjamin Britten presented "Billy Budd"; George Lloyd wrote "John Sockman" which was performed by the Carl Rosa Opera Company; and four further opera scores, chosen from no less than sixty entries, were Arthur Benjamin's "A Tale of Two Cities"; Alan Bush's "Wat Tyler"; Berthold Goldschmidt's "Beatrice Cenci" and Karl Rankl's "Deirdre of Sorrows".¹⁹

The London Season's musical contribution was a clear example of the Festival being used to stimulate a particular aspect of Britain's artistic life. For example, opera which was considered to

19. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951, and Robert Hewison, In Anger, p.52.

be the sickly child of English Music, outshone in England by its elder brother, the Shakespearean drama, and always in the shadow of its Italian, German and French cousins, was promoted and encouraged by the Arts Council, who used the Festival as a lever to further the appreciation of operatic music. Classical music was in general given a great boost by the Festival, with visitors to London, during the Festival season, being able to visit no less than two hundred concerts. However, it must be stated that although encouragement was being given to British music, composers and musicians, it was only the beginning for the majority of the music programmes featured a large number of the better known works of the more established composers. In spite of this, the music section was considered a success. Andrew Smith, music critic of The Daily Herald, stated:

British music is looking up. On its merits it has no cause to look down, but merits alone don't bring prosperity to the Arts. What has happened? The Festival of Britain, in its first month of life, has already put a touch of rose tint into the outlook.

He added that the Festival had put London prominently on the map as a music centre; Sir Malcolm Sargent told him that foreign visitors had expressed their astonishment at the quality and quantity of music London was offering during the Festival year, and as a by-product of this there was, he said, a rise in the demand for the services of British artists abroad.²⁰ Kenneth Loveland, music critic for The South Wales Argus, was much impressed by the variety of music:

I was able to hear five major orchestral works by Vaughan Williams - four of the Symphonies and "Job" - to say nothing

20. The Daily Herald, 11 June 1951.

of a new cantata and a new opera by the same composer. Is any other capital doing as much for one of its own living composers?

In his reports of the musical segment of the London Season, despite all the variety, he concluded that there were not many novelties in the Season and that the music he heard was interesting rather than shattering or revolutionary.²¹

The most eloquent testimony of the achievement of the Festival's musical contribution was written by the music critic of The Times:

What music graced the Great Exhibition of 1851? Virtually nothing: a few organ recitals, the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus at the opening and a massed band concert at the Chelsea Hospital on 15 June. W.H. Calcott published on his own initiative his "New Sacred Song for 1851, The Desire of all Nations" and seized the occasion to introduce some new piano pieces. But there was nothing of consequence. It was only the industrial side of the music which figured in the scheme: instrument makers submitted their wares to a jury, on which Sir Henry Bishop, Sir George Smart, Sigismond Thalberg and Hector Berlioz served. Berlioz has left an amusing account of music as he found it one hundred years ago. There was plenty going on at the Royal Italian Opera. John Ella put on concerts of the musical union, and there was also some extra chamber music by the Beethoven Quartet Society (at which some of the audience used miniature scores, but according to the sarcastic Berlioz lost their places in them). What is clear from him and from other such accounts as remain is that it was all foreign music performed by eminent foreigners. The Story of 1951, will read very differently.²²

The Sadler's Wells Ballet at Covent Garden performing two new works in their repertoire, "Tiresias", which was specially commissioned by the Arts Council for 1951, with music by Constant Lambert and choreography by Frederick Ashton; and Ravel's "Daphnis and Chloe", with new choreography, also by Ashton. The Sadler's

21. The South Wales Argus, July 1951 (no date given).

22. The Times Festival of Britain Supplement, May 1951.

Well's Theatre Ballet performed another specially commissioned work, "Harlequin in April" with music by Richard Arnell and choreography by John Cranko. The Festival Ballet Company, with Markova and Dolin appeared at the Stoll theatre in a programme which included "Peer Gynt", and another specially commissioned work, "Atlantic Crossing" with music by Ferde Grofe.²³

The Arts Council was less successful with the London Season's drama section. Their co-ordinating role was less established in the theatre than in the musical section. As has been seen, the complex pattern of theatre ownership and management and their grant system led the Arts Council to conclude that any attempt to arrange a comprehensive drama programme, similar to that of the music programme, would be impracticable. Instead, they chose to ask established theatre companies to submit plans and suggestions and, in this respect, money was earmarked for grants and guarantees for those schemes which seemed the most attractive. By this policy, the Arts Council hoped to encourage performances of the classic and also important productions of contemporary work. In the event, the London Season was dominated by the classics and revivals and the new contemporary works which the Arts Council had hoped for were few.²⁴

23. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951.

24. The Old Vic presented "Sophocles", "Electra", Shakespearean faithfuls including "Henry V", "Twelfth Night", and "The Merry Wives of Windsor". The cast in these plays included Peggy Ashcroft, Ursula Jeans, Roger Livesey and Alec Clunes. At the St. James Theatre a company led by Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh successfully mounted "Anthony and Cleopatra" and Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra"; John Gielgud played Leontes in "A Winter's Tale" supported by Diana Wynyard and Flora Robson; Sir Ralph Richardson also headed a company which presented ... (cont.)

New works included: J.B. Priestly's "The Golden Door"; and N.C. Hunter's "Waters of the Moon", casting Dames Sybil Thorndike and Edith Evans, which were modest successes; William Douglas-Home's "The Thistle and the Rose", a play about James VI of Scotland, which was a failure.²⁵ Three new religious plays were produced respectively, by K.M. Baxter, Christopher Fry (commissioned by the Religious Drama Society) and Richard Ward, in Southwark Cathedral, St John's, and St Thomas' Church, Regent Street. So poor were the results of the new plays that the Arts Council was forced to admit, in its sixth annual report, that "it was disappointing that so few contemporary plays of merit emerged for the occasion".²⁶

However, the ground the Arts Council lost in the drama presentations was made up in the Art Section, mounting under its direct management eleven of over thirty of the public exhibitions created expressly for the Festival. The most important of these were the Hogarth and Henry Moore Exhibitions at the Tate Gallery; two anthologies of contemporary British painting 1925-1950, the Temperas of William Blake; and Sixty Paintings for 1951. With its financial leverage the Arts Council was the only organisation that had the power to exhibit, commission and buy on a large scale.²⁷

(24.cont)

Tchekov's "Three Sisters", and Alec Guinness appeared in a production of "Hamlet". There were also performances of Shaw's "Man and Superman", starring Kay Hammond and John Clements; open-air performances in Regent's Park of James Elroy Flecker's "Hassan" with music by Delius. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951.

25. Hewison, p. 52.

26. Arts Council, Sixth Annual Report, page 7.

27. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951, and Hewison, pp.52-53. In 1952, for example, the Arts Council was able to spend £12,540 on purchases and commissions.

This initiative began in 1951 when the Arts Council invited sixty selected painters, among them Frances Bacon, L.S. Lowry, Lucian Freud, Rodrigo Moynihan, Ben Nicholson, Victor Pasmore, John Piper and Graham Sutherland, to produce work not less than forty-five inches by sixty inches on canvases supplied free by the Arts Council (as canvas was in short supply) on whatever subject they pleased as a tribute to Festival year. This size was uncomfortably large for some contributors but the Arts Council offered a further inducement by stating that it would buy five of the pictures for £500 each, on the recommendation of three independent judges. The paintings, under the title of "Sixty Paintings for 1951", were to be exhibited in twelve cities throughout the country, including London, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and Leicester. In its annual report the Arts Council said that this exhibition was, in terms of popularity and significance, one of its most important exhibitions.²⁸ The three-man committee of judges consisted of Mr Sandberg, the Director of the Municipal Museum, Amsterdam, A.J.L. McDonnell, purchaser in England for the Felton Bequest, and Alan Clutton Brock, art critic for The Times.²⁹ They selected William Gear's "Autumn Landscape", which "suggested the shape of an enormous leaf tinged at the edges with autumn colouring"; Ivon Hitchens' "Aquarian Nativity" almost seven feet high, over eighteen feet wide, and "so vivid with colour as to be indescribable"; Lucian Freud's "Interior near Paddington", (See Fig. 116) "featuring a stunted soho-like character by a window beside a Triffid plant"; Claude

28. Arts Council, Sixth Annual Report, p. 7.

29. Arts Council, 21st Arts Panel Minutes, 10 April 1951.

Rodgers' "Miss Lynn", figuring a young woman reclining on a divan; and Robert Medley's "Bicyclists against a Blue Background", having Picasso-esque figures riding bicycles, contrasted with seated figures against an ochreous background. (See Fig. 117) Victor Pasmore's "The Snowstorm", a spiral motif in black and white, although not among the original five, was subsequently bought by the Arts Council.³⁰ It may have been that these choices, or indeed the sixty paintings, were not to everyone's taste, but the Arts Council had been successful in exhibiting art and also in encouraging a public appreciation of contemporary art.

This was true also of the Works on the South Bank where numerous modern painters and sculptors, such as Siegfried Charoux, Graham Sutherland, Mitzi Solomon Cunliffe, Frank Dobson, Henry Moore, Jacob Epstein, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Victor Pasmore, John Piper and Feliks Topolski were asked by the Presentation Panel and the individual South Bank architects, to produce, in conjunction with the Arts Council, murals and sculptures to set off the landscape and adorn the pavilions and restaurants, thus attempting to unify art and architecture. Siegfried Charoux's gigantic bas-relief entitled "The Islanders" stood outside the Seas and Ships Pavilion (see Fig. 118); Graham Sutherland's mural "The Origin of the Land" was placed in the Land of Britain Pavilion; Mitzi Solomon Cunliffe executed a sculpture entitled "Root Bodied Youth" a group symbolising the origins of the land and people, which was mounted on the viewing platform at Station Gate, the

30. The Ocean Times, "Sixty Modern Paintings", 29 April 1951. and Banham and Hillier, p.49.

entrance to the South Bank; she also executed a pair of sculptured bronze hands which formed door handles for the Regatta Restaurant, (which Barbara Hepworth refused to touch because she associated them with amputation). Commissioned by the Arts Council, Frank Dobson's sculpture of two monumental seated female figures entitled "Leisure" was put in the island of the Royal Festival Hall, whilst another sculpture of his, "London Pride", was placed near the main entrance of the same building. Henry Moore's "Reclining Figures", commissioned by the Arts Council, was set against the Slope near the Country Pavilion (See Fig. 119); also commissioned by the Arts Council, "Youth Advances", Jacob Epstein's sculpture in gilded bronze, was placed in front of the Homes and Gardens Pavilion (See Fig. 120); Ben Nicholson had two pieces on the South Bank, one of which was situated on the approach from Waterloo Bridge, and the second, a large untitled mural, which is now housed in the Student's Centre of Edinburgh University was placed in the Riverside Restaurant. (See Fig. 121) Barbara Hepworth was commissioned to execute two pieces of sculpture for the South Bank,; the first, entitled "Turning Forms", for the Riverside Restaurant, and the second "Contrapuntal Forms" (See Fig. 122), was a massive double sculpture carved in blue limestone, the tallest block of which was ten feet high. It represented the spirit of discovery and was aptly set high on a plinth close to the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon, (it was later set up in Harlow New Town).³¹ Victor Pasmore's swirling ceramic mural was mounted on the south wall of the Regatta

31. Tom Cross, Painting the Warmth of the Sun: St Ives Artists 1939-75, p.91.

Restaurant, flanking the staircase entrance to the site from the Hungerford Railway Bridge, (See Fig. 123); John Piper executed an external mural, "The Englishman's Home", which was mounted in the family section of the Homes and Gardens Pavilion; and Feliks Topolski mounted his mural "Cavalcade of Commonwealth" on the railway arch close to the Transport and Communication Pavilion.³² One piece of sculpture not yet mentioned, which captured the public's attention and imagination was Richard Huw's forty-three foot bucketing water sculpture, which cascaded a thousand gallons of water per minute when it was not choked by the Visitor's orange peel. (See Fig. 124).

The efforts of the Festival Organisation and the Arts Council to unify art and architecture and to acquaint the public with fine art was not, however, completely successful. Firstly, the murals and sculptures themselves, like the architecture of the South Bank, represented no new ideas. Of all the major artists who received commissions, only Victor Pasmore had undergone major development since the war, abandoning "his misty Chiswick river-bank idiom for decisive and increasingly constructivist abstraction", producing work seen at the South Bank and the Arts Council Exhibition which "responded to the post-war mood of reconstruction and renovation".³³ Furthermore, the visitor was overwhelmed by the superfluity of visual objects on the site, as well as being filled with the exhibits pertaining to its own particular theme, each section also had its own mural or sculpture, and in some cases, both

32. Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition South Bank The Festival of Britain Catalogue.

33. Banham and Hillier, p.49, and Hewison, p.50.

were present; there were also other pieces of art on view and thus the visitor had to struggle both to digest visually and appreciate mentally the huge amount of visual stimuli before him. This lack of public appreciation of the art exhibits at the South Bank was analysed by Misha Black, a member of the Presentation Panel and co-ordinating designer of the Upstream Section:

It was odd that this (the works of art spread through every concourse and building on the South Bank) raised little comment from the eight and a half million visitors, or the Press. Only a few years previously Epstein's "Rima" in Hyde Park had been tarred and feathered for reasons which were explicit only to barbarians, but on the South Bank, Epstein seemed barely noticed, Hepworth was accepted with a shrug, while the magnificent Henry Moore attracted less attention than the huge boulders which brought to the site a whiff of the Forest of Dean.

The reason for this nonchalant reaction was, he thought, "partly *embarras de richesse*":

When there was so much to see and experience, when the Skylon soared to the sky and the Dome of Discovery spanned the days of the year, it is not surprising that a carved block of stone only eight feet high should seem, to most, of little importance.

Black concluded that with hindsight these faults might have been rectified with fewer and bigger pieces of sculpture and larger murals but, ultimately, the lesson he had learnt from the South Bank experience was:

that art only has impact on large sections of the community when its subject is deeply emotive and when it is at the same time of such aesthetic consequence that no-one can contemplate it without emphatic involvement. I feel that few of the works of our artist colleagues simultaneously met both criteria.³⁴

While the results of the artistic endeavours on the South Bank may be open to criticism, the fact still remains that throughout

34. Banham and Hillier, p.83.

this site commissions were given to some fifty painters and twenty-four sculptors, thereby creating an act of public patronage on one of the widest scales ever seen in Britain. This achievement would never have been possible without the Festival of Britain. The Art Council's art season did not end with "Sixty Paintings for 1951" or with the South Bank: in its capacity as intermediary and advisor, it ensured that all the available London museums mounted exhibitions for 1951. A main Festival sculpture exhibition was held by the LCC in Battersea Park; the mobiles in this exhibition aroused public interest and admiration. However, Marino Marini's "Horesman of the Year" was deemed so ugly by the head-keeper that he kept it hidden: in case, he explained, it rained and the plaster melted.³⁵ The British Museum also put on exhibitions which included: "English Watercolour Landscape"; "Medals and Manuscripts connected with the Great Exhibition of 1851"; "Chinese Art of the Tang Dynasty". The Imperial Institute exhibited "Traditional Art from the Colonies"; the Imperial War Museum showed "Paintings and Drawings of Sir William Orpen"; the National Portrait Gallery exhibited "Leading Characters of 1851". Drawing on its own history, the Royal Society of Arts mounted an "Exhibition of Exhibitions"; the Tate Gallery showed displays of "Hogarth", "Henry Moore" and the "The Eton Leaving Portraits"; the Victoria and Albert Museum mounted the "Commemorative Exhibition of the Great Exhibition of 1851", the "1951 Exhibition of Books from Caxton to Today" and "English Decorative Arts from 1851-1951"; the Arts Council Gallery exhibited "Splendid Occasions" which showed prints illustrating four centuries

35. Ibid., p.50.

of public rejoicing and ceremonial, and the "Tempera Painting by William Blake"; the New Burlington Galleries exhibited "Modern British Paintings"; and in the Royal Festival Hall there was an exhibition of "Sculpture from 1851-1951".³⁶

Thus for the Arts Council, the London Season was undoubtedly a great success, and from May to June, London experienced variety, quality and quantity in all the arts. The Arts Council had moreover, succeeded in establishing itself as the main organisation concerned with the arts, making it clear that it was the only body which could offer grants and commissions on a large scale. In 1951 the Arts Council offered many commissions, thus leaving behind a tangible record, not only of its commitment to the Festival, but of the Festival itself.³⁷

36. Work 25/44, The Arts in the Festival of Britain. Other exhibitions included: "A History of the South Bank" (County Hall); "Religious Craftsmanship" (Lambeth Palace); "An Exhibition of Modern Literature" by the National Book League; the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition; and the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours Spring Exhibition.

37. Arts Council, Sixth Report, p.9. A Poetry Competition drew entries from nearly two thousand poets and the work of the winners was published as "An Anthology for 1951", by Penguin Books.

THE ARTS FESTIVAL OUTSIDE LONDON

The second phase of their three part plan, the Arts Council promoted Arts Festivals in the twenty-three officially designated centres throughout the British Isles.³⁸ These centres varied considerably in terms of their experience in mounting festivals. At one end of the scale there were those, such as Edinburgh, which already possessed an established tradition and had, by 1951, acquired a considerable reputation in a number of artistic fields; others were of a smaller dimension with emphasis being placed on one particular area of the arts, for example Aldeburgh and Cheltenham (both towns had within the space of a few years gained a reputation in the field of contemporary English music), Perth (drama) and the Eisteddfod Festivals of Wales (choral music). At the other end of the spectrum there were cities, like Liverpool, Aberdeen and Norwich which had little or no tradition or experience of artistic festivals. There were also centres like Stratford-upon-avon, Bath, Brighton, Oxford and Cambridge who used the events with which they were traditionally associated as a backdrop or centre-piece of their particular Festivals. Stratford designed its Festival around Shakespeare and the theatre presentation of his plays; Bath used its annual assembly as the backdrop for its Festival of Music, Art and Drama; Brighton highlighted its city's long association with Royalty and the resultant Regency period. Oxford and Cambridge developed

38. See pp.455-460 for the Arts Council's plans for Arts Festivals. In addition see also pp.275-276 for the list of centres chosen by the Council, and the dates of these Festivals.

their Festivals around their most distinguished feature, their universities.

It was no surprise, therefore, that the Festivals should take different forms and the quality of artistic activity reached different levels. To obtain a clear picture of these differences it will be necessary to illustrate the form the Festivals took in each of the categories cited above and for this purpose those in Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Liverpool, Stratford-upon-avon and Brighton have been chosen as representative examples. Further, Cheltenham, Liverpool, Stratford-upon-Avon and Brighton will be used as examples of how four regional centres in England staged their contribution to the arts. Although the Festivals in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were on the whole much smaller than the contribution made by England, the part they played as major regions of the United Kingdom deserves illustration.³⁹

39. See Annex 4 for a summary of the content of the remaining Arts Festivals.

THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

Scotland's largest and most successful Festival was held in the incomparable setting of Edinburgh. This fifth Annual International Festival of Music and Drama was to be one of the greatest cultural events in the Festival of Britain for the three weeks, the city and its world-wide audience experienced the finest in music, opera, drama, ballet and art. 1951 heralded the New York Philharmonic's first venture into Europe for twenty years, with Edinburgh being its only European venue. Soloists accompanying the orchestra included Dame Myra Hess, Zino Francescatti, Irmgrad Seefried, Rudolf Serkin, Solomon, and a choir composed of singers from the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union. Other Orchestras to be heard were the London Philharmonic under Sir Adrian Boult; the Hallé under Sir John Barbirolli; the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Ian Whyte; the National Youth and the Scottish National Orchestras, both under Walter Susskind; the Boyd Neel Orchestra and the London Mozart Players under Harry Blech. The Leider recitals featured Kathleen Ferrier and Bruno Walter, Pierre Bernac and Francis Poulenc; Suzanne Danco, Mack Harrell and Irmgrad Seefried. Rudolf Serkin and Solomon gave piano recitals; and Zino Francescatti and Robert Casadesus gave performances of Violin sonatas. Choral concerts were given by the Nederlands Kamerkoor, the Wiener Akademie Kammerchor, and the Edinburgh University Singers. In addition, Fanély Revoil and Willy Clément presented extracts from French operetta in costume. The Glyndebourne Opera presented a production of Verdi's "La Forza del Destino" in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death, and the Sadler's Wells Opera Company presented the world

premiere of Britten's newly commissioned opera "Billy Budd". The first two weeks of ballet at Edinburgh were provided by the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company with its principal dancers Margot Fonteyn and Moira Shearer; and the third week by the Yugoslav National Ballet.⁴⁰

The drama side of this Festival was not as well developed as the musical side. Tyrone Guthrie produced the sixteenth century Scottish drama "Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites" for the Glasgow Citizens Theatre; other performances included Shaw's "Pygmalion"; "The Winters Tale" starring John Gielgud and Diana Wynyard; and the plays of Anouilh by Le Théâtre de l'Atelier. The Festival also presented an Exhibition of Spanish painting as well as a season of films.⁴¹

40. Work 25/230, The Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951, and Work 25/44 The Arts in the Festival of Britain 1951.

41. Ibid.

THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL

The Cheltenham Festival of Contemporary British Music began in 1945 and held its seventh Annual Festival in 1951. As the title implies, this Festival was concerned largely with the performance of music performed by living British composers, and as in previous years, made a special point of introducing new work to the public during the course of the Festival. Thus, from this aspect, the contribution of Cheltenham was important in an arts programme which was, for the most part, concerned with the work of established composers. At Cheltenham in 1951, the main orchestral works were played by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli and, at each of their four concerts, a major British work was given its first performance: these works included Arnold Van Wyck's "Symphony No. 1 in A Minor", new symphonies by John Gardner and E.J. Moeran; Maurice Jacobson's "Symphonic Suite for Strings"; and Malcolm Arnold's "Symphony No. 1". The London Symphony Orchestra made an appearance at the Festival with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting the second performance of Alan Rawsthorne's "Piano Concerto", (commissioned by the Arts Council for the Festival of Britain) and the programme also included Vaughan Williams' "London Symphony". The Boyd Neel Orchestra contributed to the Festival of Britain with Boyd Neel conducting the first public performance of Humphrey Searle's "Poem for Twenty-Two Strings", and Philip Sainton's "Serenade Fantastique for Oboe and Strings". Another new work, Franz Reizenstein's "Serenade", was premiered by the London Wind Players; the Robert Masters Pianoforte Quartet gave their first performance of Benjamin Frankel's "String Trio" and "Piano Quartet

in A Minor"; by Herbert Howells and Edmund Rubbra wrote a new work for the Griller String Quartet which they played at their recital during the Festival. There were also contributions from the English Opera Group who presented a repertoire which, once again, included Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas", as realised by Benjamin Britten; Monteverdi's "Tancredi and Clorinda" and the first performance of Brian Easdale's opera "The Sleeping Children" with the libretto by Tyrone Guthrie.⁴²

The other arts also had a place in Cheltenham: Shakespeare's "As You Like It" was performed in an open-air production and, in addition, there were exhibitions of "British Contemporary Painting" from the collection of the Arts Council; an Architectural exhibition, arranged by the Gloucester Architectural Association; and another exhibition of Cotswold craftmanship of the last half century which included a work by William Morris, Ernest W. Gimson, Peter Waals and the Barnsley Brothers, as well as work done by the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen in 1951.⁴³

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

LIVERPOOL

The Festival in Liverpool was planned on a scale appropriate to the variety and energy of the community, which was renowned for its docks and industries. Tyrone Guthrie, one of the Festival's organisers expressed the character and aspirations of the city in three great processions, each of which reached its climax at the St. John's Gardens in the centre of Liverpool. About ten thousand people participated in each of these processions whose themes were: "Merseyside and Youth", "Merseyside and the World" and "Resurgence". "Resurgence" was indeed dramatic: taking place on the final evening of the Festival, bells chimed throughout the city at midnight while simultaneously, giant bulldozers made their first assault on a section of Liverpool's blitzed area, thereby giving reality to the theme of resurgence, and reiterating the Festival Organisation's first dictum - that the city have faith in its future. These processions on land were matched by three spectacular displays on the River Mersey with demonstrations by both the Royal and Merchant Navies, followed by a fireworks display launched from a moving train of barges, on a scale which, the Arts Council programme indicated, had never before been attempted in Britain. Further events include an open-air exhibition highlighting the city's industrial importance. The "Daylight on Industry" Exhibition was held on a blitzed site in the centre of the city and had two aims: to interest the non-technical visitor by showing the varied nature of industry in the region; and, to demonstrate the less familiar uses of basic materials so that those with a specialised interest in

industry could see the new possibilities in local manufactures.⁴⁴

The artistic aspect of this Festival was arranged by the Arts Council. There were concerts by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra as well as performances by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham and Leopold Stokowski, the Hallé conducted by Sir John Barbirolli and also by the Boyd Neel and London Philharmonic Orchestras, during which the works of sixteen British composers were heard. In addition to this, there were performances by the Covent Garden Opera Company with the Norwegian Soprano, Kirsten Flagstad among its stars; the English Opera Group presented an intimate form of opera under Benjamin Britten; and Sir Thomas Beecham presented a new production of "The Bohemian Girl". The city was also graced with a visit by the Sadler's Wells Ballet, which was accompanied by the Liverpool Philharmonic. The Liverpool Playhouse presented a special season; at another theatre, "The Firstcomers", by Norman Ginsbury, was given its premier by the best amateur actors and actresses in the region; and at the Old Vic Shakespeare's "Henry V" was performed. There was also a selection of music from Lancashire's Music Hall stars, past and present, as well as an exhibition of the work of George Stubbs in the Walker Art Gallery, which was re-opened during the Festival for the first time since 1939. The art and achievement of the cinema was represented by special programmes of British feature and documentary films produced since the introduction of talking pictures.⁴⁵

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

In Stratford the Festival was developed around the city's longstanding association with Shakespeare. In 1951, the Memorial Theatre, the foremost playhouse in England, presented its ninety-second season of plays. The major part of the 1951 season consisted of a cycle of Shakespeare's histories: "Richard II", the two parts of "Henry IV" and "Henry V", and in addition, there was a new production of the "Tempest". A strong and highly talented company, which included Michael Redgrave, Richard Burton, Harry Andrews, Hugh Griffith, Rosalind Atkinson, Heather Stannard and directed by Anthony Quayle was assembled to perform and do justice to the majesty of the plays presented. Also organised for the Festival around the Shakespeare theme, were public lectures and courses arranged by the British Council, the University of Birmingham and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Some of these lectures were given in "Halls Croft" which was restored and decorated as the Festival Club and Shakespeare centre. Programmes of music were arranged which included orchestral and choral concerts, madrigals sung on the river, as well as performances of the Oratorio "Judith" by Thomas Arne, and Vaughan Williams' opera "Sir John in Love".

46. Ibid.

BRIGHTON

The Festival in Brighton acknowledged that its prominence in English Society was due in the first place to the Prince Regent who built the Royal Pavilion thereby causing a quasi-court to be centred there. The Festival organisers therefore decided to celebrate this major event which helped put their town 'on the map'. The Festival was centred around a Regency Exhibition held in the Royal Pavilion, for which the King and Queen lent works of art from Buckingham Palace which had originally been housed in the Pavilion. There was an exhibition of the work of Sir Thomas Lawrence at the Brighton Art Gallery and Museum. It was, however, the Regency theme which pervaded the Festival: there was a Regency Ball in which the dress of the period was worn and a cricket match where the players competed in period dress. There were lectures and conducted tours of Regency Brighton as well as an exhibition of illustrated books of the Regency 1790-1830 at the Brighton Public Library. At the Theatre Royal the world premier of a new play of the Regency period was staged and there was a display of playbills. A series of concerts was given by the Southern Philharmonic Orchestra, and an international puppet festival was held at the Dolphin Theatre, along with an exhibition entitled 'The History of the Puppet Theatre'. In addition to all these events, the organisers mounted a pageant in Preston Park (with over one thousand performers) entitled 'A Cavalcade of Brighton through the Ages', which featured the history of the town from the Romans to AD 1854, the date of the Charter of Incorporation.⁴⁷

47. Ibid.

SCOTLAND

Scotland not only produced its annual Festival in Edinburgh, there were also Festivals in Aberdeen, Dumfries, Inverness and Perth. The Festival held in Aberdeen, Scotland's third largest city, was made up of local events that took place annually: The Highland 'Royal', an agricultural show held in June; the Highland Games in Ballater, held in August; and the Highland Gatherings at Aboyne and Braemar held in September. Events organised specifically for the Aberdeen Festival included an exhibition of "Town Planning, Housing, Health and Welfare", staged in the Music Hall; two art exhibitions held in city's art gallery where the gallery's well-known permanent art collection formed one part of the exhibition, the other being formed by an exhibition of paintings on loan from the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. 21,000 people visited these exhibitions during the Festival which lasted two weeks. Apart from these activities, there were three concerts given by the Scottish National Orchestra, and one concert by the Arion Junior Choir. There were recitals of chamber music and of the traditional ballads and bothy songs of the North-east, as well as a Scottish evening which included Highland dancing and songs. The drama events in this festival included performances in the Children's Theatre and by co-ordinated drama groups. ⁴⁸

The Festival in Dumfries was planned to coincide with the long established "Guid Nych Burris Week", and thus, as a result, featured the usual round of traditional ceremonies and processions; for

48. Ibid.

example, the riding of the Marches, dating from earlier times when the town's magistrates rode out to re-establish the Borough's boundaries; and festivities recalling the pagan rituals connected with the coming of spring and the Queen of the South, otherwise known as the May Queen. Along with these, there were concerts given by the Scottish National Orchestra; a recital of chamber music; and a concert given by the Festival Chorus which was formed specially for the occasion, accompanied by the Dumfries Municipal Orchestra. The Ballet Rambert performed at the Festival and, at "Gracefield", the town's city art centre, there was an exhibition of paintings, both of the gallery's collection as well as paintings of Dumfriesshire. The Festival in Dumfries was concluded by a celebration of the life and work of Robert Burns, "A Nicht wi' Burns", held on 30 June (the last night of the Festival). Scenes from Burns' life was featured along with a selection of his songs, as well as the first performance of a new play about him, entitled "The True Pathos".⁴⁹

The Arts Festival of Inverness was inaugurated with concerts by the Scottish National Orchestra, and among the other musical events were: a recital of chamber music; three concerts of Scots and Gaelic instrumental and vocal music; and a performance of "Rob Roy" by the Inverness Operatic Society. The Ballet Rambert gave two performances, and the annual exhibition in the art gallery of the Inverness Art Society was augmented by pictures borrowed from private collections.⁵⁰

In Perth, at one time the capital city of the Kingdom of

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

Scotland and the focal point for all the routes leading into the Scottish Highlands, the Festival celebrated the city's theatrical tradition which went back at least three hundred years. The achievements of the Scottish theatre were exemplified by three major theatre companies: The Perth Repertory Theatre, formed in 1935; The Glasgow Citizen's Theatre, formed in 1943; and the Dundee Repertory Theatre. During the first two weeks of the Festival, these companies were brought together on the same stage for the first time for an event of this kind, performing three plays in rotation. They were: Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night"; Grace Lovat Fraser's translation of Goldoni's "The Liar" and "The Lass wi' the Muckle Mou", a play in Scots vernacular by the new playwright Alexander Reid presented by the Citizen's Theatre Company (this was performed again in the Edinburgh Festival in 1986). In addition to these events the art gallery mounted an exhibition of painting furnished from the collections of private and national sources; which also included displays of locally-made silverwork and other crafts. A further exhibition of costumes, needlework and pottery was mounted in the Georgian Ballroom of the County Buildings. During the last week of the Festival the public was entertained by: the Ballet Rambert, the Scottish National Orchestra, the Perth Madrigal Choir, the Choral Society and the Chamber Music Club.⁵¹

51. Ibid.

WALES

The Festivals in Wales were dominated, by virtue of the land in which they were situated, by music and song. There were five Festival Centres in Wales: Cardiff, Swansea, St. David's, Llangollen, and Llanrwst. The Festival of Cardiff, the capital of Wales, was planned to give full expression to the variety and energy of its civic personality. During the first two weeks of May there was a series of concerts presenting a wide variety of music, with those activities most exemplary of Welsh musical life given prominence: for example, every evening from 1-4 May, four choirs of five hundred voices chosen from Cardiff's schools took part in a School's Music Festival. The combined male voice choirs of Manselton, Pendyrus, Treorchy and Rhymney presented a choral concert, and there was a performance of Handel's "Messiah" by the Municipal Choral Societies of Cardiff, Llanelly, Merthyr and Swansea, accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra (which was also performing separately during the Festival). In addition to the sound of massed voices, there were recitals of Welsh folk songs; performances by the Welsh National Youth Orchestra, the Welsh National Opera Company and a massed band. For every month of the Festival, dramatic performances were arranged: from 16 May to 2 June three plays were presented: Eric Linklater's "Love in Albania", Christopher Fry's "The Lady's Not For Burning", and a version of "Alice in Wonderland"; from 4-9 June, the Cardiff Shakespeare Players performed "As You Like It". Other productions include a Welsh historical pageant, "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau" (Land of My Fathers), arranged by the Welsh Committee, which told the story of Wales

throughout the ages; the theatrical companies of Cardiff, Llanelly and Neath presented a season of Welsh plays by D.T. Davies, E. Eynon Evans, Jack Jones, David Monger and Emlyn Williams, and a translation of Quintero's play "One Hundred Years Old" by Mary Lewis. There were exhibitions of traditional Welsh music, drama and folk dancing at the Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagan's. and scientific and artistic exhibitions at the National Museum of Wales.⁵²

The Festival in Swansea, the coal-mining and industrial heart of South Wales, was firmly anchored in its musical and choral tradition. While there were Festival productions in the Grand Theatre and exhibitions in the Glyn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea's contribution was dominated by the voices of the Swansea Municipal Choir, the Pontardulais Choir and the Welsh Festival choir (a new creation of two hundred and twenty voices launched specially for 1951). The Welsh Festival Choir were accompanied by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and some of the works they performed included Holst's "Hymn of Jesus"; Ireland's "These Things Shall Be"; Vaughan Williams' "Sea Symphony"; Berlioz "Damnation of Faust"; and new works by Arwel Hughes and John Morgan Nicholas, commissioned by the Arts Council on the advice of the Welsh Committee.⁵³

The Festival of Worship, Music and Drama at St. David's Cathedral, Wales' oldest and most remote cathedral which was once one of the ecclesiastical centres of the medieval world, was like the previous Festivals, dominated by music. The Festival was naturally set within the framework of Christian worship and each day

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

in the cathedral, there were special services conducted and sung with full high church ceremonial. The programmes performed in this setting included the new works by Arwel Hughes and John Morgan Nicholas; cantatas and the "Mass in B Minor" by Bach; as well as early church music. Choirs were drawn from churches and colleges in Llandaff, Monmouth and Carmarthen. Additional music and singing was provided by the Welsh Chorus, the Aberystwyth Madrigal Singers, the Welsh Festival Choir, the BBC Welsh and the Boyd Neel Orchestras. Two religious plays were presented, one in English, on Giraldus Cambrensis, and the other in Welsh on the life of St. David, both of which were commissioned specifically for the Festival and were performed in the cathedral.⁵⁴

The Festivals at Llangollen and Llanrwst were not strictly speaking Festivals in the same way that those so far mentioned were. Events staged in these two areas were: the "International Musical Eisteddfod" at Llangollen and the "National Eisteddfod of Wales" at Llanwrst. The International Musical Eisteddfod, was inaugurated in 1947, and taking place annually in Llangollen, it was then, and still is, a meeting place for choirs and groups of dancers all over the world.⁵⁵ The competitions were held in a large marquee seating ten thousand, and in 1951, choirs and dancers from

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid. From its inauguration in 1947 choirs and dancers from the following countries had taken part in the Eisteddfod: France, USA, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, the Ukraine and Poland.

Argentina, Brazil, Turkey, Israel, Ceylon, Indonesia, Canada and India took part. The event was arranged in three main choral competitions in which the choirs were required to sing two set pieces, one of which was in Latin, and a third piece which had to be an original composition by a composer from the competing choir's own country. Alongside the competitions, visitors were entertained nightly with concerts given by visiting choirs and dancers, accompanied by well-known orchestras and conductors.⁵⁶

The National Eisteddfod, the oldest Festival in Britain, is by tradition held in a different town each year, and in 1951, Llanrwst, a market town in the Conway Valley of North Wales, was chosen as host. The people of Llanrwst worked very hard for two years raising money and preparing a suitable site for the Eisteddfod and in 1951, a pavilion seating ten thousand people was erected in a pretty meadow. In addition to this, smaller buildings and halls around Llanrwst housed the competitions of choral music, individual singing and instrument playing. The National Eisteddfod with its competitors drawn predominantly from Wales, had a poetry section - the Gorsedd Ceremonies - which took place every day, exemplifying the high esteem in which the Welsh people have always held poets, culminating with the crowning and chairing of the bard in the Pavilion. Concerts also took place every evening, performed by the Eisteddfod Choir made up of six hundred and fifty voices from North

56. Ibid. The set pieces required of the choirs were as follows: Mixed choir: "Amen" (G.F. Handel), and "Crux Fidelis" (Solon Michaelides). Female choir: "I Went Out A-Marketing" (Sandor Veress) and "Quoniam Qui Talia Agunt" (Orlando di Lasso). Male choir: "Adoramus Te" (G.P. da Palestrina), and 'Brudefaerden' (Halfdan Kjerulf).

Wales: to the accompaniment of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, they performed Dvorak's "Stabat Mater" and Handel's "Samson" amongst other works including some that had been specially commissioned. There were further vocal contributions from the Eisteddfod Childrens Choir, the Welsh Festival Choir and the Welsh National Opera Company, and orchestral concerts given by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra. Every evening there were drama performances which included competitive performances and Eisteddfod productions in the Welsh language.⁵⁷

57. Ibid.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The last Arts Festival to be discussed was held in Belfast and was jointly arranged by the Northern Ireland Committee, the Arts Council in Northern Ireland, the Belfast Corporation, and various voluntary organisations. The Arts Festival featured a comprehensive programme of Exhibitions, Music and Drama. Tyrone Guthrie directed the newly-formed Northern Ireland Company in a season of old and new Irish plays. The Ulster Theatre Group presented the work of Northern Ireland writers including a new play by the Belfast dramatist St. John Ervine, and there was also a Festival of Amateur Drama. The music section of this Festival included contributions from the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli; the City of Belfast Orchestra accompanying the Festival Chorus; the chorus and orchestra of the Belfast Philharmonic Society; the Queen's University Music Society; and the Griller Quartet. For those who enjoyed dancing to the traditional music of Ulster, there were ceillidhs in the city every evening. Exhibitions in the City Museum and Art Gallery showed the work of Sir John Lavery and also of contemporary Ulster artists, as well as a display of Northern Ireland Books.⁵⁸

58. Ibid.

THE FESTIVALS : AN EVALUATION

The most outstanding point of the Festivals considered, apart from the established ones in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is that there was a 'transient quality' about them, built as they were around the existing traditions and events of particular towns. It was clear that the centres made some effort for 1951, but how lasting this effort would be was debatable even in 1951. In their sixth annual report, the Arts Council confirmed this by stating: "It is still early to hazard an opinion upon the lasting values, if any, of the London Season, the Arts Festival and the many local celebrations. It was in the nature of the whole concept of the Festival of Britain for much of it to be ephemeral".⁵⁹ What was perhaps more important than their lasting value was that these twenty-three centres made to the best of their ability a contribution to the Festival year. Furthermore, smaller towns such as Colchester, Kings Lynn and Salisbury, which were not official centres, made contributions (as the third part of the Arts Council's plan to encourage Festivals in local communities) which, when taking their size into consideration, were by far more outstanding than some of the larger official Festival centres. Colchester held its Festival for a two week period in July, which included: the performance of a play specially written for the Festival by Dorothy L. Sayers on the theme of St. Helena; Exhibitions of Essex painters, Essex subjects, Domestic Architecture, Handicrafts, Church Treasures and Roman Colchester. There were conducted tours of the Constable

59. Arts Council, Sixth Annual Report, p.9.

country, and Essex and Suffolk's clothiers' towns. There were two orchestral performances and choral concerts which included performances of works written specially for the Festival by Armstrong Gibbs and Martin Shaw.⁶⁰

In Kings Lynn the Arts Festival was inaugurated with the re-opening of the Guildhall of St. George (founded in 1406); there were concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra and the Boyd Neel Orchestra as well as performances of Shakespearian and other plays. Exhibitions of a wide variety were mounted, and some of the subjects presented were: "Nelson Relics"; "Merchant Princes House furnished in the period to which they belong"; and "Dr. Charles Burney and his Family". There were also excursions to famous houses and villages.⁶¹

Salisbury's Festival of Arts was planned to include a play commissioned from Ronald Duncan with music by Arthur Oldham, performed by the Salisbury Arts Theatre and amateurs in the Cathedral. Another play was produced by the Arts Theatre Company. There was a choral concert in the Cathedral, as well as an exhibition in the Chapter House and also tours and lectures. These smaller Festivals were, the Arts Council concluded in their Sixth Annual Report, the most successful. In addition to the contributions of the smaller towns, thirty-two cities in Britain mounted art exhibitions: Bradford mounted an exhibition of works by "Bradford Artists 1851-1951"; Carlisle showed the work of "Local Artists and Local Scenes"; at the Mclellan Art Galleries in Glasgow, the exhibition staged was entitled "Scottish Art - Retrospective and

60. Work 25/44, The Arts in the Festival of Britain.

61. Ibid.

Contemporary"; and Manchester City Art Gallery mounted an exhibition of "British Contemporary Paintings".⁶²

In evaluating the Arts in the Festival, the point to be considered is not so much whether or not the Festivals presented new and lasting contributions to the arts, but that the Arts Council managed to organise and encourage most cities in the British Isles to put on some kind of artistic display in 1951. This achievement was indeed monumental, and if the London Season and the Arts Festivals were for the most part transient, the ascendance of the Arts Council was not. At the close of the Festival, the Arts Council's Account closed with a surplus of £51,559 and, with the approval of certain supplementary grants, this figure would be, reduced to £50,259. The Treasury agreed that the Arts Council spend this surplus as they wished.⁶³ It was the crucial grant of £400,000 which the Arts Council had to spend on the Festival that not only gave the Arts Council its unrivalled position in British cultural life, but it acknowledged publicly the conclusive advent of state patronage in the Arts. Lord Keynes said of the initial grants to CEMA (i.e. in 1945) "at last the public Exchequer has recognised the support and encouragement of the civilising arts of life as part of their duty".⁶⁴ The success of the Arts Council reinforced this Governmental acknowledgement. The grant enabled the Council to place commissions in art, music, opera and ballet and to establish and ensure its role as the major arbiter of cultural life in Britain.

62. Work 25/44, The Arts in the Festival of Britain and the Arts Council, Sixth Annual Report, p.7.

63. Arts Council Papers, The Festival Surplus.

64. Arts Council, First Annual Report, 1946.

After the Festival, it was able to dispose of its art commissions in such a way that various cities benefitted from its munificence. Ultimately, the success of the Arts Council lay in its ability not to be over ambitious in attempting to raise the cultural standards of the nation; rather, it tried to help the Arts and the performance of the Arts, and in doing so it helped itself.⁶⁵

65. Sir Huw Wheldon, Interview, 28 January 1983.

THE GROWTH OF THE COID 1943-1957

Like the Arts Council, the early beginnings and development of the COID can be traced back to the necessity of the war years, and its consolidation and permanence being fully recognised by the Festival of Britain. The advent of war and its attendant deprivation made the Government decide, as in other areas of the nation's life, that it was necessary to take over the control and sponsorship of the design industry. They felt that it had become essential to organise the work of the hundreds of both large and small furniture companies to produce, by November 1942, a single range of furniture under the control of a small central committee. In mid-1942, as a result of this decision, Hugh Dalton, then President of the Board of Trade, asked Gordon Russell, who was later to become the head of the COID, to sit on this small central committee, whose function would be to advise Dalton on the introduction of utility furniture which was to be made available through coupon distribution to certain categories of people who could prove their need, for example, newly weds and those whose necessity arose through loss during bombing raids.⁶⁶ The Committee also included other well-known members of the furniture trade, employees and trade unionists, as well as design and housing consultants. At the first meeting, Dalton made it clear to the Committee that its aim should be to ensure that the furniture produced should be soundly made from the best materials available, pleasant in design and which would have to be produced very quickly

66. Gordon Russell, Designers Trade, p.197.

in order to avoid a national famine.⁶⁷ The Committee members were also given a long list of the materials they needed which included plywood, blockboard, hardwood, steel, cellulose, paint, linoleum and textiles, most of which were either unobtainable or in very short supply. The Committee was puzzled by what Dalton meant by "pleasant" furniture for it conjured up different things to different people. This was, however, soon cleared up by Russell who managed to ensure "that the basic rightness of contemporary design won the day", for as he explained, "there wasn't enough timber for bulbous legs or enough labour for even the cheapest carving, and straightforward commonsense lines were both efficient and economical".⁶⁸

Thus, with design concepts worked out, the Committee proceeded to impose these ideas on the hundreds of individual furniture companies,^{and} at the same time, prohibit the manufacturing of any other style. With the help of two furniture designers from High Wycombe, Messrs. Cutler and Clinch, who produced workmanlike designs that would evolve into the new 'utility' style which began to appear in the shops in early 1943, at prices which, not subject to purchase tax, appeared very reasonable when compared with the prices of old stock and second-hand furniture.⁶⁹ However, although this idea of distributing standardised furniture was basically sound, the design was criticised by the Architectural Review as being too retrograde and by the trade as being too advanced. Russell, on the other hand, encouraged to hear the criticisms from both sides, of which he said,

67. Fiona Macarthy, A History of British Design 1830-1970, p.70.

68. Russell, p.199.

69. Ibid.

"it looked as if we were about right. I am never for forcing the pace; a limited advance and then consolidation is a sound principle both in war and peace".⁷⁰ This philosophy would serve Russell well in the early years of his leadership of the COID.

The success of the utility furniture experiment led Russell and other designers such as Misha Black, Milner Grey and Kenneth Bayes to transfer the advances made in raising design standards in war to peacetime use. Russell suggested a programme of research into furniture design for both wartime use and for the future, and with the blessing of the Board of Trade, he created a Design Panel, of which he became chairman. Finding designers of an acceptable calibre was not easy, as the best of them were either abroad or unavailable. He was, however, able to recruit Messrs. Cutler and Clinch; Eden Minns agreed to join, but without warning, he was enlisted by the Navy to work in the Pacific; Dick Russell (Gordon's brother) who was also in the Navy working on camouflage, was given permission to attend some of the meetings but before long, he was also shipped out to work in India and Burma. The more permanent members included: the architects Brian O'Rourke and Grey Wornum; Jaques Gloag, a Czech refugee who was an architect and former pupil of Alfred Loos, added a most vociferous and imaginative voice to the panel.⁷¹ Thus, ready to begin, Russell and his colleagues embarked on a two-fold programme of research into temporary furniture, to cope with devastation if the bombing raids should intensify, and also into the long-term planning for furniture in

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., pp. 201-2.

peacetime, when supplies of plywood, blackboard, cellulose and steel would once again be available. The Design Panel studied consumer needs, arranging meetings at which ordinary people could ask questions about utility furniture and have them answered by the Panel. For example, at one of these meetings a woman asked if her son-in-law's newly purchased utility bed "would stand up to 'it' when he came home from India".⁷² Other problems were tackled by the Panel: they found that plain utility shapes were sometimes appearing illegally decorated with the most appalling carving, rivalling the very worst exhibit at any pre-war furniture exhibition.⁷³ Realising that the sparseness of the exhibition furniture was a problem, the Committee tried to meet the public's need for decoration, by proposing to co-opt Henry Moore in the production of a pattern range. Unfortunately, although Moore was willing to help, he was unable to come up with a suitable design. Thus utility furniture remained unadorned and solid until the end of the war when the Panel developed a range of smaller, lighter, more sophisticated and graceful furniture, which won the approval of most people including the Architectural Review.⁷⁴ Apart from the work of the Design Panel, there was also a new design group formed by Misha Black, Milner Grey and Kenneth Bayes. The Design Research Unit, as it was called, aimed in general:

to make available immediately a design service equipped to advise on all problems of design and to form a nucleus group which through contacts established during the war period with specialist designers and experts in all appropriate fields, would be in a position at the end of

72. Ibid., p.203.

73. Ibid., p.203.

74. MacCarthy, p.71

the war to expand to undertake the wider services which may then be demanded.⁷⁵

The ultimate aim of this group was to provide a service so complete that it could undertake any design problem which might confront national and municipal authorities, industry and commerce.

While this scheme was being organised, plans for an even more encompassing idea were being considered within the confines of the Board of Trade, for a Central Council of Design big and powerful enough to promote higher standards of industrial design and ultimately to improve the standards of British exports. Involved in this scheme were, Laurence Watkinson, Alan Hoskin, Francis Meynell (temporary advisor on civilian needs), Thomas Barlow (Director-General of Civilian Clothing), and Gordon Russell. The details for the Council of Industrial Design were worked out long before the war ended. In 1943, the Weir Sub-Committee on Industrial Design, chaired by Cecil Weir, presented its report on the subject of design. Set up by the Export Trade Committee of the Department of Overseas Trade, its terms of reference were "to consider the place of design in post-war planning for industry with particular reference to the export trade, and to recommend measures to ensure that the United Kingdom shall reach and maintain a leading position in the field of industrial art".⁷⁶

The Committee began its report by stating categorically, "we agree that there is such a thing as recognisably good design", and further, "that not only was good design essential if exports were to

75. Ibid., p.72.

76. Design Council Papers, The Weir Report, by the Sub-Committee appointed by Mr. Harcourt Johnstone of Industrial Design and Art in Industry, 23 September 1943.

go up; but that they could not see "a lasting conflict between giving the public what it wants and good design".⁷⁷ They went on to say that it was recognised amongst many of the country's manufacturers, traders and consumers that there was no doubt as to the importance of good design, and that there was a need for devising a means of setting up and maintaining standards of design. Outlining the manner in which this could be done, the Committee's report highlighted two areas: education, and the setting up of a central design council. In terms of education, which was divided into the education of children in schools and adult education, the Committee recognised the fundamental importance of the former and urged its development. Of the latter, the Committee referred to the work being done by various institutions such as the Design and Industries Association, the British Institute of Adult Education, and Museums, to raise the consciousness of the adult population through exhibitions of well-designed objects in daily use. They wished to encourage these bodies to provide more exhibitions, as well as the innovative use of the "shop-window" as a further means of educating the consumer.⁷⁸

However, to ensure that their wealth of suggestions were properly directed and supported financially, they recommended that a central institution, to be called the Central Design Council, (or COID) be formed to act as the authority on design. In addition to this, they recommended "the simultaneous action of various industries through corporate action, in the formation of Industrial

77. Ibid., para.2.

78. Ibid., paras.5-6

Design Centres". Of the Central Design Council, the Committee began by stating that this proposal could be attacked, even by disinterested parties, as an attempt to impose a censorship of taste. Regardless of this, however, they felt that a central authority taking the whole field of design within its scope was necessary in order to overcome the difficulties facing individual industries.⁷⁹

These difficulties, which included one industry making an excellent component to be housed in the badly-designed casing of another industry, could only be remedied by the review and study of all design at a central agency which could encourage the exchange of ideas and to exhibit the achievements of individual industries to everyone. The Government had to be prepared, the report argued, to provide adequate finance for such a council - some people in the Treasury and Board of Trade did not concur with this proposal, feeling that public money ought not to be spent on such a project. In addition to the financial aspect, the committee felt that the Council should be given adequate powers and be supported in its functions by the Government. The Committee's report went on to outline their views on the Constitution, powers, finance and functions of the Council.⁸⁰

The Central Design Council should, they said, be an independent body of specifically qualified persons closely associated with the Board of Trade, the Department of Overseas Trade, the Ministry of Works, and the Board of Education. Initially they considered placing the new body under the direction of one of the aforementioned departments, thereby following the example of the

79. Ibid., paras.10-12.

80. Ibid., para.13 and Russell, pp.226-227.

Arts Council which was under the guidance of the Board of Education. However, they experienced considerable objections to this idea on the grounds that the Board of Trade could not properly advise the Ministry of Works on purchases, nor could the latter be responsible for decisions having a direct bearing on export trade. They therefore recommended that the Council should be appointed by the Lord President and supported by grant aid of £20,000 from the Government - a solution which they felt would be the most practical. The Council should, they said, be composed of leading designers, artists, technicians, manufacturers and large users of goods who have shown a sustained interest in good design. They felt that Council membership should not come from the Civil Service, should not exceed twelve persons, and the only salaried member should be the Chairman. Representatives from the concerned Government Departments should also be present on the Council, and furthermore, they suggested that in order to keep public confidence and contemporary attitudes, a proportion of the members should resign at stated periods - with the exception of Government Departmental members, a third of the Council would, after the first three years, have to resign each year.⁸¹

As to the Council's function, the Committee was quite specific: it would have to establish and finance a pavilion of British Industrial Art as a permanent building, with changing exhibitions of the best modern design within the furnishing and decorative arts field and possibly opening out to wider areas. In addition, the Committee recommended that a selection of the best

81. The Weir Report, paras. 14-15.

British products should be shown in the Centre alongside the best examples of the industrial art of foreign countries. A further function would be to approve the choice of goods displayed in British pavilions in International Exhibitions and only goods receiving this approval could be displayed. The Council would also be responsible for reviewing, through various sub-committees, all articles of furniture and decoration purchased by the state, and also for recommending to the Ministry concerned, goods to be purchased which seemed to be outstandingly well-designed. Finally, the Council would ensure that all articles bought for use or decoration in any Government buildings, including British Embassies, Legations and Consulates, were well-designed. The Council would not, the Committee stressed, follow "the egalitarian system usual in Government patronage, or be tied to the lowest tender" - it would only exhibit or purchase articles which were well-designed and, furthermore, they stated categorically that the Government must be prepared to support the Council in this policy.⁸² By December 1944 the recommendations had been accepted by the Government and the Design Council was launched. At the Opening Meeting, Hugh Dalton, then President of the Board of Trade, addressed the gathered representatives and members with stirring words which today recall the great hopes envisaged for the future, the urge for revival, the belief that the ordinary man and woman deserved a better life which could be made possible in part by higher standards in design. He said:

... we must, therefore, make a sustained effort to improve design, and to bring industry to recognise the practical

82. Ibid., para.16.

importance of this task. You have to arouse the interest of ordinary men and women ... if you succeed in your task, in a few years time every side of our daily life will be the better for your work. Every kitchen will be an easier place to work in; every home a pleasanter place to live in. Men and women in their millions will be in your debt, though they may not know it; and not in Britain alone but all over the world ... industry itself will have much cause to thank you. Our export trade and our volume of business at home will both be the greater if our goods are planned and made, with skill and imagination, to meet the users real need, and to give pleasure in the using.⁸³

The New Council had one further function added to its terms of reference - it was to assist and encourage the establishment of Design Centres by Industries and to advise the Board of Trade on the granting of financial assistance to these Centres.

By 1945 the Government had changed and the Members of the grant-aided Design Council wondered what their future would be. They need not have worried, for the election of the Labour Government brought an ardent supporter of reform in the Design Industry, thus ensuring that the Design Council was "blessedly immune" from cuts to its funds.⁸⁴ Sir Stafford Cripps, who replaced Dalton as President of the Board of Trade, was even more interested in reform than his predecessor, and within twenty-four hours of his appointment, he walked into the offices of the COID and told the Director, S.C. Leslie (former Principal Assistant Secretary at the Home Office), that he wanted the Council to stage a considerable exhibition of British goods, for which special funds would be made available.⁸⁵ This exhibition which would be launched in 1946 under the title of "Britain Can Make It", presented

83. MacCarthy, pp.73-74.

84. MacCarthy, p.74.

85. Russell, p.231.

the newly-formed Council with a splendid opportunity. There had already been two excellent post-war design displays: the CEMA Exhibition "Design in the Home", designed by Milner Grey; and an exhibition of wallpapers, displayed by Eric Brown and Stefan Buzas.⁸⁶ However, this latest exhibition was to be much more ambitious, for the Council wanted, as Russell explained, to arouse greater interest in design in the minds of the public as consumers; to intensify the interest of manufacturers and distributors in industrial design and their awareness of the desirability of rapid progress; to give encouragement to British designers of all kinds and to stage a prestige advertisement before the works for British industry, industrial design and standards of display.⁸⁷ Trying to put this exhibition together at such short notice, and in post-war conditions of companies just returning to peacetime production, combined with the scarcity of materials, was a formidable task. The Architectural Review wrote rather nervously of this situation for they thought that Sir Stafford was perhaps being rather ambitious and overdoing things; it was he, they said :

who conceived the idea of the exhibition and insists on its early date. Council and manufacturers will have a tough job, with no materials yet to make new things, and no skilled labour, with plenty of designers still in the Forces, with an understandable dislike to show the old 1938 things again, and an equally understandable dislike to show new designs not yet in production. What will be exhibited then? Prototypes, models, products available for export only? One feels unable even to guess and yet one ardently wishes this test show the greatest possible international success.⁸⁸

86. MacCarthy, p.74.

87. Russell, p.231.

88. MacCarthy, p.75.

The Council's response to these conditions was recalled by Russell:

... it was decided that the wisest thing to do would be to stress lighthearted, gay decor and display so that, if the worst came to the worst and in some sections, it should prove impossible to find more than a handful of exhibits, the show would not be a flop.⁸⁹

This attitude stood the Council in good stead in the cavernous 90,000 square feet of the Victoria and Albert Museum where the exhibition was housed. The show, designed by James Gardner in consultation with Basil Spence, was a great success, more so than anyone could have imagined, and although most of the exhibits were labelled "for export only", and the exhibition was renamed by the public "Britain Can't Have It", Sir Stafford's ambitions were justified. It pleased a great many people: The Architectural Review enjoyed it because it showed British products that were aesthetically rational and well designed (largely due to the shortages); the King and Queen, who came down from Balmoral specially for the exhibition were greatly impressed; but most of all it pleased the people - a million and a half came and patiently queued for hours to wander round the exhibition in a state of complete amazement. When they entered the Museum, they moved from the foyer into a section that essentially summed up the whole exhibition: named "From War to Peace", it showed, "side by side with their war-like origins", some twenty domestic articles which had evolved from the new processes, materials and techniques developed during the war. For example, a new type of saucepan was shown beside the exhaust stub of a wrecked Spitfire; inflatable

89. Russell, pp.231-232.

reclining chairs lined up beside dummy weapons; and for the benefit of anyone who failed to understand this patently obvious message, the exhibits were displayed against a dim background of bomb-shattered London, picked out by shafts of light. From here the visitor moved through displays of textiles, metal, rubber, glass, timber, plastics, paper, and to the shop window street with its hosiery and glove tree displays. The educational aspect of this exhibition was clearly highlighted: there was a system of quizboxes placed in various parts of the hall which allowed the visitor to register a vote for the design he or she favoured most; the designer's work was credited throughout the exhibition, called "What Industry Means", using simple examples, Misha Black explained to the public the way an industrial designer worked, and the way in which different materials and processes influenced design. This theme was further illustrated in a section called "The Birth of an Eggcup - Who Designs the Eggcup? Not the machine which cannot think. The hen is partly responsible; she lays the egg to which all bowls to all eggcups must conform". Thus, slowly but surely, the public were being taught about the importance of the industrial designer.⁹⁰

Perhaps the most important aspect of the exhibition was the benefits it gave the newly-formed council. "The exhibition proved that the British public would respond to good design when shown it, and furthermore that British manufacturers, however suspicious of outside advice or criticism, would submit to competitive selection if the bait was big enough."⁹¹ This last point would become very

90. MacCarthy, pp.75-76.

91. Banham and Hillier, p.58.

important when the Council took on the even bigger task of organising all aspects of design on the South Bank and at other sites for the Festival of Britain 1951.

THE COID AND THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN 1951

Following the excitement of the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition, under the new Directorship of Russell (S.C. Leslie, the former director had been asked to return to Whitehall to take charge of the Information Division of the Treasury) the Council returned to the business of raising public and trade consciousness in design. The years leading up to the heady triumphs of the Festival were not easy for Russell and his Council. Following the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition, there was an exhibition of "Designers at Work" held in 1948 which was planned as a follow-up to the 1946 exhibition. It was jointly sponsored by the Royal Society of Arts and the COID, but it was not a great success; the exhibition showed that the designers for industry had a long way to go in the quest for perfection in their trade. Moreover, the exhibition exposed the limitations that despite its obvious success, were cleverly glossed over in 1946. As Director of the COID, Russell naturally received, as he described it, "the backwash from utility furniture and from "Britain Can Make It".⁹² The manufacturers disliked the idea of outside selection, believing that as their order books were full (as a result of post-war buying), what sold well, was therefore well designed. The retailers were angry at aspersions being cast on their ability to choose the finest products; designers were annoyed because they felt the Council's standards were too lenient, but the trade on the other hand thought them ridiculously high. There was further dissension from people who were not Council Members and thought they ought to

92. Russell, p.235.

be, and from people on the Council who felt that its business should solely be that of sales promotion. The Press, especially the Trade Press, fought the Council and Russell was alarmed in case the export trades united to denounce the work of the Council to the Board of Trade maintaining that the Council was destroying profitable export lines by pointing out faults in design. In addition to all this, the Chairman Thomas Barlow, resigned due to overwork. Through this difficult period, Russell survived, he said, "thanks to his army experience which had stood him in good stead".⁹³ He made new plans for the COID, regrouping his staff into three divisions (it had originally been one large body): there was now an Industrial Division to encourage a supply of well designed products; an Information and Exhibitions Section to stimulate demand, and an Administration Section to deal with internal organisation, finance and staff. From within this new framework, COID industrial officers visited the manufacturers, examining, entreating and encouraging. The Information Division travelled the country taking its Design Fair, a mobile exhibition, to participate in civic displays, and it also created design weeks in Southampton, Bristol, Bradford and other towns, drawing audiences of all kinds of people, from civic dignitaries to housewives and school parties. They organised discussion groups of housewives to which women came demanding that adjustments be made to tools which would make their work easier. They also sent news sheets and pamphlets on good design, by 1949, the monthly magazine 'Design' came into circulation.⁹⁴ By 1950,

93. Russell, pp. 235-236, MacCarthy, p.81.

94. MacCarthy, p.82.

largely through the efforts of the COID, design in Britain was improving and was beginning to take root in the lives of the British populace. This process was to be conclusively supported by the Festival of Britain which Russell described as a major national project which would do much to establish the Council's position and make a landmark in the history of industrial design.

The Council was quick to realise the potential for their cause in the Festival since a place in the theme of "The British Contribution to Civilization, Past, Present and Future" had been given specifically to industrial design. The relationship that emerged between the Festival Organisation and the COID was indeed a profitable one: from the organisation built up from the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition, which had enabled them to compile a sizeable list of manufacturers and objects, the Council had access to substantial information; the Festival could now be the impetus to encourage the manufacturers to produce even better design for 1951. Initially it was thought that the Council would, at the invitation of Sir Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade, sponsor a first-class design display which would include consumer goods, civil transport, certain classes of capital goods and some handicraft production as well as displays showing the historical development of certain industries.⁹⁵ However, on reflection and as the project grew, the Council, Russell explained, took the view that "a pavilion of industrial design did not make sense" and the whole exhibition ought, he felt, "to take account of how both it and

95. Cab 124/1333, COID Notes on problems connected with proposals for the 1851 Centenary celebrations to be held in 1951, 5 January 1948.

the things were designed".⁹⁶ Thus, the Council's role changed with the approval of the Government and the Festival Organisation to embrace the selection and collection of all the industrially produced exhibits as well as certain handicrafts which would be required to illustrate the themes in all the Festival Exhibitions.

The Council began by organising discussion groups with industry, where members were encouraged to submit photographs of their best products for inclusion in a list of possible exhibits that the Council was compiling for 1951. It further examined what branches and achievements of industry should be related to the exhibitions, and which industrial products, both historical and contemporary, would make the most suitable exhibits. A detailed survey (made with the co-operation of manufacturers, trade associations and research bodies) showed British achievements in a wide range of industries manufacturing both capital and consumer goods. This survey helped to shape both the argument and the contents of several display sections in each of the Festival exhibitions. The second task, the selection and collection of exhibits for the exhibitions, fell on the Council's Industrial Division: Mark Hartland Thomas, its Director and representative on the Executive Committee, suggested that this should be handled by the creation of a stock-list for 1951. The 1951 stock-list was an illustrated sample card index of all well designed articles that the officers of Hartland Thomas' division could search out in a systematic survey. The index was formed by inviting manufacturers to co-operate with the Council by supplying not only photographs but

96. Russell, p.249.

actual exhibits for the official displays. Four specialist teams of Industrial Liaison and Development Officers, built up by Hartland Thomas, went through the submitted exhibits which were then divided into seventy categories ranging from locomotives to tableware, from liners to sailing boats, from henhouses to garden tools. By 1951, the stock-list contained approximately 20,000 items from 5,000 companies. It was exhibited on the South Bank under the title of the "Design Review". The majority of the items were represented by black and white photographs, but some, such as pottery and carpets, were represented by colour transparencies which were projected for the visitor on request. Other items, such as wallpapers, were shown by actual samples. There was also a display of some 500 fashion and furnishing fabrics, either in photographic or sample form and it was accompanied by the appropriate catalogue description, which included the names of the designers and manufacturers, the dates of design and commercial production, the chief design features and the price. The visitor to the South Bank was invited to use this comprehensive reference list. Following the close of the Festival, the Council kept the 'Design Review', which was frequently updated for use by buyers, retailers and manufacturers.⁹⁷

The Industrial Division also provided the Festival Organisation with nine of its officers who, as theme convenors, were given the responsibility for writing the detailed themes to be presented in the various pavilions on the South Bank, the Science Exhibition at South Kensington, the Heavy Engineering Exhibition at the Kelvin

97. Design Council Papers, The Sixth Annual Report of the COID 1950-51, pp.18-20.

Hall, Glasgow, and the Travelling Exhibition on board the Festival Ship "Campania". In addition to all this, Hartland Thomas also turned his attention to creating a new design style for 1951. For this purpose he created the M-Service and the Festival Pattern Group. The former was a scheme for bringing good new designs to the prototype stage, so that they could be presented more realistically to potential manufacturers. The Council had rather over-optimistically thought that there would be many interesting designs around to be used, but they were to be disappointed in this area. However, the Festival Pattern Group proved to be more encouraging, even if its influence was short-lived. In May 1949, Hartland Thomas attended a weekend course at Ashridge organised by the Society of Industrial Artists, the purpose of which was to show the audience of designers visual materials from other arts and sciences which would broaden their minds and introduce new ideas. Among the papers presented was one by Professor Katherine Lonsdale on crystallography, she made the suggestion that some crystal structure diagrams might make good textile designs. Hartland Thomas followed up this suggestion, writing to Dr. Helen Megaw of Cambridge who had already drawn out some of these diagrams as a basis for decoration. On seeing these drawings, he decided that the patterns should not be confined to textiles but should be made more widely available to the many industries concerned with decoration - but only to one company from each industry.⁹⁸ The Council persuaded twenty-eight British manufacturers to work for eighteen months in the Festival Pattern Group decorating a range of products with a

98. Banham and Hillier, p.60.

pattern based on the crystal structure; these included dress prints, curtain fabrics, plastic sheets, ties, light fittings, dinner plates and wine glasses, as well as a crystal structure pattern which was designed for the foyer of the Science Exhibition.⁹⁹ The crystal structure motifs were an ingenious and interesting idea but, although widely used by designers on the South Bank, in particular by Misha Black in his Regatta restaurant, (See Fig. 125) it did not lay the foundations of a new style - in fact, the design barely survived the Festival year.¹⁰⁰ The crystal structures, though novel, did not impress everyone: the Architectural Review felt that the Council showed a lack of guidance in this area and furthermore, that there was an acute danger that the manufacturer might think that science could take the place of the designer, thus saving the money allocated to obtaining ideas from designers. Worse still, they envisaged the new crystal designs forming the basis for a new jazz phase in decoration.¹⁰¹ Despite criticism there was merit in what the Council had achieved in this area: they had managed to bring together many leading manufacturers from many different industries to collaborate on the project, thereby, helping to fulfil the Council's desire to have a better rapport with industry.

The Council's last task for the Festival was the responsibility for the collection and eventual return to some 3,500 companies, the 10,000 industrial exhibits (independent of the "Design Review") which were shown in the Pavilions and Halls of the official Festival

99. MacCarthy, p.88

100 Banham and Hillier. p.61

101. "COID Progress Report", Architectural Review 110 (December 1951), p.351.

exhibitions. The operation was organised by Jack Benoy, a retired Major-General, whose experience in moving troops for the African invasion served this purpose well. The achievement of the Council which, although criticized by the Architectural Review for being too lenient and moderate, was nevertheless an important one. The aim was, Russell said, "to find something worth showing from the greatest number of firms possible, otherwise we should run the risk of all the exhibits in certain trades coming from three or four firms, which could hardly be tolerated in an operation financed by public funds on this scale".¹⁰² But perhaps it was this moderation that finally made modern design, as carefully selected by the Council, acceptable to the public. In the months of the Festival Exhibitions, the public went to see, and were captivated by, for example, the showhouses in Lansbury, which with COID approval were entirely furnished,

for £143 4s 7d, where Bill, a docker, his wife, Mary (35), who had been in service and understood good housekeeping, their children, Jack, Jill, Jane and Baby Tom (4-5 months) lived happily with blue distemper walls and dark blue paper, starred and dotted on the wall above the chimney, an extending dining table, an expanding coffee table, "Jack and Jill" easy chairs, a brass-stem standard lamp and russet wild-flower curtains (7s 11d per yard).¹⁰³ (See Fig. 126)

Undoubtedly, Russell and his Council made the most of the opportunities offered by the Festival. The event seemed at that moment to consolidate completely the Council's attempts at reform in peoples attitudes and design. As Russell explained, "the Festival of Britain, like the earlier "Britain Can Make It", provided an

102. MacCarthy, p.88.

103. Ibid., p.89.

excellent opportunity for furthering the Council's long-term aims of convincing industry of the need for and benefits to be derived from improvements in industrial design".¹⁰⁴

104. Russell, p.257.

TOWARDS THE DESIGN CENTRE

After the Festival, the Council continued to consolidate its position as the adjudicator of good design, keeping the "Design Review," the 'Stocklist' from 1951 and accumulated goodwill of the manufacturers; it further developed the services of its Information Division which now aimed at the retail trade, education authorities, the Press, and the general public. Three main lines of approach to the retail trade were gradually developed: short residential courses for salesmen, buyers and managers; the arranging of exhibitions in stores, either by the Council or by the store itself with the advice and assistance of the Council, and the encouragement of higher standards in window displays. The Education Section built up a lecture panel of several hundred professional lecturers in the country who could be recommended to interested parties and, in addition, it offered a wide range of publications on design topics particularly on home furnishings, and a monthly bulletin of design events taking place all over the country. However, despite all this activity, the Council, as Russell said, "felt a bit spent and it was obvious that unless a clear-cut plan for the future could be put forward the staff would become restless and frustrated".¹⁰⁵ The problem was, he analysed, how best to capitalise on the interest created as a direct result of the Festival. The Council was facing a reduction in its grant, and its valuable educational service had to be cut, thereby making it imperative for another means of

105. Russell, p.258.

communication to be found. Walter J. Worboys, who succeeded Dr. Edwards, as the new Chairman, felt that the effects of this loss could perhaps be minimised by the provision for the Council of its own permanent exhibition gallery in London. This idea was of course included in the Council's early terms of reference by the Weir Committee and permission had already been given as early as 1945 by the Board of Trade to make preliminary enquiries about sites, although at the time, it was clear that building would not be feasible for some years. If the Council could now succeed in establishing a centre, it would not only succeed in reversing the problems of the loss of its Educational Division, but it would also give it another big objective to work towards - a permanent, changing, selective exhibition in London as a national shop window for the most interesting current designs from the British consumer goods industries. It would, as Russell rightly pointed out, "really put the Council on the map". As Russell envisaged it, the Design Centre would,

be the logical and culminating development of the many displays, great and small, national and local, with which the Council had previously been concerned and it would serve as a springboard for further activities, particularly in provincial centres of industry. The Centre would be of value to all sections of the community; to manufacturers it would both provide publicity for their products and enable them to see exactly what, in the Council's eyes constituted good, modern design; to designers, many of whom have all too few opportunities of seeing up-to-date developments; to home and overseas buyers it would give a lead on good design which would help them to cater more successfully for a growing demand; for architects, interior designers or purchasing officers with the problem of furnishing or equipping a large building, it would provide in one place information which it might previously have taken weeks to collect; to school-teachers and students it would show a cross section of the best contemporary work in Britain; to housewives it would offer a selection of goods of enduring value; and for the Press - particularly the Women's Press -

it would help forward the Council's work.¹⁰⁶

Having envisaged whom the Centre would benefit, the Design Council was confronted with the enormous expenditure that it would entail even if it were to be partially financed by the Board of Trade. One plan to overcome this problem was to charge exhibitors rental on space. According to Russell this presented "a very sticky problem".¹⁰⁷ The experience gleaned during the Festival of Britain and "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition had shown the Council that industry did not appreciate their goods being selected by an outside body, but at least there had been no charge to show their goods. Now the Council was proposing not only to select the goods but also to charge the exhibitors rental space for the goods chosen - this plan would no doubt cause a great deal of adverse criticism. Furthermore, if this plan was adopted, the Council would have to work even harder to maintain high standards in order to prevent charges of bribery and leniency. Added to this they would have to ensure that the charges were set at a reasonable rate so as to allow the smaller companies, from where some of the more interesting ideas emerged, to participate.¹⁰⁸

There were other problems: how would the Council, without large-scale advertising at its disposal, keep up the initial high attendance rate? The Council did not want to set an admissions charge which would ultimately reduce the centre's educational value by discouraging students, women shoppers and the like.

106. Russell, pp.259-260.

107. Russell, p.261.

108. A price of 2s 6d - 10s, later raised to 3s - 10s 6d, according to the size of their exhibition was eventually set as a daily charge for exhibitors renting the space to show their goods at the centre. Design Council Papers, Twelfth Annual Report of the COID 1956-57, p.8.

Undaunted by these problems, the Council pressed on with its idea. Worboys successfully managed to convince the Board of Trade and the Treasury of the soundness and necessity of the scheme and, after much discussion, the plan was approved on condition that if the Council financed a minimum of half the running costs from receipts, the Government would match this sum up to an agreed limit. In addition, the Council was directed to make an appeal to industry for a contribution towards the capital costs of establishing the centre. This they did, addressing their appeal mainly to the suppliers of raw materials and services rather than to manufacturers, raising nearly £27,000. Following this the Council turned their attention to locating the right building to house this venture and after much searching, they settled on 28 Haymarket, "a new and ugly building but on an almost perfect site, in the heart of the west end of London, about 150 yards from Piccadilly Circus".¹⁰⁹ On 26 April 1956, the Design Centre was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh who, like his predecessor Prince Albert, had become a full convert to the cause of good design. In his speech, he hoped that the Design Centre would "enter upon an industrious, adventurous, controversial, vitalising life". In the Centre, (See Figs. 127 and 128) there were 1,020 exhibits displayed, which were drawn from over 430 companies, as well as supporting window displays in over 100 shops and stores in more than 60 towns and cities. By all accounts the opening of the Design Centre was an unqualified success: The Times said, "the first exhibition leaves an encouraging impression of the high standard of design achieved by

109. Russell, pp.261-262.

industry at its best"; The News Chronicle said, "no other country has anything like this. Apart from its value to the export drive, the Centre will be a place where ordinary shoppers can browse before going out to buy household goods"; and the Daily Telegraph said, "the new centre will be a permanent shopping index for the public, for store buyers, manufacturers and trade buyers from overseas ... it is the sort of service that could revolutionalise shopping and be a start of a drive to make us the best furnished nation in the world".¹¹⁰

Following the euphoria of the opening, the Council did not let its audience down. In its Twelfth Annual Report, it was able to report that since the centre's opening, some 3,500 exhibits had been shown representing some 700 manufacturers. The categories represented were those making durable consumer goods for furnishing the home, office or hotel, as well as other goods such as cycles, motorcycles, hand and garden tools, cameras and field glasses. It is perhaps worth noting that a great majority of the centre's exhibits were drawn from the "Design Review" which was itself housed in the Centre adjacent to the exhibition, thus forming a permanent reference for buyers and other serious enquirers. Apart from the permanent but changing exhibition, the Design Council decided that certain trades would be chosen for special display in the Design Centre from time to time. In the first year of the Centre's life there were the following displays which were shown for a period of at least six weeks' duration: "Design in Cotton" opened on 4 June 1956;

110. Design Council Papers, The Eleventh Annual Report of the COID 1955-6, p.4.

"Britain at Table" in July 1956; in September 1956, there was a display addressed mainly to British manufacturers showing the products, packs, interiors or exhibition stands resulting from the recent recommendations from the Council's Record of Designers; in October 1956; there was a selective exhibition of carpets; and in March 1957, a display of television equipment entitled "Design for Viewing" was shown. The success of the Centre can be measured by its attendance figures: in the first eleven months of opening, the Centre welcomed over 2,300 visitors each day, and by the end of March 1959, the total attendance had reached almost two million.¹¹¹ The seal of success was further set when in 1957 the Design Centre began awarding its now Annual Design Centre Awards for which, selected by an independent panel of judges from the products exhibited in the Centre during the year, the Duke of Edinburgh presented the Certificates to the chosen manufacturers, as he has continued to do since. A further award, the Duke of Edinburgh's Prize for Elegant Design, presented in alternate years, was given to a designer for a contemporary design in current production, distinguished by its elegance.

Thus, ten years on, the Council had not only succeeded in capitalising on the gains it had made from the Festival, it had established itself in the lives of both the home and overseas markets. Abroad, it concentrated its energies on stimulating the interest of retail stores, particularly in Europe, by staging special exhibitions of British goods selected from the Design

111. Design Council Papers, Fourteenth Annual Report of the COID 1958-59, p.13.

Centres. At home, the Council extended its influence by encouraging a limited number of stores in selected towns to mount major exhibitions under the title "The Design Centre comes to"; advice and assistance was given by the Council in these efforts, but the shops themselves bore the cost of staging the exhibition. The first of three exhibitions was held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in September 1958, and was followed, in 1959, by the "Design Centre comes to Wales", ".... to Southampton", ".... to Manchester", and ".... to Southsea". Subsequently, the Council worked out a pattern of collaboration with local retailers, Chambers of Commerce, newspapers proprietors, and the like, to show design exhibitions on independent sites. The Design Centre also published detailed information of their exhibitions, thus enabling interested stores to copy their displays.¹¹²

Through tact, moderation and conservatism, and with a great deal of help from the Festival, the Design Council succeeded in bringing the concept of good design into the lives of the British people. They had managed, again because of the Festival, to bring the manufacturers in line. Not only did the manufacturers conform to the knowledge, taste and style of the Council, most people did too, believing, then as now, in the distinctive black and white quartered triangular label which was - and still is - attached to those products which the Council feels have met their stringent standards of good design. This little label, 42 years on, still carries with it not only a certain cachet, but represents the impact and permanence of the Design Council in our lives.

112. Russell, p.278.

CHAPTER 10

THE END OF THE FESTIVAL

THE DISPOSAL OF THE FESTIVAL EXHIBITIONS

THE QUESTION OF CONTINUANCE AFTER 1951

From as early as December 1950 (five months before the Festival's opening) discussions had been taking place as to what the future of the exhibition on the South Bank would be, after its closure in September 1951. The matter had been raised by Norman Dodds, Labour MP for Dartford and former exhibitions manager on 7 December 1950, in the House of Commons. Although not yet opened to the public, Dodds believed that the Exhibition would be one of the finest the world had ever seen and as such there was good reason for it to continue for another year. His suggestion, it was pointed out by John Hay, Conservative MP for Henley, and by the Under Secretary of State for Air, Aidan Crawley, was premature. It would they argued, be better to wait for the exhibition to open, and according to the reaction of the public towards it, the ultimate length of the showing period should ^hten_A be debated in September 1951.¹

A week after the debate in Parliament on this matter on 14 December 1950, Max Nicholson sent a letter to Barry, stating that while there was no hurry about considering the possible continued opening of certain Festival exhibitions, the matter would probably be raised again in Parliament in the spring or summer of 1951. Therefore, he felt that it would be convenient and helpful if the Festival Organisation examined the implications of such an action.²

1. Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, 482(1950), 669-680.
2. Cab 124/1251, Nicholson to Barry, 14 December 1950.

Max Nicholson outlined some points that the preliminary studies should cover. He wished to know which of the Festival exhibitions other than the South Bank and the Battersea Pleasure Gardens could be continued after 1951? What effect such a continuance would have on revenue and expenditure, when would the Festival Organisation expect to re-deliver the South Bank site to the Ministry of Works for construction to begin on government offices? Further, he inquired what the position would be with exhibits that were perishable or those that had been borrowed on short loan, which would have to be replaced or dispensed with altogether. What implications would a decision of continuance have on areas such as policing, traffic control, tourism, and accommodation? When would the final decision be made on the matter and finally, would it be possible to make an estimate of the number of visitors who would visit the exhibitions should it be kept open after 1951? He concluded his letter to Barry by informing him that, if the South Bank site were to remain open, the Festival Office would have to pay the Ministry of Works additional rent, and that as far as the Pleasure Gardens were concerned the leader of the LCC was not strongly opposed to it continuing to 1952. Further, the leader, he said, felt that there was a case for continuing the Gardens irrespective of the decisions taken about the future of the other Festival exhibitions.³

The response of the Festival Organisations to Nicholson's request was highly interesting. They began their report by stating:

The Festival of Britain itself is a unique event celebrating

3. Ibid.

the centenary of the Great Exhibition and it could not possibly be repeated in a second year. Festivals of the arts which were established before 1951, as well as some which have been established in 1951 for the first time, will, it is hoped, continue as annual events but the encouragement of these will form part of the normal work of the Arts Council and they do not call for any special consideration.⁴

Nevertheless, the report proceeded to consider the exhibitions and projects financed and organised by the Festival Organisation, which they pointed out were of such a nature that they did not readily fall into the scope of any continuing organisation. This was, of course, largely due to the fact that the Festival of Britain exhibitions differed greatly from ordinary exhibitions. Although the exhibitions displayed industrial products, they were not trade fairs, no space was sold to exhibitors, thereby making it impossible for the Government as the Festival exhibition sponsors to recoup a large part of its initial expenditure, and the costs of displaying the exhibits was not the responsibility of the supplier or manufacturer as happened in trade fairs. Further the Festival exhibitions were not like international exhibitions, where the displays and buildings were provided by Governments and private bodies and re-opening for a second year was justifiable on financial grounds. The sponsoring government or body would have met its main costs in the first year and the costs in the second year would be mainly for maintenance, operation, and publicity.⁵

With these facts outlined in the introduction the report proceeded to consider each of the Festival exhibitions. Beginning with the Book Exhibition in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, it was their opinion that the periods during which the exhibitions were to

4. Cab 125/1251, Notes on the problems of a second year.

5. Ibid.

be kept open were long enough to provide ample opportunities for viewing to all those who wanted to visit the exhibitions. It would be possible, the Festival Organisation said, to 'dismantle' these exhibitions after 1951, bring them up to date and mount new shows in their places. The cost of doing this, however, would most certainly be higher. Moreover, they argued, the new exhibitions might not have the same attraction for the public once they were no longer part of a highly publicised nationwide Festival. The exhibition of Architecture, Town Planning and Building Research as mentioned in the report, contained two 'Festival' pavilions. The entire site however, belonged to the LCC and as such was due to be returned to the LCC at the end of the exhibition. It would be up to the LCC, the Festival Organisation emphasized, to decide whether they wished to keep the exhibition open. Regarding the Science Exhibition at South Kensington, the Festival Organisation believed that while there was much to be said for keeping the exhibition open after the Festival for as long as there was sufficient public demand, it would be for the Ministry of Education to decide whether the new wing of the Science Museum in which the exhibition was housed should continue to be used for this purpose, or whether it should be put to uses more appropriate to the Science Museum's terms of reference. The Exhibition of Industrial Power at the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, was to be kept open for a further two weeks at the end of its ten week period if there was sufficient public demand. Following this, the exhibition had to be closed and dismantled immediately as Kelvin Hall would be required for other purposes. On the other hand, if the Kelvin Hall Exhibition of Industrial Power was brought to London in 1952, it would doubtless attract a considerable number of

Londoners as well as visitors to London. However, the cost of transportation and erection would, the Festival Organisation warned, be very high in relation to the revenue which the exhibition might be expected to earn.⁶

The Land Travelling Exhibition differed due to its nature from all of the static exhibitions so far discussed. It was constructed as a transportable exhibition, visiting only four regional centres during the Festival summer. Therefore, the report advised, that it would be possible to plan a further itinerary for this exhibition and the renovation and operational costs would not be excessive. The Festival ship "Campania" was not, however, in this category. The Festival Organisation, as the report explained, was under obligation to return "Campania" to the Admiralty at the end of the Festival in the condition in which they received it. But if the Admiralty agreed to extend the period of the loan it would not, the report said be impractical to maintain the exhibition on board Campania for a further period and move it to other parts in the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the United States. While the operational costs of such a plan, could well be high, the prestige value would benefit the nation as a manifestation of its resilience and capacity.⁷

The last part of the Festival to be considered by the report was the South Bank. To keep the South Bank open for a second year in 1952 would cost the Festival Organisation approximately

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

£1.8 million a sum which did not provide for the expenditure on publicity.⁸

The Organisation did not believe that in a second season, the South Bank could earn as high a revenue as was anticipated in the first season. There was doubt that the revenue earned in the second year would be equal to the outlay of £1.8 million.⁹ Further the exhibits displayed on the South Bank would in all probability have to be changed in many cases as the firms which supplied many of the important and expensive items would need to withdraw them at the end of the Festival. To replace these exhibits would involve the COID procurer in extra expenditure. The Festival Organisation thus concluded that it would be difficult to justify on economic grounds the continuance of the South Bank exhibition. The site had to be returned to the Ministry of Work as soon as possible after the exhibition, and with full knowledge of this fact the pavilions constructed for the exhibition were of a temporary nature. Should it therefore be decided that the exhibition had to continue after September 1951, the Ministry of Works would have to agree to the extension of the site's lease and rental obligations would have to be met. Further serious attention would have to be given to the problems of maintenance and costs of pavilions that were not designed for a longer life than one year.¹⁰

8. Ibid. This figure of £1.8 million was broken down as follows: Rent and Rates approximately £200,000; Renewal of Displays £250,000; Running Costs £500,000; Maintenance, Headquarters, Staff and Overheads £850,000. Cab 124/1251, Notes on the Problems of a Second Year.
9. The expected revenue for the first session was put conservatively at £2 million, optimistically if the exhibition was a great success at £3 million from all sources. Cab 124/1251, Notes of the Problems of a Second Year.
10. Cab 124/1251, Notes on the Problems of a Second Year.

Perhaps, the Festival Organisation suggested, it would be better to consider the alternative, if demand necessitated it, of extending the period of the exhibition on the South Bank until October as the final closure date. If such a decision was taken, it would have to be borne in mind that none of the pavilions could be easily or economically heated and four of the pavilions and two cafés were partly or entirely open structures. A further disadvantage of this alternative as the report stated was that visitors from the regions would be unlikely to visit London in great numbers in the autumn and visitors from overseas would be more likely to visit London in the summer months. Thus, keeping the exhibition open until October 1951 might lead to the criticism that the exhibition was being kept open at the public's expense for the benefit of Londoners.¹¹

On 6 March, Nicholson sent these findings to Morrison arguing that in his opinion, in view of the facts, the most sensible course would be to wait for the reaction of the public to the Festival exhibitions, with a readiness on the part of the Government and the Festival Organisation 'to yield gracefully if public demand proved irresistible'. If this proved to be the case then he said 'the various difficulties should be fully explained but should not be pressed as an insuperable objection'.¹² The Lord President was fully in agreement. It was, he replied essential to avoid heavy revenue losses. Moreover, he maintained that the Treasury would

11. Ibid.

12. Cab 124/1251, Nicholson to Lord President, 6 March 1951. Morrison was soon to leave the office of Lord President to become the Foreign Secretary, Lord Addison was appointed to the office of Lord President of the Council on 9 March 1951.

have to be consulted before the cabinet and the Lord President's Committee gave their respective opinions.¹³

By June 1951, with the Festival exhibitions now having been open for a month, the Festival Organisation felt in a better position to judge the necessity for keeping the exhibition open after 1951. On 21 June 1951 Barry wrote to Richard Stokes, the Lord Privy Seal, to outline the Organisation's position after the first month of their enterprise. Regarding the exhibitions, particularly those on the South Bank there was he said 'no solid ground on which a decision to run for a second year could be based'. While, even at that early stage there were a great many people who were enthusiastic about the Festival and wanted it to continue after 1951, it seemed to him that

the only circumstances which would justify the Government reaching a decision in favour of continuance would be clear evidence that large numbers of people wishing to see the exhibition will be physically unable to get in this year because of its limited capacity. There is, as yet, no such evidence, and, although it is true that the holiday season has only just started, I do not now expect that the gates will have to be closed for any substantial part of the day except possibly on Saturdays and on August Bank Holiday. This does not in any way mean that the show is not a success - it demonstrably is a big success. But the economics of a second season are to my mind such as to need a very strong case indeed to justify going ahead with one.¹⁴

It was his opinion, that a statement should be made as soon as possible that the South Bank Exhibition would not be opened for a second year. Such an announcement might he said encourage people to book tickets as soon as possible, and thereby give a boost to the weekly attendance figures. He further advised that once the Government made the statement concerning the South Bank the matter

13. Cab 124/1251, Morrison to Nicholson, 7 March 1951.

14. Cab 124/1251, Barry to Stokes, 21 June 1951.

of opening the exhibition until October could be considered again by the Festival Organisation and the Government after there had been an opportunity to gauge the public's reaction to the Government's announcement.¹⁵ On 23 June 1951, Richard Stokes informed Barry that while he agreed broadly with Barry's arguments against continuance he was nevertheless disappointed, but that he would nevertheless begin preparation of the Government's statement on the matter.¹⁶

On 11 July 1951, the Lord Privy Seal announced the Government's decision on the continuation of the South Bank Exhibition. In response, Richard Wood, MP, for Bridlington who asked whether the Government 'were considering extending the duration of the South Bank Exhibition after 30 September 1951 to enable those whose occupation kept them out of London during the summer to visit it'. Richard Stokes answered:

No real case has been made out that there are large numbers of people who would visit the South Bank after 30 September but cannot do so earlier. After studying the finances I am satisfied that the South Bank and Festival Exhibitions (other than the Festival Pleasure Gardens at Battersea Park) ought to come to an end on the announced dates this year and not re-open next year. I would advise all those who wish to see any of these exhibitions before they close to do it now.¹⁷

Thus on 30 September 1951, after the closing ceremony the process of dismantling the exhibits and the pavilions began. With the knowledge that the South Bank site Festival Exhibitions were not to be continued, the question foremost on most peoples minds was, what was to become of the South Bank?

15. Ibid.

16. Cab 124/1251, Stokes to Barry, 23 June 1951.

17. Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, 490 (1950), 34.

THE SOUTH BANK: ITS FUTURE

The primary fear expressed by the Lord Privy Seal and the Festival Council was that the South Bank site would become derelict once the Exhibition had closed. On 16 July 1951, the Lord Privy Seal wrote to Barry using this argument as an encouragement to continue the Exhibition after 1951. He explained to Barry that there was not 'the slightest chance of making use of the site for building purposes until 1954". Therefore, he argued, if the site was left unoccupied, it would become derelict.¹⁸ At the final official meeting of the Festival Council, members agreed that while it was unable to advise on the subsequent use of the site, it was necessary to warn against the prospect of it becoming a public eyesore. There was a tinge of nostalgia about the place. It stood for the stamina to endure against many obstacles, it conjured up the best of British imaginative skill and enterprise. Therefore, at the final meeting, the Council passed a resolution that:

all practical measures should be taken to preserve the South Bank site in an orderly and pleasing state and that every effort should be made to safeguard it from falling into a derelict or unsightly condition which would be singularly out of keeping with the aesthetic aims underlying the whole Festival. Those aims could be suitably projected into the future by seeing that the site of the centre piece of the whole Festival remained - until its permanent use was embarked upon - in a state which would be a worthy tribute to all for which the exhibition had stood. The unhappy fate of previous exhibition sites should serve as a warning, lest the South Bank should meet with a similar end.¹⁹

With this as a paramount concern, investigations began, prior to the end of the exhibition on the South Bank site, into the best

18. Cab 124/1251, Stokes to Barry, 16 July 1951.

19. Work 25/44, Festival Council Minutes, 15 August 1951.

way to secure the future of the site. The Government (with the help of a working party set up by the Lord Privy Seal under the Chairmanship of Max Nicholson, consisting of representatives of the Festival Office, the LCC and the Government departments concerned) began to explore ways in which the pavilions on the site could be disposed of and the site maintained in the short term (for five years) while planning for its long-term development. To find solutions to these problems a meeting was held on 23 October 1951 at County Hall to discuss the proposed short term development of the site.²⁰ The Deputy Clerk confirmed the appointment of Hugh Casson, Robert Matthew and L.A.Huddart to prepare a proposal on the South Bank site. Their terms of reference were:

To examine those parts of the South Bank Exhibition which may be made accessible to the public as gardens or other open space, and to advise the LCC in consultation with the Festival Office how the existing assets can most suitably and economically be put to use in the interim scheme towards the development of the Council's proposals for the future of this area as a public open space.²¹

Casson, Roberts and Huddart were further told by the Deputy Clerk that it was the LCC's intention to request the demolition of any buildings which the report stated were not being required, in order that temporary shops or other buildings could be erected on the site, thereby attracting rent. However, the representatives at

20. Sir Hugh Casson, private papers. Present at this meeting were: R.H.Matthew, Architect to the LCC (who chaired the meeting), J.L. Martin, Deputy Architect to the LCC; C.E.Nicholson, Administrative Officer, Architects Department, LCC; T.G.Randall Deputy Clerk of the LCC; L.A.Huddart, Chief Officer of the Parks Department; Max Nicholson and Mr Jones, Office of the Lord President; S.W.C. Phillips, Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and Hugh Casson formerly Director of Architecture Town Planning and Building Research for the Festival of Britain.

21. Ibid.

the meeting forced a compromise, and it was generally agreed that if the consultants could not suggest any use of such premises for 'live' purposes, then it would be advisable to retain them on aesthetic grounds and use them for storage.

On 8 November 1951, Hugh Casson and his colleagues presented their report on the South Bank, and on 13 November Nicholson outlined its recommendations to the Minister of Works, David Eccles. The report although highly detailed could be broken down into three sections: the riverside strip, the remainder of the Downstream section between Hungerford and Waterloo bridges, and the Upstream section between Hungerford Bridge and County Hall. Hugh Casson and his colleagues recommended for the Riverside strip that certain structures such as the Nelson Pier, pontoons and brows, the Seas and Ships pavilion with the exception of its separate balcony, the upper works of the Regatta restaurant, the canvas awnings of the Seaside section and the sports display structure should be removed. The site of the Seas and Ships pavilion should be laid out as a small garden. The whole riverside strip once these buildings were removed should, the report said, remain as it was and be re-opened to the public as soon as possible in 1952 by the LCC Parks Department who would be responsible for it. In the Downstream section the report recommended that everything between Belvedere Road and the Riverside strip should be kept, this included the Shot Tower, but not the Harbour Bar. The consultants further recommended that a children's playground should be constructed in this area. To the rear of the Downstream section (between Belvedere and York Road), the consultants recommended immediate demolition of every building with the exception of the Telecinema, the Waterloo Road Administration

Block, and if suitable tenants could be found, the Television and Homes and Gardens pavilions. The Gardens pavilions would be extended over the site of the Unicorn Café and Lion and Unicorn pavilion.²²

Regarding the Upstream section which was leased to the Ministry of Works, the report proposed that the station gate and the police station should be let for a period to British European Airways as a substitute which they urgently required for the Kensington Air Terminal. The report added that if the Ministry of Works did not need to build immediately on the site between Belvedere Road and York Road, the Chicheley Street Courtyard should be retained as a pedestrian area with the shop facing this area to be retained. The Minerals of the Island pavilion was to be demolished as was the Country pavilion unless a commercial tenant could be found. The consultants assumed that the area between the Riverside and Belvedere Road which included the Dome of Discovery would be required for early development by the Ministry of Works; if this was not the case, then it was recommended that further study should be made for its possible layout, with the Power and Production building being kept and let for some purpose. Analysing the Casson-LCC report, Nicholson advised the Minister of Works, that as far as the Riverside strip was concerned the recommendations seemed generally acceptable "in that they involved a minimum use of labour and materials, moreover, they met the public's demand for

22. Cab 124/1270, Memo by Nicholson to Minister of Works, 13 November 1951.

early access while retaining as many of the amenities as possible with full regard to the economy of maintenance."²³ (See Fig. 6)

There were problems however with the recommendations. The consultants, had based their ideas on certain assumptions, for example, they assumed that suitable tenants would be found to take over the remaining buildings: the Regatta Restaurant, the Press Bar and the Thameside Restaurant. They assumed that the LCC could be persuaded to keep Skylon and ensure that its foundation would not be disturbed by the Ministry of Works when preparatory work for their buildings started on that part of the site. Further, they assumed that the water and lighting services needed for the Riverside could be preserved or made better, despite the excavation work that would be going on in the adjoining area. None of these problems, Nicholson explained, were necessarily insurmountable. However, he warned that it would prove technically impracticable for Skylon to be retained. The proposals for the Downstream and Upstream sections also had a number of difficulties. The main problems with the portion of the Downstream section left in the hands of the LCC, was the difficulty of finding tenants who could pay a reasonable economic rent to cover the costs of meeting and adapting two of the four buildings which the report recommended for retention. The COID and the British Film Institute, Nicholson said, had expressed a keen interest to rent in this area. As tenants who would be able to pay the economic rent, he advised the Minister of Works that there was much to be said for enabling them to do this.²⁴

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

As far as the Upstream section was concerned, Nicholson was anxious that the outstanding difficulties about arranging for British European Airways to use the station gate and the adjoining area could be overcome as they were very desirable tenants and their presence would do much to build up the land values of the area. However, the whole area (as far as the riverside strip) was, Nicholson said, in the hands of the Ministry of Works and as such its disposal was the responsibility of the Minister of Works. Nicholson was concerned that the Ministry of Works make a firm decision quickly as to whether excavations and building operations were to commence in the near future on this part of the site. On 15 November at a meeting at County Hall, at which Nicholson and Jones of the Lord President's Office were present, the LCC outlined their response to the Casson-LCC report. The South Bank Committee of the LCC had agreed that the riverside strip was the LCC's responsibility and an examination of the cost of the suggestion put forward in the report was being carried out by their officials. They further agreed that they would probably discuss with Festival Office the case for retaining the features (in the immediate approaches to the Festival Hall) suggested by the report. They expressed the need for the Festival Office to submit estimates of the cost of implementing this scheme, the Committee felt however, that the responsibility for the future of the Upstream section other than the riverside strip must rest with the Ministry of Works who were building in that area.²⁵

25. Cab 124/1270, 15 November 1951.

Regarding the details of the report the LCC said they were seeking advice from the catering industry on the desirability of retaining the Thameside Restaurant on the river-front. They were, unlikely to accept the suggestion that they should run the Thameside Restaurant partly as a restaurant and partly as an art gallery. However, they were prepared to give favourable terms to the Institute of Contemporary Art to run the restaurant. The Arts Council who had also expressed an interest in this building were prepared to offer a rent of £12,000 a year and accept responsibility for its operation as an exhibition gallery. Thus the LCC felt that the best solution might be to offer the building to the Arts Council, with the Institute of Contemporary Art becoming sub-tenants of the Arts Council. The problem of Skylon and its retention on the site for a further two to three years was being examined by their engineers whose report would help to assess the future of Skylon. Regarding the main Administration Building and Telecinema pavilion the LCC said that it was likely that the proposals for their retention by the COID and BFI respectively would be approved. The suggestion in the Casson-LCC report that the Homes and Gardens pavilion should be retained and tenants sought for it, was, the LCC said, unlikely to be acceptable and therefore the pavilion was to be demolished. The removal of this pavilion and the Lion and Unicorn pavilion, which was no longer required by the Arts Council would, the LCC said, be the responsibility of the Festival Office, which would have to rehabilitate the area, creating from it part of the Central Garden

as proposed by the Casson-LCC report.²⁶

Thus these preliminary plans concluded the proposed short-term development of the South Bank site. In the long-term, none of the exhibition structures remained. The Ministry of Works erected between County Hall and the Hungerford Bridge Government offices. The Royal Festival Hall was completed and the adjoining site was occupied by the National Theatre. The long-term development was completed with the erection of the Shell building and a car park on the site where the Dome of Discovery stood.

26. Ibid. The Arts Council had been interested in acquiring the Lion and Unicorn Pavilion which they had hoped to turn into a small gallery, suitable for housing large visiting exhibitions. This pavilion they felt could be adapted for this purpose at a comparatively small cost of £5,000-6,000 with an annual maintenance of £4,000. However, to acquire the Lion and Unicorn Pavilion the Arts Council needed to be supplied with extra funds by the Treasury. The Treasury refused to provide the Council with the money to undertake this responsibility. Therefore the Arts Council was forced to abandon their plans for the Pavilion. Arts Council papers, Disposal Box, M. Crobert to Jones, 3 September 1951; E. White to H. Wheldon, 18 September 1951; and Sir Hugh Cassons private papers.

THE BATTERSEA PARK PLEASURE GARDENS AND FUNFAIR

It had always been the Government's and the LCC's intention to keep the Pleasure Gardens open after the Festival Summer, if only to attempt to recover the losses in the initial outlay. In July 1951, when questioned in Parliament about the Gardens continuance the Lord Privy Seal, Richard Stokes said that the Government fully recognised the advantages that would result from the continued opening of the Festival Pleasure Gardens for, say another five years. Moreover they believed that such a course would be acceptable to the public, provided that local authorities and others directly concerned agree and there are adequate safeguards for the finances, management and the maintenance of suitable standards. The Government, he said, would welcome a decision to continue. The Government he also stressed would only agree to such a continuance if assurances could be given that no new capital would be needed and further that there would "be substantial repayments in reduction of the Exchequer loans already made". "Judging from the operating results the Government had" he said, "every reason to hope that these conditions would be met".²⁷ The LCC and the Government thus set to work in the following months to ensure that the specified conditions could be met. On 19 October, the Office of the Lord Privy Seal was able to announce that:

examination of the implications of the continued opening of the Festival Pleasure Gardens in Battersea Park has now been completed by the Government with the assistance of the Festival Gardens Limited, and in consultation with the London

27. Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, 491 (1950-1951), 200-202.

County Council. Examination shows that the requirements laid down in the Lord Privy Seal's statement to Parliament on 24 July 1951, can be satisfied.

The Company are now in a position to repay the Exchequer £270,000 of the money loaned them, while retaining an adequate sum for maintenance and working capital for continued operations and giving satisfactory assurances that, on a conservative estimate, no fresh capital will be needed and a further surplus may reasonably be expected to be available for further loan repayments in the next two years while it is not desirable at this stage to attempt to estimate future surpluses, the examination in the opinion of the Lord Privy Seal, supports his previous statement to the House of Commons that the 'total moneys owing to the Exchequer could be repaid if the Gardens are allowed to run long enough.²⁸

Reporting on the Lord Privy Seal's statement on the following day The Times explained in an article that the Festival Pleasure Gardens Company was prepared if continuance was accepted in Parliament 'to operate the Gardens in accordance with their existing character and standards'. Further the Company was also prepared to restore permanently to Battersea Park the bandstand and the surrounding area south of the Emett Railway and to arrange for free public access along the river frontage during most of the winter months when the Gardens were closed to visitors. The Company was also going to pay for two of the four cricket pitches to be added to the site which, in addition to six football pitches, were part of the public facilities, outside the enclosure of the Gardens, offered by the park.²⁹

On 13 November 1951, the Government officially announced the continuance of the Pleasure Gardens. The Minister of Works, David Eccles, made the following statement on behalf of the Government:

in view of the demand for the continuance of the Festival Pleasure Gardens and the estimate by Festival Gardens Limited

28. The Times, 20 October 1951.

29. Ibid.

that a substantial part of the outstanding loan can be repaid out of profits, the Government have decided to introduce enabling legislation for the Festival Pleasure Gardens to remain open for a period up to five years, with the proviso that the Gardens may be closed at the end of two further seasons should the Government or the London County Council so require.³⁰

The Pleasure Gardens not only successfully completed their two year trial, but ran beyond the initial five year period. However, the creativity, promise and care shown in these gardens in 1951 and subsequently was never maintained. In 1976, James Gardner the creator of the fantasy world on this site, complained bitterly that the Gardens were not only not maintained properly but that they were allowed to run down.³¹

Of the other Festival projects the question of continuance was never an issue. The Buildings in the 'live' Architecture Exhibition lease were returned to the LCC the owners at the close of the Exhibition. The development for the Exhibition still stands today in Lansbury but as Frederick Gibberd the architect of the market place said in 1976, the festival style of architecture and development was not maintained and the dignified dwellings, schools and playgrounds were swamped by the Sixties fascination with high rise buildings.³² The Exhibitions such as the Science Display in South Kensington, the Industrial Power Exhibition at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, the display on board "Campania" and the Science Exhibits on the South Bank all had to be dismantled and disposed of. From as early as November 1950, the Science Council began to consider the problem

30. Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, 439 (1951-1952) 820-821.

31. Banham and Hillier, p.122

32. See pp. 385-386 for Gibberd's comments on Lansbury in 1976.

of disposing of the exhibits. An Advisory Panel was set up on 28 November 1950 under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Barlow with representatives of the Royal Society, the Director of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Directors of the Natural History and Science Museums, representatives of the Museums Association, the Ministry of Education and the Permanent Under-Secretary for Scotland. The panel had to deal with the matter of disposing of the scientific and technological exhibits seen at South Kensington, the South Bank, on "Campania" and at the Exhibition of Industrial Power at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, and report their decisions to the Council by the opening of the Festival on 5 May 1951.³³

The panel advised the Council that the exhibits should be given to National Collections and Government departments in Britain and the Commonwealth; to public collections and teaching establishments and to non-profit making public bodies. The recommendations of the panel were presented to the Festival Office on 14 September 1951 and by 31 October 1951, the Director of Science was able to report in the Science Council's final report that there were many bids for exhibits from authorities from the above mentioned categories with tours of inspection of the exhibits being arranged by the Science Council.³⁴ The disposal of industrial displays seen on the South Bank, the Land Travelling Exhibition, on Campania and Lansbury was handled by the COID, under the direction of Major ^{- General} Jack Benoy. The COID collected and returned approximately

33. Work 25/50, Final Report of the Science Council, 31 October 1951.

34. Ibid.

10,000 exhibits to the industrial manufacturers.³⁵ In Northern Ireland, the Farm and Factory exhibition displays were dismantled. The Factory building was re-adapted and allocated to house precision engineering by Messrs. Short Brothers and Harland. Some of the exterior decorative features were retained for permanent use while other exhibits and salvaged materials from the exhibition were sold at a public auction fetching good prices. A model of the exhibition buildings and grounds used for publicity was presented at the end of the Festival to the Belfast Museum.³⁶ In Wales, the Dohendre Hillside Farm Scheme, designed to show the redevelopment of farm land in Wales was further developed and populated after the Festival by farming families.

Lastly, the Arts Council, set up a Disposal Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Clark to make recommendations to the Festival Office as to which institutions and public bodies should receive the Art work seen at the Festival projects. The Art Council's Disposal Committee followed a disposal plan similar to that of the Science Council's Advisory Panel on disposal. The Arts Council's Committee was instructed by the Festival office that it had been decided in consultation with the Treasury that the art works up to the value of £50,000 purchase price should be given free to the bodies which came within certain categories, namely: United Kingdom national institutions, United Kingdom local institutions and United Kingdom and Commonwealth universities, as well as other non-profit making public bodies. The recipients of the art works

35. See pp. 519-520 for the role of the COID and Major Benoy in the Disposals of Industrial Exhibits.

36. Work 25/3, Final Report Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland, January 1952.

would only have to pay for dismantling and transportation costs.³⁷ Many institutions in these categories applied and received Festival paintings, sculpture and murals. The New Town in Harlow received Barbara Hepworth's "Contrapuntal Forms", Ben Nicholson's "Untitled" mural was presented in 1965 to Edinburgh University by Jennie Lee on behalf of the Government and now hangs in the University's Student Centre; Feliks Topolski's mural 'Cavalcade of the Commonwealth' went to the Commissioner General for the UK in South East Asia and was ultimately sent to Singapore. Other recipients included the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; The Glyn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea; the Manchester Art Gallery; the Tate Gallery; Southampton Art Gallery; the Brighton Art Gallery; The Royal College of Art; University College London; and the Ministry of Education.³⁸

On 30 September 1951, the Festival of Britain ended. In the last weeks of the Exhibition the South Bank site, which had always been gay became boisterous:

Two balloon ascents were made from the fairway and on 22 September the Thames was crossed on a tight-rope by Charles Elleano before a record crowd on the site of 75,923 people. On the final Saturday, 29 September, a Gala Night was held with paper hats and squeakers on sale and three bands playing for dancing on the grounds. On the Fairway, where Geraldo and his full broadcasting orchestra were playing, the crowds were packed too tightly for dancing and had to resort to community singing. The cabaret that night, introduced as usual by Philip Slessor, consisted of the Radio Revellers, Richard Murdoch, Kenneth Horne and Gracie Fields, all of whom received a magnificent reception from the crowds who had been standing in a solid mass for several hours.³⁹

- 37. Arts Council, Disposal Box, Barry to W.E.Williams, Secretary General Arts Council, 20 August 1951.
- 38. Arts Council, Disposal Box, 8 November 1951 and press announcement on the Disposal of Art Works (no date given).
- 39. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain, 1951

On the evening of 30 September, the closing ceremony was held on the South Bank. It had been hoped by the Festival Organisation that the King would be able to broadcast a message, thereby giving the event an atmosphere of formality. His Majesty, unfortunately, was too ill to attend the closing ceremony, a fact which overshadowed the proceedings. It was, therefore, decided by the Festival Organisation that there should not be an official closing on the South Bank, but rather a small ceremony with a broadcast made by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This in the circumstances would suffice.⁴⁰

On that evening the Archbishop summed up the gains of the Festival with these words:

I think the Festival has been a good thing for all of us and has brought encouragement just when it was needed: and in saying that I am thinking not only of the Festival of London but also, and perhaps even more, of local Festivals up and down the country. It really has been nationwide. Well over two thousand cities, towns and villages organised celebrations on their own resources through the enterprise of local authorities and voluntary organisations and countless individual citizens. It has been a real family party and I am glad to know that almost everywhere the church has helped to make it so.⁴¹

The Festival, the Archbishop reminded his audience, had left in many places things of permanent value, such as new buildings, art centres, new gardens and playing fields, new works of art, music and drama which were a legacy for future generations, but besides these outward benefits there were, he said, "inward renewals of spirit. In London and the country there was a family feeling of doing things together".

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

He concluded his speech by expressing the hope that the Festival, having inspired the nation with the courage needed to dare and to do, that this same nation, now invigorated would move forward to new tasks, more refreshed by the excitement of the Festival, putting their best effort into their work and lives, and thereby keeping "this beloved country, socially, economically, morally and spiritually - a green and pleasant land".⁴²

After the Archbishop's address, there was a beating of the Retreat and Tattoo by the massed bands of the Brigade of Guards. At half past ten the lights of the Exhibition were dimmed and a guardsman lowered for the last time the Festival flag which had fluttered over the Exhibition for five months. The crowds who had gathered for the ceremony sang songs and hymns, culminating with 'Abide with me' and the National Anthem.⁴³ Thus, with the Ceremony over and the Festival of Britain officially closed, the task began not only of dismantling and disposing of the exhibitions, but also of evaluating the Festival.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN 1951

In the immediate weeks and months following the Festival of Britain, the critics who attempted to review the event's significance, for the most part cautiously came to the conclusion that the legacy of the Festival ought to be left for historians of future years to interpret. At the end of the summer of 1951, when the lights on the South Bank dimmed and the heady excitement had gone, it was difficult to find an accurate yardstick by which the success or the failure of the Festival could be judged. The Critic for The Times wrote of the Festival as being 'a landmark in the social history of Britain'. It would he said

remain as a vivid recollection in the memory of young men and women and of children who may reasonably hope to be still alive at the turn of this twentieth century, and , after that, it will be weighed in the balance by the historians.⁴⁴

The question uppermost in the minds of critics was highlighted in articles of The Times and The Guardian. The critic of The Times asked 'As time passes and detailed pictures of the South Bank grow blurred what will linger in the mind's eye?'⁴⁵ For the critic of The Guardian the issue was not so much what the Festival would leave behind but more significantly 'how many of its ambitious aims were realised, how near it got to being a year of wonders'.⁴⁶ Answers to the questions were attempted at the time by the Festival organisers. Gerald Barry wrote and lectured on the Festival and its significance, as did Hugh Casson. However what neither they nor

44. The Times, 29 September 1951.

45. Ibid.

46. The Manchester Guardian, 29 September 1951.

others had, then, being so close to the event, was the invaluable insights made possible by distance of time. Thus thirty five years on, these questions as well as the legacy of the Festival of Britain ought therefore to be examined. Some answers could be found in the decades that followed 1951.

Without doubt, the Festival was a unique achievement, forged by highly innovative people in adverse times and circumstances. Its primary achievement as viewed from the spectacle at the South Bank lay in its presentation. The British public were offered a bright new world free from the tensions and constraints of the past years. It was as if this was the breaking of the mould. The Festival of 1951 might aptly be called the re-birth of Britain.

It is necessary to examine whether the goals and objectives of the men who formulated the ideas and aspirations for the Festival were attained. If so what was the gain for Britain? Many reasons have been given for having an event in 1951. It was strongly felt that the centenary of 1851 should be marked. Economic constraints determined the end result of this idea. The Festival of Britain 1951, with a publicity campaign aimed at showing Britain as a nation with a glorious future, was ironically to mark an event epitomising a glorious past.

Whatever its stated objectives were, the underlying theme of the Festival was to give the people a sense of fun. With two world wars in an historically short time-span the people's lives were overshadowed by tensions, fears and tragedy that are part of 'the horror of war'. It must be remembered also that the depression of the thirties began to peter out with the necessity to re-arm for war. The aftermath of the Second World War took its toll on the

spirit of the nation. Descriptive tones of this period after the war ranged from grey to sombre browns. It is possible that this colour range did not only apply to what was available in clothing and in paint work but also to the general appearance of the wreckage of war. With this understanding of the mood of the people who were experiencing shortages and rationing, the Festival of Britain was planned with a desire to cheer the people up. Yet it would be naive to believe that this sense of fun could be its most important objective. Suffice it to say, as a goal it was achieved. The people enjoyed the Festival, the glitter, the change of rhythm in their lives - they had fun. More significantly for the ordinary man and woman, the world being offered to them was forward looking, exciting and inspiring. Never before had they seen in one space such colours, such scrupulous attention to landscape. A whole new way of life was opening up. Details seemed to matter in the most unexpected places - litter bins, sign posts, street lighting, lettering on captions. A hint that the environment mattered was emerging.

The most significant change was seen in interior and exterior furniture; architectural plans included all amenities under one roof; added to this were new styles of furnishing. In the experience of many, accommodation varied in kind from one room with primitive facilities, 'shared by several families - one lavatory on a landing with near it one gas cooker on which several harried housewives had to prepare their meals'.⁴⁷ Then there was 'the notorious back-to-back' with its own peculiar advantages and

47. Arthur Marwick, British Society Since 1945, p.73.

disadvantages. For many others home was:

The standard working-class house (though with infinite local variations), left intact by the slum clearance drives of the thirties, was the two-up two-down: two bedrooms on the first floor, two rooms on the ground floor, with a tiny scullery at the back, opening on to the yard containing the lavatory. The variable incidence of damp, dilapidation, and vermin could render the intolerable beyond description, and the tolerable degrading. None of these types of houses had baths, a condition shared by one third of all houses in Britain in 1951.⁴⁸

Lansbury gave the people the right to dream of wonderful and luxurious happenings. It was a leap forward for most people to think that even a flat with all 'mod cons' included, could be theirs. The people voted Labour with great hope of better times to come. They received many advantages in the Welfare State. Most certainly they had a Festival in 1951, which inspired new ideas in living standards from which Britain could never look back. The Festival use of plastics, new fabrics and modernity in furnishing with Scandinavian overtones, was to have an impact on home making, reaching into the present.

In the various exhibits everything revealed a bold use of colour in homes. The use of available space also became an interesting feature. The colour and style, first seen on the South Bank gave rise to new stylistic connotations. Chief among these being 'contemporary' and 'Festival of Britain' which could refer to a building, a piece of furniture, an interior or a product. For a while in the early fifties these terms 'contemporary' and 'Festival of Britain' were virtually interchangeable. The British public with no other choice, in the war years and after, than gravy browns and cumbersome pieces of Victorian furniture generally adopted the

48. Ibid., p.73.

colours and the new 'contemporary' style, and became interested and committed to the new look:

There was an outburst of blocks of council flats whose end-walls, balconies and front doors hectically asserted themselves in primary colours. In smart trend conscious areas, like Kensington and Hampstead, front doors with one accord turned bright yellow, like fields of buttercups. Interiors, after a long period of anaemia in pastel shades, became feverish with 'contemporary' wallpaper, patterned with jazzy calligraphy on brightly-hued fireplace wall, would be made to 'stand out' - one might have said 'leapt out' - by being papered with an even brighter and more gaudy paper than the others. Underfoot in millions of living rooms lay the earliest best seller among wall-to-wall carpets. It was called 'Skates Trails' and was the very essence of 'contemporary' style - a hectic pattern of thin curved lines scraped on a ground of grey or burnt red. More than two thousand miles of it were run off the looms at Kidderminster. Amid this sat 'contemporary' with spindly, splayed legs, moulded and laminated 'free-flow' chairbacks, coffee table tops which flared upwards at either end. They might have been designed to fly. Instead they alighted in flocks in airport and suburban lounges alike.⁴⁹

With a brief to attract the attention of a large and varied number of countries around the world, the Publicity Planning Group realised that the success of their effort would be measured by the response of the numbers of tourists from overseas who visited the Festival. The awareness of a Britain on the road to recovery, was therefore a necessary ingredient in getting the message across. Double decker buses touring Europe in 1950 may seem pedestrian only to those who are over familiar with these vehicles. To those not acquainted with the London bus, the impact was staggering. The use of this idea was a novelty in its time; the buses were typically British, their presence was a bold reminder of Britain's determination to be seen as vigorous and enterprising in the business of showing the country abroad. Associating with Time-Life

49. Peter Lewis, The 50's, p.187.

Inc: in this venture of publicising the country was a no less effective decision to ensure the level of status and prestige that was to be accorded to Britain. The Festival achieved its objective in attracting tourists to Britain in substantial numbers during the summer of 1951. It is on record that 1951 was the most successful year that the British Tourist Industry had experienced since 1938, excluding of course the war years.⁵⁰ The figures for the period recorded:

1938:	450,000	foreign	visitors
1949:	555,000	"	"
1950:	610,000	"	"
1951:	700,000	"	"

There was a 14% increase in visitors who came to Britain during the festival year compared with the preceding year. From North America alone 170,000 visitors came to Britain in 1951, a 4% increase over the 1950 figure. Dollar earnings increased by 100 million dollars. Foreign exchange earnings were a vital objective for the planners of the Festival. Bearing in mind that in many places the effects of war were not yet over, the response from foreign visitors to the publicity campaign was most satisfying. Continental visitors numbered 387,000 which was an increase by nearly one fifth over the 1950 figure. From Scandinavia, the Low Countries and Switzerland, one person in every 200 of their populations were among the visitors. Commonwealth visitors also increased: 142,000 people came from the Commonwealth to Britain in 1951. The specific increases over the 1950 level were as follows: 12.7% from New Zealand, 15.6%

50. Cab 124/1252, Report on the Festival of Britain 1951, Lickorish to Nicholson, 21 August 1951.

from Australia and 24.7% from South Africa.⁵¹ The total spending by overseas visitors to Britain in 1951 was estimated in August 1951 at £73 million and with the addition of fare payments to British Shipping and Airline Companies this figure rose to £103 million. Thus in the Festival year, the nation's earnings from overseas visitors rose by £18 million, or, double the cost to the Exchequer of the Festival. This expansion of Britain's tourist earnings in 1951 could be contrasted with the general trend in the country's balance of payments, the volume of British exports had risen only by 3% as compared with the 14% expansion in tourist traffic.⁵²

The obvious increasing importance of the tourist trade, as highlighted by the Festival, meant that ancillary services prospered. Hotels and restaurants were refurbished and the catering trade was able to raise its standards. Cleanliness in handling and preparing food improved.⁵³ But the maximum gain was that Britain steadily became routed on the tourist map of the world, a feature still apparent in 1986.

The Festival was created by young men and women with ideas of what Britain could achieve and their responsibility was to demonstrate this. On the South Bank and at the other Festival Exhibitions young artists, theme convenors and display designers were given an opportunity to show what they were capable of doing. Institutions like the Arts Council and Design Council consolidated their role in society, thus giving an impetus and spur to creativity. The Festival gave to the young who were for so long

51. Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

unsettled by the general disruption of their lives, a sense of identity, ambition and fulfilment. One such young person who was quick to grasp the message of the Festival was Terence Conran. Having worked on designs for the Transport as well as Homes and Gardens pavilions he went on to found a manufacturing empire whose Scandinavian inspired style of elegance and simplicity would be reminiscent of the message first highlighted by the Festival. British artists and composers were given a boost from the Arts Council. Although the Classical European composers were usually on the programme, it must be said that there was a deliberate effort to have as many British composers as was possible playing British music.

The Festival Organisers and sponsors succeeded, in creating a new persona and a new role for Britain looking not towards the might and magic of Empire, or entirely towards the emergence of America but to the countries of Europe also with their redevelopment problems. The style that fascinated the people in 1951 at the exhibitions on the South Bank, the music, art, architecture and design was very much orientated towards, and essentially inspired by, Europe. The architecture and design had a clear British stamp but were influenced by the work done in these areas in Germany and Scandinavia in the thirties. Some might say that this was the beginning of a greater orientation towards Europe than had occurred in the previous century, thus preparing the people for Britain's future participation in European affairs.

The Festival of Britain ought not to be looked at in isolation from other policy decisions of 1945-51. By 1951 the Welfare State had become a reality. Indeed in the first nine months after the Labour Government took office Attlee was able to hearten the party

faithful at the annual Party Conference with the news that seventy five bills had been introduced and fifty five had recieved Royal Assent. "In previous Parliaments" he said "any one of these would have been thought a full meal for a year".⁵⁴ Undeniably it was a time of rapid and unprecedented change in the social history of Britain.

Against this background was held the Festival of Britain which had to take its turn in the budget, for as each piece of legislation was passed it too had its financial implications; and many thought the Festival was evidence of frivolous expenditure that the Government could do without.

It seems to me, that if the Festival was a tonic, it was also a statement. A statement that some far reaching change had taken place in the lives of the people:

whether life was lived in an overcrowded slum, in a new council house, on a private estate, in a Victorian semi-detached, or in a luxury flat, material conditions for everyone were somewhat different from what they had been in the 1930s. For all the harassment of rationing, shortages and austerity, the nation as a whole was healthier and fitter than it had ever been before.⁵⁵

Moreover, the Festival, beneath its gaiety and bunting had the serious element of emphasizing the sweeping changes that had taken place in Britain, as well as stimulating hope in what could be achieved. There was a sense in which the Festival demonstrated physically a great deal of what the Labour Government had been saying and doing from 1945-1951. In specific terms the statement was that the Labour Government had succeeded in implanting the

54. Hopkins, The New Look, p.54.

55. Marwick, p.74.

Welfare State in Britain and from 1951 onward it would be difficult for any future administration to turn the clock back. The Festival was not the swan song of the Labour Government as it has been portrayed, rather it was the visual demonstration of the realisation of their progress. No Government would have risked so much criticism merely to give the people fun in an impoverished nation. What was done, perhaps can best be explained by looking at two different sides of the same coin: on the one side there was the desire to mark the Centenary of 1851 by men who were forward looking but in the main traditionalist; on the other side, the Festival of Britain 1951, could also have been a decisive act containing a veiled truth: that those who were then in power believed that they had succeeded in changing history, both for their Party and their Country.

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1

The Great Exhibitions Centenary Committee

"The Official Committee"

Chairman:

E.M. Nicholson, Lord President's Office

R. Auriol Barker	Ministry of Works
S.L.G. Beaufoy	Ministry of Town & Country Planning
A. Clark	Ministry of Works
Sir James Creobie	Treasury
A.W. Cunliffe	Ministry of Works
J.H. Fershaw	Ministry of Health
J.P.G. French	Foreign Office
J.H. Lidderdale	Office of the Lord Privy Seal
A.E. Miles Davies	Ministry of Education
R.E.J. Moore	Exhibitions Branch, Board of Trade
J.G. Owen	Treasury
G. Parker	Board of Trade
A.J. Platt	Treasury
W.A. Proctor	Ministry of Works
H.R. Smith	Scottish Office
R.B. Tippetts	Board of Trade
E. Tomkins	Foreign Office
T.R. Weaver	Ministry of Education
K.M. Wilford	Foreign Office

Source: Work 25/7, Invitations to Festival Hall Opening.

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1A

The Constituent Bodies

The Arts Council of Great Britain

Chairman:	Sir Ernest Pooley
Vice-Chairman:	Dr. B. Ifor Evans
Miss Mary Glasgow	Secretary-General until March 1951
W.E. Williams	Secretary-General
Huw Wheldon	Arts Council representative to the Executive Committee

The Rt. Hon. The Countess of Albermarle
Sir Bronson Albery
Sir Richard Capell
John Carter
Sir Kenneth Clark
Joseph Compton
Edric Cundell
Mrs. Hugh Dalton
The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Esher
Sir Cecil Graves
Wyn Griffith
George T. McGlashan
Dr. James Welsh

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1B

The Constituent Bodies

The Council of Industrial Design

Chairman:

Dr. R.S. Edwards

S. Gordon Russell

Director and representative to the
Executive Committee

Sir Colin Anderson
John Anderson (retired)
Sir Leigh Ashton
Mrs. Helen C. Bentwich
Lord Bilsland
Noel Carrington
Robin Darwin
Cyril Dee
Geoffrey Dunn
John Murray Eaton
Leslie Gamage
John GLOag
Sir Ernest Goodale (retired)
William Haigh
W. Johnstone (died in office)
G.W. Lacey
Sir Kenneth Lee
H.V. Lobb
R.A. Maclean
Sir Francis Meynell (retired)
Sir William Palmer
A.N. Silver
F.J. Stratton
Sir Charles Tennyson
Allan Walton (died in office)
The Hon. Josiah Wedgwood (retired)
Philip G.R. Whalley (died in office)
A. Whitaker
Miss Audrey Withers
W.J. Worboys

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1C

The Constituent Bodies

The British Film Institute

Chairman:

Cecil H. King

D. Forman

Director and representative to the
Executive Committee

The Hon. Antony Asquith
E.G. Barnard (retired)
Norman Collins
Sir Arthur Elton (retired)
Sir Henry French
W.R. Fuller
Mrs. Jacquetta Hawkes
Frank Hill
F.A. Hoare
J.H. Hoy
J.M. Peddie
I.J. Pitman
Miss Dilys Powell
F.A. Ring
Dr. Stephen Taylor
The Lady Tweedsmuir (retired)
Mrs. Eirene White

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1D

The Council for Science and Technology

Chairman:

Sir Alan Barlow

Ian Cox

Director of Science, Executive Committee
Festival of Britain Office

Sir Wallace Akers
Sir Stanley Angwin
Sir Edward Appleton (retired)
Sir Alfred Egerton
Sir John Fryer (died in office)
Sir William Halcrow
E.H. Havelock (retired)
Sir Harold Himsworth
Sir Ben Lockspeiser
Sir Edward Mellanby (retired)
Prof. Andrew Robertson
Sir Edward Salisbury
Sir William Slater
Sir Frank Smith

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1E

The Constituent Bodies

The Council for Architecture, Town Planning & Building Research

Chairman:

Howard V. Lobb

Hugh Casson

Director of Architecture, Executive
Committee, Festival of Britain Office

Prof. H.V.A. Briscoe

F.J. Forty

Prof. W.G. Holford

Robert Matthew

Rowland Nicholas

Sir George Pepler

J.M. Richards

Howard Robertson

ANNEX 1F

The National Book League

Chairman:

Robert Lusty

Mrs. Anne Moore, Festival Officer

W. Balleny

Alan Bott

John Carter

G. Wren Howard

Kenneth Lindsay

Sir Francis Meynell

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

ANNEX 1G

THE CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS

The conservative newspapers, that is The Daily Mail, The Daily Express and The Evening Standard, published highly critical and provocative articles between 1949 and 1950. Suddenly developing a social conscience, the Conservative newspapers highlighted areas or groups in the nation's life that they felt could be better served if the funds and materials allocated to the Festival had been used differently. For example, in The Evening Standard of 10 July 1950, Herbert Morrison was accused of "ignoring the homeless". Labour, materials and effort, the editorial announced, were being diverted from housing to "purposes which should never have been contemplated ... to the Festival of Britain and its associated enterprises". The article went on to say:

Of course it is too late to draw back now. But what folly and wickedness prevailed when the Government decided to press forward with the Festival despite the urgent and unanswered need of the people for more homes.

In different circumstances, the Festival would have been a good undertaking. If the slums were diminished instead of spreading. If there were appreciably fewer than 175,000 families on the LCC waiting list, then the Festival would have been worthy of support.

As it is, Mr. Morrison has decided that an £11 million, six-month jamboree should take precedence over the human needs of the Londoners whose interest he professes to cherish.

The Daily Express of 30 September 1950 questioned Morrison's intended desire to make the people happy under the glaring headline, "Are You All Happy?" It stated that Morrison wished to hear the people sing and asked:

But how does the Lord President interpret his mission as a troubador of joy? To this date, his sole and debatable

contribution to human happiness is to build at the tax payer's expense a monument to funfair in Battersea Park.

If projects like these are a sufficient recipe for happiness then the public by now should be rolling joyfully in the aisles. But if something more is needed a sharp and immediate reduction in the cost of living there can only be bitterness and resentment at the cool and callous way in which Mr. Morrison and the Government allow fresh financial burdens to be piled on daily to the poorest and weakest members of the community.

Tomorrow, October 1st, brings a fresh batch of imposts on the people. Up tomorrow from 12s to 13s 3d, goes the price of an old age pensioner's radio battery. Up tomorrow although the post office last year made a profit of £15 million goes even the price of letters sent abroad. All these increases? For one day, yes. But only for one day. On Wednesday up by nearly 10s soars the price of the gabardine raincoat a little boy wears to school. What does Mr. 'I-want-to-make-the-people-happy' Morrison do about the rising cost of living? What does he do to make life easier and less harassing for the millions of families to whom each rise in price means harsh and heavy hardship. He does not a thing. And he will do nothing. For the one sure way to reduce the cost of living is to cut out the restrictions, the extravagance, the intolerance, the incompetence of socialism.

That is the price for the people's happiness which neither Mr. Morrison nor any other socialist is prepared to pay.

The articles supposedly investigated in depth the cost of the Festival project, the men who were organising it, and the benefits it would bring. The articles made several untrue allegations, such as, the Display originally planned as a modest show to celebrate the centenary of 1851, had now "been superseded by far more ambitious schemes"; and, "by June 1949", Wintour said, "Mr. Gerald Barry was saying that the purpose of the Festival is to put the whole of Britain on show". Wintour claimed that the South Bank site where the centrepiece of the Festival was being housed, was chosen because "Mr. Morrison saw his chance to exploit the Festival programme of advancing his long cherished scheme for developing the South Bank". The articles further described the Festival Office staff, Ismay, Barry and members of the Festival Council and Executive as overpaid,

irresponsible, incompetents who for some inexplicable reason were put in charge of spending the taxpayer's money without adequate supervision or the qualifications to do so.

Sources: The Evening Standard, 10 July 1950; The Daily Express, 30 September 1950; The Evening Standard, 2 and 3 August, 1949.

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1H

The Festival Council

The following lists include all the men and women who served on the Festival Council and the Executive Committee from April 1948 to September 1951. Those who died in office are marked as such and those whose service came to an end before the close of the Festival are shown as "retired".

The Festival Council

Chairman: General The Rt. Hon. Lord Ismay

Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie
W. Arthur
Sir Frederick Bain (died in office)
Sir Alan Barlow
R. Brook
The Rt. Hon. R.A. Butler, M.P.
Sir Kenneth Clark
The Rt. Hon. Lord Clydesmuir
Noel Coward (retired)
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Crawford and Balcarres
The Very Rev. A.C. Don
Dr. R.S. Edwards
T.S. Eliot
The Rt. Hon. Walter Elliot, M.P.
L.K. Elmhirst
Sir Henry L. French
John Geilgud
Sir William Haley
Miss F. Hancock
Sir Alan Herbert
Miss M. Herbison, M.P.
The Rt. Hon. Thomas Johnston, M.P.
Sir David Lindsay Keir (retired)
Lt. Gen. Sir Charles King
Lord Latham
Sir Harry Lindsay
Kenneth Lindsay
Lady Megan Lloyd George, M.P.
Howard V. Lobb

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1H

The Festival Council (contd.)

Mrs. James A. Mackie
Mrs. Jean Mann, M.P.
The Rt. Hon. Sir Roland Nugent, M.P.
Sir Ernest Pooley
Sir Robert Robinson
Sir Malcolm Sargent
Sir Frederick Stewart (died in office)
The Rt. Hon. Joseph Westwood (died in office)
Sir Wyn Wheldon
The Rt. Hon. Lord Wilmot

ANNEX 1I

Nominees for the post of Director-General of the Executive Committee:

S.J. Graham was the Regional Controller, London and South East Region, he was formerly with the Exhibitions Division in the Department of Overseas Trade of the Board of Trade and had participated in the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow in 1938.

J. Eaton Griffith aged 54, had been Private Secretary in the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Aircraft Production. He had been a principal Assistant Secretary in the Ministries of Production, Fuel and Power, as well as Chairman of the European Coal Organisation, President of the Lawn Tennis Association and was described as a good mixer.

H.V. Rhodes was over 62, and was the Establishment and Organisation Officer of the Ministry of National Insurance.

Cecil Weir (58) was largely responsible for the organisation of the Scottish Empire Exhibition of 1938 and had held during the war responsible positions at the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Supply, and at the time of his recommendation for the post of Director-General, he was with the Control Commission in Germany.

Mr. Hynd (46) a backbencher who had been with the Duchy of Lancaster.

Lord Ismay had, at this time, already been appointed to the Chairmanship of the Festival Council; no further notes were given on General Slim (aged 47), Sir Cyril Radcliffe (49) and Sir Miles Thomas (51) and Francis Williams (45).

Source: Cab 124/1214, 1951 Organisation, Chief Executive Officer

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1J

The Executive Committee

Director General:	Gerald Barry
B.C. Sendall	Controller, Deputy Chairman
G.A. Campbell	Director, Finance & Establishments
Hugh Casson	Director, Architecture
Cecil Cooke	Director, Exhibitions
Ian Cox	Director, Science
Leonard Crainford	Secretary (until 22 June 1950)
J.D. Forman	Director, British Film Institute
S. Gordon Russell	Director, COID
Huw Wheldon	Arts Council of Great Britain, representative
Paul Wright	Director, Public Relations

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951.

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1K

The Regional Committees

The Scottish Committee:

Chairman:

The Rt. Hon. Thomas Johnston
The Rt. Hon. Joseph Westwood (died in
office)

Secretary:

Sir John Hanford
Dr. George Firth (retired)

William Ballantine

The Rt. Hon. Lord Bilsland

The Rt. Hon. Lord Clydesmuir

The Rev. Dr. Nevile Davidson

Lady Dollan

Frank Donachy

The Rt. Hon. Walter Elliot

Miss Margaret Herbison

Sir Hector Hetherington

Sir Alexander B. King

Eric Linklater (retired)

A.B. Mackay

R.A. Maclean

Sir Hector McNeil

Mrs. Jean Mann

Sir Frank Mears

The Rt. Hon. Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Mr. James Miller

Sir Andrew H.A. Murray

Sir Frederick Stewart (died in office)

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Provost of Glasgow, Sir Victor D. Warren

James Welsh

H. Harvey Wood (retired)

The Welsh Committee:

Chairman:

Sir Wynn Wheldon

Secretary:

A.G. Prys-Jones

Will Arthur

Alun Oldfield Davies

Sir William Llewelyn

Sir Leonard Twiston Davies

H.T. Edwards

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1K

The Regional Committees

The Welsh Committee (contd.)

Idris Evans
Sir Herbert Miles
The Rev. A.E. Jones
Lady Megan Lloyd-George
R.H.R. Lloyd
Morgan Nicholas
Miss Myra Owen
J.D. Powell
Emlyn Williams
Dr. W.J. Williams
Clough William-Ellis

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

THE MACHINERY OF THE FESTIVAL ORGANISATION

ANNEX 1K

The Regional Committees

The Northern Ireland Committee:

Chairman: The Rt. Hon. Sir Roland Nugent
Col. S.G. Houghton (retired)

Vice-Chairman: Dennis Rebbeck

Secretary-Controller: A.A.K. Arnold
Depute-Secretary: Miss N.H. Lonsdale
Depute-Controller: S.M. Morgan
Secretary: R.C.W. Grubb (retired)

F.M. Adams
D.H. Alexander
James Alexander
A.G. Algeo
The Countess of Antrim
L. Arndell
R.W. Berkeley
S. Clarke
W.H.N. Downer
Prof. E. Estyn Evans
E.T.R. Herdman
A.J. Howard
J. Keating
H. Lynch-Robinson
Mrs. J.A. Mackie
J. Nelson McMillen
Prof. J. Morrison
Councillor J.H. Norritt
The Rt. Hon. Dame Dehra Parker (retired)
Major F.A. Pope (retired)
A. Stewart

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

ANNEX 2

THE INVESTMENTS PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Sir Edwin Plowden
A.K. Cairncross	Board of Trade
B.N. Davies	Central Statistics Office
J. Downie	Central Economics Planning Staff (CEPS), Treasury
D.C.B. Holden	CEPS, Treasury
L.B. Hutchinson	Ministry of Supply
E.F. Muir	Ministry of Works
P. Redfern	Central Statistics Office
W. Strath	CEPS

Source: Cab 124/1335, IPC Minutes, 12 July 1948

ANNEX 2B

RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR THE BUILDING OF A PERMANENT
CONCERT HALL ON THE SOUTH BANK SITE

THE SOUTH BANK SCHEME:

Clearance of Site Cost £ 50,000

Labour Required 300

Labour Period (months) 6

Construction of the river embankment wall

Labour Required 50-100

Steel Required (tons of sheet piling) 1,000

Straightening of Belvedere Road
Hungerford Bridge £ 17,000

From Hungerford Bridge
to County Hall 25,000 £ 42,000

Labour Period (months) 18

Erection of Concert Hall

Labour Required skilled 75

unskilled 150

Labour Period (months) 24

Source: Cab 124/1335, Report from the Official Committee to the
Lord President, 17 July 1948.

ANNEX 2C

RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR THE BUILDING OF A PERMANENT
CONCERT HALL ON THE QUEEN'S HALL/ST. GEORGE'S HALL SITE

THE QUEEN'S HALL SCHEME:

Building ends	End of 1950
Labour Required	255
Labour Period (months)	18
Steel Required (tons)	600 can be reduced if pre-stressed is used for the roof.

Source: Cab 124/1335, Report from the Official Committee to the Lord President, 17 July 1948.

ANNEX 2D

THE CONSIDERATION OF TENTAGE

The COI was commissioned by the Executive to prepare a report for them on the possibility of using this method to house the exhibitions. Cecil Cooke presented the Executive with a detailed report in which he based his calculations on an area covering 350,000 square feet. On further examination of the South Bank site, he discovered that an increased area of covered exhibition space was available, so that if the area used turned out to be more than 350,000 square feet, the materials and the labour requirements would have to be increased accordingly. The main materials needed were canvas, timber, steel and cordage. Of these materials, the estimated amounts required to cover 350,000 square feet were (not including flooring): 120,000 square yards of canvas; 17 tons of mild steel; 210 standards of timber; and 7 tons of cordage. The interior displays would require: 325 standards of timber; 46 tons of steel; and 570,000 ft. of super plywood. In terms of labour to be used, in his estimate Mr. Cooke divided the amount into three stages: the preparation of the site which would require 600 men for a period of 4 months; the flooring of the structures would require 400-700 men for a period of 3 months; and the erection of tentage itself would require 200 men for a 3 month period. The report further dealt with the question of specially-designed tentage which was an issue of great importance to the Executive. So long as the tentage was not specially designed, the South Bank would merely look like a conventional garden party planted in the midst of London, but the

design of the tentage presented problems, special steel structures had to be created, and more important, the canvas used had to be dyed - which would be complicated by the fire and damp-proofing processes that had to be carried out in order to conform to the LCC's fire and safety precaution standards. Cooke concluded his report by stating that from experience gained in housing exhibitions in tented structures, "they can be made practical in construction and pleasant in atmosphere; while the unusual technical problems involved might produce a visual form very different from the generally accepted exhibition planning formulae. Although satisfied with Cooke's report there were some areas that worried the Executive. The Presentation Panel, concerned as it was with the physical and visual setting of the Festival, were concerned about the problems of specially designed tentage and its durability once erected. They decided that they would find out what other kinds of fabric could be used and how tentage would perform under various weather conditions. To find out the answers to these problems, the Executive asked the DSIR (Department for Scientific and Industrial Research) and the Shirley Institute of Manchester to investigate. These bodies investigated the possible use of plastics, balloon fabric, nylon, cotton and flax - none of these fabrics withstood the rigorous examinations and had, therefore, to be abandoned. The tented structures fared not better: erected on a site near Surrey Docks, the fabric did not respond well to the weather conditions. The damp affected it and it looked dull after a few months of exposure, and the fire-proofing techniques still did not conform to the LCC's standards. The Executive had shown itself willing to compromise, noting however that this plan could only be perceived as

second best; even the Council had agreed to the plan, also noting that it was second best, but having seen the results of the tests, all parties were forced to admit that the idea of using tentage would have to be abandoned and that the exhibition would have to be housed in temporary structures designed by competent architects.

Sources: Cab 124/1336, Report by Cecil Cooke on alternative housing for the Festival Exhibitions, 19 August 1948; Work 25/48, Minutes of the Presentation Panel, 11 January 1949; Work 25/44, Festival Council Minutes, 2, 16 and 23 September 1948; Sir Gerald Barry, "Three Cantor Lectures on The Festival of Britain 1951", Journal of The Royal Society of Arts, c (22 August 1952), p. 688.

THE BRITISH INDUSTRIES FAIR

The first catalogue for the British Industries Fair states that in 1930 Olympia was used for light industry and the heavy industrial exhibits were mounted in Birmingham. In 1931 two further sections were added to Olympia and Birmingham, a section on Cotton Textiles at the White City and an Artificial Silk Goods Exhibition at the Royal Albert Hall. By 1937 the number of trades exhibiting at White City had risen to five and in 1938, the fair was moved from White City to Earls Court; by this time the number of trades exhibiting had risen to nine.

In 1951 the British Industries Fair was opened daily from 30 April - 11 May. The Fair was closed on Sunday 6 May 1951 and the public were admitted for a fee only on two days Saturday 5 May 1951 and Wednesday 9 May 1951. The only goods allowed to be shown at the Fair were ones manufactured or produced within the Commonwealth. At Earls Court, the following goods were displayed:

Commonwealth Section	Glassware
Textiles and Clothing	Carpets, Linoleum
Furnishing Fabrics	Leather and Leathergoods
Foodstuffs and Beverages	Boots and Shoes
Confectionery	Saddlery and Harness
Tobacco, cigarettes and cigars	Plastics
Furniture	Sales Services
Bedsteads and Bedding	
China, Earthenware and Stoneware	

At Olympia, the following goods were displayed:

Baby Carriages and Invalid Chairs
Basketware
Brushes and Brooms
Chemicals Light and Heavy
Domestic Chemical Products

Perfumery and Chemists' Supplies
Drugs
Dyes
Cutlery
Jewellery, Watches and Clocks
Silver and Electro-plate
Fancy Goods including Tobacconists Sundries
Haberdashery
Medical and Surgical Instruments and Appliances
Printing and Bookbinding Machinery
Photographic and Cinematographic Apparatus
Scientific and Optical Instruments
Spectacle ware and Opticians' Supplies
Office Appliances and Equipment
Musical Instruments
Radio Apparatus
Paper
Printing and Publishing
Stationery and Stationers' Sundries
Sports Goods and Camp Equipment
Toys and Games

At Castle Bromwich, Birmingham the Engineering and Hardware section
displayed:

Group A

Hardware

- (A) Hardware, Ironmongery and Brass Foundry
- (B) Farm and Garden Equipment

Group B

Building

Group C

Electricity

Group D

Engineering

- (A) Engineering
- (B) Metals
- (C) Quarry, Mining, Colliery, Road and Oil Field
- (D) Transport
- (E) Gas

In 1955 only Olympia was used in London for the British Industries Fair and in the last available Catalogue dated 1956 Olympia was again the only venue used and the number of exhibitors had dropped to 250.

Source: Earls Court Press Office, British Industries Fair Catalogues, 1930, 1931, 1937 and 1951.

ANNEX 2F

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE BATTERSEA PARK GARDENS SCHEME
OVER A FIVE YEAR PERIOD

REVENUE

Admissions Fees	1951 - 1955	£ 915,000
Concessions	1951 - 1955	985,000
		£1,900,000

EXPENDITURE

New Features	200,000
Re-instatement of the park	50,000
Maintenance and running costs from 1951 until 1955	700,000
Contingencies for 1951 - 1955	150,000
Profit	50,000
	£1,900,000

Source: Work 25/44, Report by the Working Party on Festival
Pleasure Gardens, 2 April 1949

ANNEX 2H

THE FESTIVAL GARDENS LIMITED

Chairman:

Sir Henry French (retired)
Lt. General Sir Charles J.S. King

I.J. Hayward
Leonard Crainford
Sir Leslie Joseph
M.P. O'Hara
Leonard Crainford

Deputy Chairman
Managing Director (retired)
Managing Director
General Manager
Secretary (until 22 June 1950,
appointed M.D. of FPG Ltd.)
Secretary

F.A. Ricketts

Lord Aberconway (retired)
Sir Gerald Barry
G.A. Campbell
Sir Charles B. Cochran (died in office)
Cecil Cooke
Alderman D.H. Daines
Sir Arthur Elvin
G.J. Hill
Lord Latham
Sir Giles Loder
Sir Howard Roberts
B.C. Sendall

Source: Work 25/3, The Story of the Festival of Britain 1951

DESIGNERS OF THE FESTIVAL EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF LONDON

Land Travelling Exhibition

Theme Convenors: Mark Hartland Thomas and Ray Innes
Designer: Richard Levin

Corridor of Time

Theme: Ray Innes
Design: Richard Levin

Discovery and Design

Theme: Ray Innes
Design: Manfred Reiss

People at Home

Theme: S.D. Cooke
Design: James Cubitt and Partners

People at Play

Theme: Col. B.W. Rowe

Toys Design: Peter Judge
Hobbies Design: Richard Levin
Outdoors: Dorrit Dekk
Indoor Display and Games: Bruce Angrave
Leisure Wear: Natasha Kroll

People at Work

Theme: C.J. Whitcombe
Design: H.A. Rotholz

People at Travel

Air: Richard Levin
Rail: Richard Levin
Road: John Pearce
Sea: Leonard Manasseh

Source: Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition The Land Travelling Exhibition
Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Festival of Britain
Catalogue

The Festival Ship "Campania"

Theme: Ian Cox

Land of Britain

Theme: Jacquetta Hawkes
Design: Victor Prus

Agriculture

Theme: Peter B. Collins
Design: Victor Prus

Origins of Island

Theme: K. Chapman
Design: Victor Prus

Minerals of Island

Theme: Sonia Withers
Design: Victor Prus

Industry

Theme: C.J. Whitcombe
Design: Victor Prus

Power

Theme: J.L.P. MacNair
Design: Victor Prus and W. Kay

Transport

Theme: Peter Waring, George Williams and Harold Wyatt
Design: W. Kay

Sea and Ships

Theme: C. Hamilton Ellis
Design: Charles Hasler

Discovery

The Land

Theme: Penrose Angwin
Design: Charles Hasler

The Earth

Theme: Sonia Withers
Display: Charles Hasler

The Living World

Theme: K. Chapman and N. Clayton
Display: Victor Prus

Physical World

Theme: Arthur Garratt and Jan Read
Display: Victor Prus

Outer Space

Theme: Penrose Angwin
Design: Victor Prus

The People at Home

Homes and Gardens

Theme: A. Hipsley Cox
Design: Ernest Pollack

Health

Theme: Surgeon Vice-Admiral Sir Sheldon Dudley and Nigel Clayton
Display: Pauline Behr

Rural Scene

Theme: A.S. Thomas
Design: R. Negus and P. Sharland

The Seaside

Theme: A.D. Hippsley Cox

Display: R. Negus and P. Sharland

Great Britons

Theme: Commander H.O. Hill and Peter Stucley

Display: R. Negus and P. Sharland

Source: Work 25/3, 1951 Exhibition F.S. Campania, Southampton, Dundee, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Hull, Plymouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Belfast, Birkenhead, Glasgow, Festival of Britain Catalogue.

Scotland: Exhibition of Industrial Power Kelvin Hall

Theme: Alistair Bothwick

Architect: Basil Spence

The Hall of Power

Architect: Basil Spence

The Hall of Coal

Design: Hulme Chadwick

The Hall of Steel

Design: Albert Smith

Power for Industry

Design: Albert Smith

Hall of Electricity

Design : Albert Smith

The Hall of Hydro-Electricity

Architect: Arthur C. Bravern

The Hall of Civil Engineering

Design: D.C. Stephen

The Hall of Shipbuilding and Railways

Architect: Jack Coia

Design: The Design Group

The Hall of the Future

Architect: Basil Spence

Design: Victor Prus

Source: Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, Festival of Britain Catalogue

ANNEX 3C

Ireland: Ulster Farm and Factory Exhibition

Theme: Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce

Indoors

Display: W.M. de Majo and L. Bramberg

Outdoors

Layout: W.M. de Majo and L. Bramberg

Landscaping: W.M. de Majo

Source: Work 25/230, 1951 Exhibition Ulster Farm and Factory
Exhibition Belfast, Northern Ireland Festival of Britain Catalogue.

THE ARTS FESTIVALS IN NINE CENTRES

Aldeburgh: 'English Opera and English Song'

Music:

Performances by the English Opera Group of "Dido and Aeneas", "Albert Herring" and "Let's make an Opera" and Concerts: Symphony concerts, serenade concerts, chamber concerts, music from Verdi's Operas "Il Masnadieri" to "Falstaff" and Madrigals.

Recitals: Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten gave the first performance of new song cycles by Michael Tippett and Arthur Oldham.

Music for Wind Instruments given by members of the English Opera.

Group Chamber Orchestra - with Poetry readings by Peggy Ashcroft.

A concert of Brass Instruments Organ and Choir

A new work by Roberto Gerhard commissioned the Aldeburgh festival.

A concert program celebrating the work of the Elizabethan composer John Wilbye composer and luterist.

Exhibitions:

Of the work of Henry Bright, Thomas Churchyard and John Piper.

Lectures:

By Lord David Cecil, Sir Kenneth Clark and E.M. Forster.

Bath: 'The Bath Assembly'

Music:

Orchestra, performed by: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham; Halle Orchestra conducted by Sir John Banbirolli; Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Schwarz; London Symphony Orchestra and the Boyd Neel.

Choral Works: "The Dream of Gerontius" soloists Nancy Evans, Eric Greene, Harold Williams and the Bach Choral and Orchestral Society.

The Messiah: performed by Bath Bach Choir and the London Symphony Orchestra.

Ballet:

Performances by the Ballet Rambert.

Drama:

Religious Plays.

A pageant of Bath performed by Local Youth Groups

Performances by the Lanchester Marionettes.

Exhibitions:

Works by Gainsborough

Sheridan

A Book Exhibition

Other Events:

Congress of writers of the West Country

Performances organised by the English Folk Song and Dance Society

Military Music

Lectures on the Arts

An International Film Festival for Children

Firework Displays

Bournemouth and Wessex Festival: 'The Arts of Bournemouth'

Music:

The Bournemouth Municipal, the London Symphony and the London Philharmonic Orchestras gave special festival performances in the Winter Gardens

A Festival Choir of 300 voices gave choral concerts

Chamber music was performed by the Griller String Quartet and by Robert Masters Quartet, and Recitals were given by distinguished soloists.

Opera and Ballet:

Productions at the pavilion Theatre by

The Sadler's Wells Opera Company

The Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet Company

Drama:

Productions at the Palace Court Theatre by

The Young Vic Company

The Little Theatre Company

Exhibitions:

Bournemouth's Development from Seaside Coastal Village of the 1820's
"Victorian Life and Taste"

Pre Raphaelite Paintings and Drawings

Music Exhibition of autographed letters, manuscripts, old instruments, photographs and prints.

Cambridge Festival: 'Town and Gown'

Music:

Performances by the London Philharmonic, London Symphony and Halle Orchestras. The conductors included Sir Adrian Boult and Sir John Barbirolli.

Further orchestral and choral concerts performed were:

Monteverdi's "vespers" at King's College

Handel's "The King Shall Rejoice", Parry's "Blest pair of sirens", and Howell's "Hymnus Paradisi" at the Guildhall

Elgar's "The Dream of Gerontius" was performed at King's College Chapel

Programmes of organ recitals took place in the Chapels of King's, St. John's and Trinity

Programmes of sacred music were performed by:

The King's College Chapel Choir in King's College Chapel

St. John's College Chapel Choir in St. John's Chapel College

The Lady Margaret Singers in St. John's Chapel College

Other musical events included:

Madrigals on the river performed by Cambridge University's Madrigal Society

A College musical society concert in the hall of Gonville and Caius

Three programmes of music and poetry given in the Senate House

The Cambridge University Musical Society mounted a production of Dryden-Davenants version of 'the Tempest' as well as the first performance of an opera by Peter Tranchell based upon Hardy's novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'

A pageant of British Composers held in the College Courts and performed by the Principal University and Town Musical, Operatic and Dramatic Societies

Drama:

There were productions in the Arts Theatre of "Dr. Faustus", "Two Gentlemen of Verona"

Ballet:

Productions were mounted by the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company

The Canterbury Festival: 'The Cathedral and The City'

Religion:

The festival began with a service in the Cathedral whose theme was "Canterbury and the World"

The Archbishop of Canterbury attended the service as did representatives from all over the christian world

Two further special services were held:

One was a masonic service conducted under the auspices of the provincial Grand Lodge of Kent. The second was an Evensong at which music was sung by Choirs from South and South East England affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music.

Music:

Performances were held in the Chapter House and the Cloisters of Bach's "B Minor Mass" (the soloists were Elsie Suddaby, Freda Townson, William Herbert and Norman Walker). They were accompanied by boys from the King's School and by the Canterbury Choral Society and the Boyd Neel Orchestra.

Mendelssohn's "Eligah" (the soloists were Elsie Morison, Nancy Thomas, Eric Green and Harold Williams. They were accompanied by The Kentish Singers.)

A serenade concert was given by the Boyd Neel Orchestra.

A symphony concert was given by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

A concert was given by The Royal Artillery Orchestra.

Recitals were given by:

Moura Lympny, Jelly d'Aranyi and Astra Desmond

Opera: A new opera: 'A Trip to Italy' was performed by the Cathedral Choristers. The Libretto was by Christopher Hassall and the music by Antony Hopkins

Drama:

At Chapter House a new play written by Robert Gittings dealing with St. Alphege and the Danish invasion of the eleventh century entitled 'The Makers of Violence' was presented

The boys of the King's College presented 'The Merchant of Venice' in the Archdeacon's garden.

Other plays presented included 'The Enduring Stores' by Edward Percy and 'The Merryman of Canterbury' also by Edward Percy.

Ballet:

The Ballet Rambert appeared and its performances included a ballet specially commissioned for the Canterbury Festival, its theme was based on the Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer. The music for the ballet was composed by Peter Racine Fricker and choreography was by David Paltenghi.

Lectures:

Lectures were given by Dorothy L. Sayers and Dame Sybil Thorndike.

Exhibitions:

'Canterbury's Dark Ages to the Present' held on the site of Roman buildings and of the ancient Whitefriars' Monastery.

Norwich: 'The Arts in a Country City'

Music:

The concerts given included the programmes presented by the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Musical Festival, The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent performed a new work "A Rhapsody for Orchestra" with soprano by Professor P.A.S. Hadley as well as the first public performance of "The Dark Night of the Soul" by Rubbra.

Concerts were also given by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

Recitals were given by Dame Myra Hess, Margaret Hodson and Richard Lewis.

Light music programmes were presented by Tom Jenkins and the Palm Court Orchestra, Geraldo and his Concert Orchestra, Black Dyke Mills Band which was Britain's champion Brass Band and Band concerts presented in the parks.

Opera: The Norfolk and Norwich Amateur Operatic Society presented Gilbert and Sullivan's "H.M.S. Pinafore" and "Trial By Jury".

Drama:

At the Maddermarket, the Norwich Players presented "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Pericles, Prince of Tyre"

"A Sleep of Prisonners" by Sir Christopher Fry (first performed in St. Thomas Church, Regent Street, London) was presented in St. Peter Mancroft Church.

Exhibitions:

The work of the Norwich School of Painters

The Contemporary work of East Anglian Artists

"One hundred years of Archaeological Discovery in East Anglia"

A Norwich Industrial Exhibition

A Free Church Exhibition

Lectures:

Lectures on the East Anglian theme were presented by Viscount Templewood and other distinguished speakers, the following speakers Professor Herbert Butterfield, Sir Ernest Barker, Alan Pryce-Jones and R.N. Moore spoke on the subject of 'The Influence of Christianity on the Social Life of Britain'.

Festival Carnival and Waterfrolic:

Norwich Through the Ages

A Procession of Tableaux

Tours:

Tours were given to Norfolk's many country houses as well as to places of general interest.

Visits were arranged to Norwich's museums, churches, historical and public buildings.

Oxford: 'The Arts in England in the Seventeenth Century'

Lectures:

These formed the centrepiece of this festival and were given by Lord David Cecil Goldsmith's Professor of English Literature, Professor F.P. Wilson Merton, Professor of English Literature, Professor C.M. Bowra, Professor of Poetry and G.H.W. Rylands. The subjects expounded upon included Shakespeare, non-Shakespearean Drama, Milton, Dryden and Seventeenth Century Lyric Poetry.

Further lectures were presented on the Visual Arts by Professor Anthony Blunt on the "Charles I as a Collector", Professor Geoffrey Webb on "Wren", Dr. M. Whinney on "Seventeenth Century Sculpture" and on "Inigo Jones", Mr. Oliver Millar on "Sir Peter Lely and the Architecture of Oxford" and Dr. Joan Evans on "Seventeenth Century Plate".

Lectures were also given on aspects of Seventeenth Century history given by the Provost of Oriel (Dr. G.N. Clark) and other scholars. The lectures were not solely confined to the past, a lecture was arranged in conjunction with the city authorities entitled "Oxford, the present and future".

Music:

There were choral and orchestral concerts given by the combined choirs of Christ Church, New College and Magdalen and by the Oxford Harmonic Society.

Madrigal concerts were given by the Bodley Singers.

There was also a Chamber Music Concert and organ recitals.

There were also promenade concerts conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, Leopold Stokowski, Thomas Armstrong and Sir John Barbirolli.

Opera and Ballet:

The Sadler's Wells Opera Company and Theatre Ballet Company performed during the Festival.

Drama:

There were performances of "Samson Agonisties" and "Cymbeline" in the College gardens and cloisters.

The Alchemist was performed in the College Hall.

Exhibitions:

The Bodelian Library arranged an exhibition on Seventeenth Century manuscripts.

The permanent collection of the Ashmolean Museum was on view.

Other Oxford colleges were opened to the public and their paintings and objects d'art from this period were put on display.

Worcester: 'The Three Choirs Festival'

Music:

The concerts performed in the Cathedral included:

Elgar's "The Kingdom"

Mozart's "Symphony No. 40"

Finzi's "Imitations of Immortality"

Julius Harrison's "Mass in C"

Elgar's "Violin Concerto"

Bach's "Mass in B Minor"

Vaughan Williams' "Symphony in D"

Elgar's "Symphony No. 2 in E Flat" (performed in the Concert Hall)

Palestrina "Stabat Mater"

Haydn's "Symphony"

Holst's "Hymn of Jesus"

Vaughan Williams' "Sancta Civitas"

Brahms' "St. Antoni Variations"

Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius"

Handel's "Messiah"

Various symphonies and soloists contributed to the Worcester Festival programme. They included the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra. The soloists were Isobel Baillie, Elsie Suddaby, Ena Mitchell, Gladys Ripley, Grace Bodey, Mary Jarred, William Herbert, Richard Lewis, Eric Greene, Harold Williams, Norman Walker and Jean Pougnet. The soloists and orchestras were also complemented by a 300 voice choir.

Exhibitions:

Mr. Oliver Millar the Deputy Surveyor of the King's Pictures arranged an exhibition on "Charles I".

The City Art Gallery mounted an "Exhibition of Worcester China".

Elgar's Birthplace at Broadheath was opened daily. On display were manuscripts, photographs and personal belongings of the composer.

The York Festival: 'Choral Music and Medieval Drama'

Drama:

The first performance since 1580 of "The York Cycle of Mystery Plays". "The Creation" and "Redemption of Man and the Life of Christ".

Music:

The Halle Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli gave four concerts, three of which were held in York Minster. The programme included Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius", and a Arlo concerto, Vaughan Williams' "Symphony No. 5" and Brahms' "Symphony No. 4". The London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult performed Beethoven's "9th Symphony" and Verdi's "Requiem". Chamber music performances were given by the Amadeus Quartet, the Lemare Orchestra and the London Baroque Ensemble. Recitals were given by Malcuzyński, Max Rostal and Franz Osborn, Maria Lidka and Peter Gellhorn, John Francis and Millicent Silver, Engel Lund and Ferdinand Rauter, Mlle. Demessieux, Marcel Dupre, Frances Jackson and Allan Wicks. A special production of "Highwayman Love", a Yorkshire operatta was performed by the York Amateur Operatic and Drama Society.

Exhibitions:

The following exhibitions were mounted:

At the City Library "Masterpieces from the Great Yorkshire Houses"

At the Public Library "Medieval Books and Manuscripts"

At the Castle Museum "Kirk Collection of Bygones"

"Grand Mothers Treasures" and "Period Dresses"

"Medieval Sculpture, Archaeology and Natural History"

"Special Exhibition of Railway History"

Two blocks of flats specially commissioned for the York Festival as a result of an international competition were opened to the public.

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