



Chapter 2.1

Originality and Authenticity in the Post-War Reconstruction of Britain

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Introduction



The concept of ‘authenticity’, however defined, seems rather at odds with almost all of the planned and built reconstruction of British towns and cities following the Second World War. There was indeed damage and destruction of traditional, ‘historic’, urban places ranging from individual buildings to entire streets and quarters, and this spurred much thinking about the identification of what might be regarded as worthy of preservation, and indeed its nature.

The nature of much post-Second World War rebuilding in England evidently differs from much of that elsewhere in Europe – although it is equally clear that there was little consensus, but much debate, on matters of form and style in countries such as France and East and West Germany (Nasr 1997). In particular, there was little explicit discussion of ‘authenticity’ and very little facsimile replication of what had been destroyed. This is despite widespread professional knowledge of post-First World War reconstruction in the professional, academic and public media and through battlefield tourism (Cammaerts 1925, Lloyd 1998). The facsimile reconstruction in post-Second World War Europe similarly made little direct impression, although the example of Warsaw was widely published.

The form of post-Second World War reconstruction in Britain was heavily influenced by a range of ideologies and issues, and this led to a



dominance of urban forms, infrastructures and buildings inspired by European Modernism. The damage was widely seen by built environment professionals as an ‘opportunity’ (cf Tubbs 1942). Although the reconstruction provided opportunities for refining ideas about conservation, originality and authenticity, and this is most clearly seen in approaches to bombed churches (Larkham 2010), the replication of damaged or destroyed forms was very rare. There was a limited use of fragments and architectural salvage, but radical, new and often large-scale forms dominated the new urban landscapes. This chapter uses a wide range of examples, from the smaller scale of dealing with individual bombed buildings to the largest scale of citywide visions of reconstruction to explore the origin and influence of such approaches. The Midlands cities of Birmingham and Coventry are a particular focus for attention. Heavily damaged, including historic buildings, their municipal approaches to reconstruction and the contemporary responses of citizens differed significantly; but both became icons of reconstruction – so how they dealt with the past in their visions of the future is instructive. Bath, a city of historic terraces, provides a counter-example where authenticity and replication might be expected to play a much larger role in reconstruction.

Many conventional histories of conservation (for example Glendinning 2013) note the significant influence in English conservation theory and practice of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). It would, therefore, be expected that its concept of ‘authenticity’ would be influential in the actions of the post-war reconstruction. This chapter, however, argues that other factors, such as the scale and nature of the damage, ownership and funding, and the ideas of dominant decision-makers such as city planners, were dominant especially in the earlier years of reconstruction. The Society’s impact on post-bombing activities is best shown by its pamphlet *The Treatment of Ancient Buildings Damaged in War Time* (SPAB undated, c. 1941). This ‘outlined the policy which *should* be adopted’ (our emphasis). It focused primarily on churches and timber-frame buildings, and reiterated SPAB ideas about replication, new work not being mistaken for original, and on the focus for ‘respect for the entire building as a work of art’. It also reiterates the SPAB view against confusing new work with original; something done ‘in the exact manner of a past period . . . is historically misleading’.

The war damage

In this new ‘total war’, major attacks on English towns between 7 September 1940 and 16 May 1941 alone included 71 raids on London involving 18,291 tons of bombs, 8 on Liverpool/Birkenhead with 1,957 tons, 8 on Birmingham with 1,852 tons, down to 1 on Cardiff with 115 tons (the National Archives (hereafter TNA) AIR 41/17). By November 1945 the War Damage Commission had been notified of damage to 3,281,953 separate

properties (TNA ADM 1/19037). In August 1946 the Ministry of Health estimated that, for the United Kingdom as a whole, 22,000 houses were destroyed/damaged beyond repair; 4,698,000 damaged in some way (light/heavy) (Titmuss 1950: 329–30).

Although in some places, particularly the centre of London, there were substantial expanses of damaged and cleared sites, in many other locations the damage was quite scattered. For example a journalist on the *Birmingham Weekly Post* noted that ‘the Birmingham newspapers reported German bombing as indiscriminate ... We could never get a clear impression about the areas on which the raiders were concentrating, and so it seemed to us that the bombing was pretty general, all over the city’ (H. J. Black, interviewed by Sutcliffe 1967–9: 2–3).

In many places, maps of bombs and damage survive, allowing detailed understanding of the nature and extent of the damage. However, the detail of the mapping varies from place to place, as does the categorizing of the damage. Hull, for example, uses the categories of total destruction, serious and slight damage. The City of London, in contrast, showed ‘demolished’, ‘destroyed or partially destroyed with shell of two or more floors still standing’ and ‘ditto but with three floors or more standing’. Birmingham, Plymouth and others merely plotted the fall of bombs (Woolven 2005: 15). Although comparison is therefore complicated, it is possible to suggest some of the scale of damage and destruction from contemporary official statistics which include information on buildings (especially ‘houses’, but meaning dwellings) destroyed, and on the areal extent of damage reported and the area accepted by the government for the legal purposes of reconstruction (a ‘declaratory area’) (Table 1).

But notwithstanding these categorizations, there is a problem with the language used about the damage, perhaps for propaganda reasons. Some overemphasized the destruction and minimized survival. A report on a lecture on London’s bombed churches by Edward Yates FSA, for example, noted that some had been ‘completely destroyed except for walls and in some cases steeples’ (H. V. M. R. 1941: 575). That does suggest substantial survival; perhaps enough for repair/restoration in other circumstances.

Reconstruction in the industrial midlands

Bomb damage in both Birmingham and Coventry was severe (Table 1), although widely scattered for the former and closely concentrated on the city core for the latter. When in early 1941 the Cabinet Committee on the Reconstruction of Town and Country decided to review four sample heavily bombed areas, both were selected (TNA HLG 71/1570).

In Birmingham, planning was led by Herbert Manzoni, the City Surveyor and Engineer. In a forthright interview to the *Birmingham Mail* (27 February 1941) he stated clearly that ‘we have not got to start replanning

TABLE 1 *Areas of damage/reconstruction.*

Town	War damage ¹	Declaratory Order applied ²	Declaratory Order granted ²	Number of houses destroyed ³
Bath				1,214
Birmingham				5,065 ⁴
Bristol			247	2,909
Coventry			274	4,185
Exeter			75	1,700
Hull	136	300	246	4,184
Liverpool	208		46	5,487
London (all 18 boroughs)			1,312	47,314
Manchester	61		74	1,951
Plymouth			415	3,593
Portsmouth	165	507	431	4,393
Sheffield	108	198		2,906
Southampton	145	514	262	4,136

¹Estimated figure, in acres, from TNA HLG 71/34.

²In acres, from TNA HLG 71/2222 and TNA HLG 71/34

³From TNA CAB 87/11 unless otherwise specified. 'Houses' was taken to mean most types of dwelling, including accommodation over commercial premises.

⁴12,125 destroyed according to the City Surveyor and Engineer, Manzoni.

Birmingham. All we want is the opportunity to carry out the plans we have already'. He was asked whether the bomb damage had altered those plans, and the succinct reply was 'no'. Damage was far from a 'clean sweep' and so 'any dream that a completely new city can emerge, Phoenix-like ... is quite erroneous'. Manzoni asserted several times that Birmingham's redevelopment ideas predated the bombing (for example Manzoni 1955: 90). To a great extent the city was ready because of Manzoni's contacts and influence at the national level, not solely because of the pre-war planning. He said that Birmingham was ready 'because we'd shaped the legislation for it, or at least we had been there while it was being shaped' (Sutcliffe 1967-9, Manzoni interview: 4). By 'we' Manzoni meant himself. Thus Manzoni was not in favour of an all-encompassing reconstruction plan, as many other cities were preparing at that time.

Without such a plan, city-centre reconstruction was shaped by the design for a tightly drawn inner ring road, approved via a local Act of Parliament

in 1946, and by treating individual street blocks as 'precincts'. The ring road radically altered the existing pattern of streets and plots, and this included major straightening and widening of a 'cross' of streets within the ring. Although work was postponed until 1957 for reasons of national economy, this project required large-scale compulsory purchases of bombed and undamaged property, facilitated by the new legal mechanisms for planning which Manzoni had influenced (for example including slum clearance in the war damage reconstruction provisions of the 1944 Town and Country Planning Act).

Within the ring, buildings were principally of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century date and were cleared for redevelopment with little compunction until the development of the Central Library at the end of the 'reconstruction era' in the early 1970s. This was an industrial city of relatively recent growth and very little physical fabric remaining from earlier periods. Individual buildings were replaced using new architectural styles and modern materials, although these remained rationed until the mid-1950s and progress was slow. A particular modernism, with façade bays separated by narrow projecting vertical 'fins', became dominant. Two individual structures stand out from this trend: one being an example of stone-faced late Classicism, by a Stafford-based architect (not in a major thoroughfare); the other being the first post-war office building within the city core, built on New Street in 1951–53 by a local architect/developer, Cotton, Ballard and Blow (Figures 1A and 1B). Their first designs, of 1949, were plain but, although the application was approved on 26 May 1949, Manzoni asked for 'some improvement in the architectural treatment'. The result has 'rows of sawtooth projections, little pointed iron balustrades on the corner, and a *brise-soleil*. Flashy but undeniably effective' (Foster 2005: 111). This building is now Listed.

The precinct-block developments were pushed by the new City Architect, Alwyn Sheppard Fidler. He was aided by the concentration of landownership in the city core in the hands of the city council (helped by compulsory purchase) and a small number of landed estates and property companies such as the local Hortons' Estate (Hortons undated). He strongly argued in various meetings, widely reported in the professional press, against building lining main thoroughfares (including the inner ring road), and instead recommended pedestrian precincts and advocated towers within city centres (Sheppard Fidler 1959). Many of these ideas were evident in contemporary architectural publications and in other rebuilt cities, although relatively few actually found place in Birmingham. However, they were clearly evident in the Cotton/Gropius plan of 1962 for several blocks along Corporation Street and in the original proposals by the Corporation Street Estates Co. to build shops and an office block. The proposals had been 'recently modified to include a "raised shopping floor" with bridges over intervening streets. This would enable Birmingham to be the first city to carry out Mr Marples' idea of segregating pedestrians and motor traffic' (*Architect and Building*



FIGURE 1A 23–4 Bennett's Hill, Birmingham, by E. Bower Norris of Stafford, 1961. Unusually late historicism, but inauthentic. Source: P. J. Larkham.

News 6 April 1960: 433: Marples was then Minister of Transport). The developer 'sees the scheme growing to include nearby sites not in the group's possession'. When built the segregation was achieved through underpasses (many of which have since been removed). Precincts included civic uses

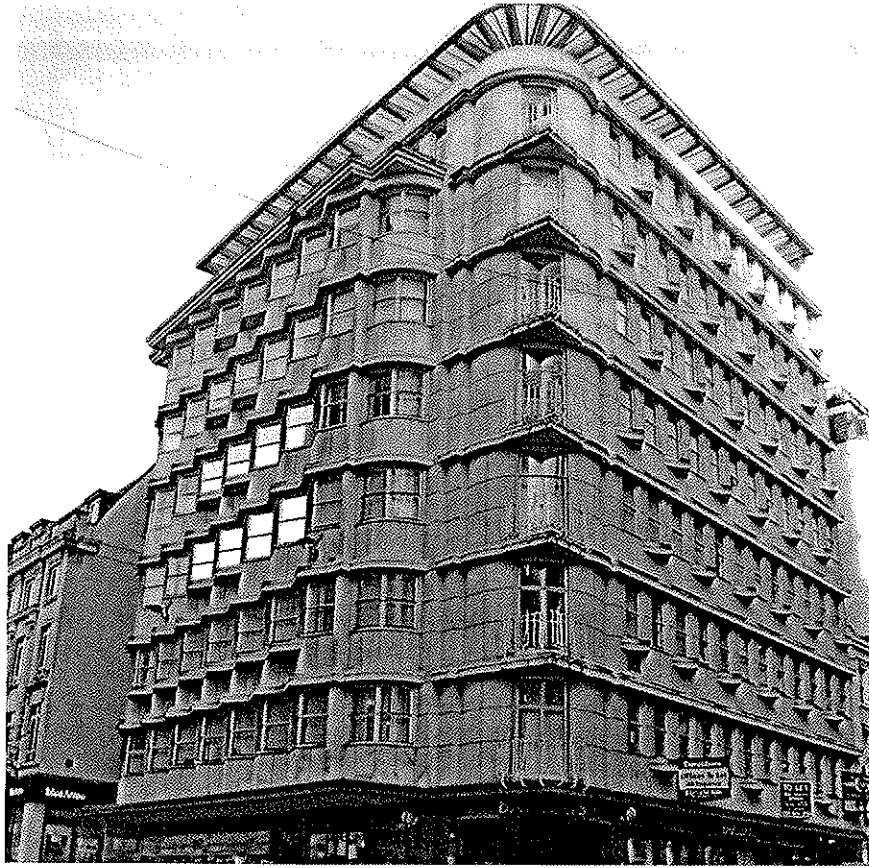


FIGURE 1B *Grosvenor House, New Street, Birmingham, by Cotton, Ballard & Blow, 1951–3. Novel style which might be more authentic on a seafront. Source: P. J. Larkham.*

as well as retail/commercial, including a civic centre and law courts; and precinct designs were often rectilinear, paying little heed to street, block or plot patterns (Figure 1C).

In Coventry the situation was very different. A young, modernist city architect, Donald Gibson, had been appointed just before the war. He and his equally young, radical team had prepared plans for the city core, and held a well-received public exhibition, shortly before the most destructive raid. This medieval walled city still had substantial surviving buildings and structures, but the medieval street patterns were now very congested; the plan proposed civic and retail precincts in open lawned space, and formed the basis for the adopted reconstruction plan despite some disagreements between Gibson and the long-serving city engineer, Ernest Ford (Gould and Gould 2016).

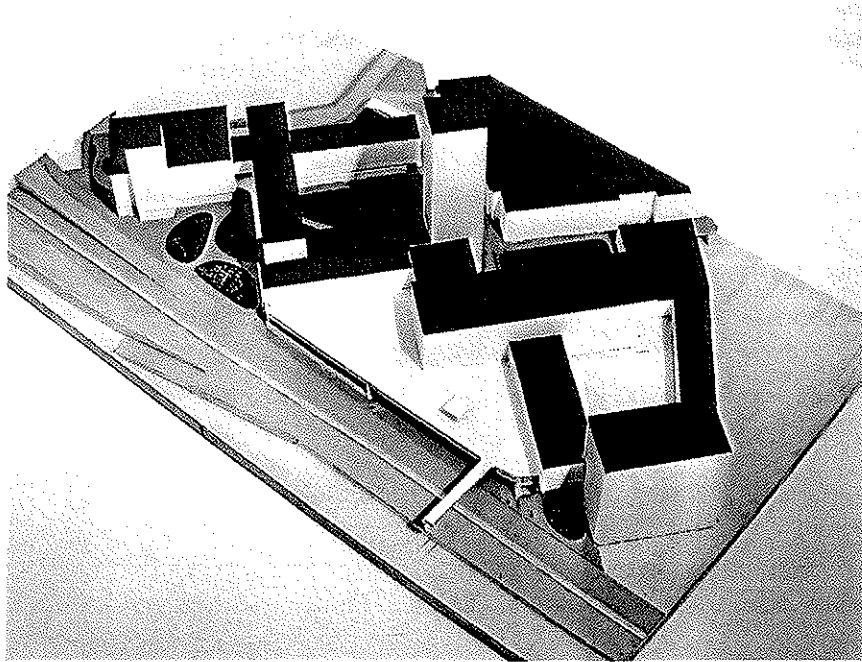


FIGURE 1C *Model of proposed Law Courts precinct, Birmingham, showing rectilinear form unrelated to road or building lines. Source: reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham, BCC Acc. 1999/077 box 22/67, print dated September 1962.*

Again a ring road was designed, tightly drawn around the centre, with numerous underpasses, flyovers and roundabouts. While some of the plans suggested equally radical restructuring of the inner road pattern, in the event there was considerable survival of streets (except in the retail quarter); but historic plot patterns were again removed by the larger scale of redevelopment proposals. Many of the buildings originally proposed – and some actually built – were of a form that was later derided as toothpaste architecture: squeezed out of a tube and cut off to the desired length (Aldous 1975: 57). The retail redevelopment included a radical new form, the Precinct, which originally segregated pedestrians, vehicles and servicing. Many of the earlier reconstruction buildings were plain (partly a response to the financial situation); some virtually a ‘stripped Classical’, others with what has been described as ‘regular “hole-in-wall” windows edged in white stone’ (Gould and Gould 2016: 26) – the slightly projecting narrow stone edging became virtually a countrywide style.

A high-profile problem for the city’s reconstruction was the destruction of the cathedral. The tower and outer walls remained. The Secretary of the Central Council for the Care of Churches disliked the idea of keeping the

cathedral as a ruin, and favoured restoration (letter of 30 December 1940), the Mayor favoured an improved replica, Ford a new design in the style of the old and Gibson a modern design but retaining the tower (quoted by Campbell 1996: 23). SPAB argued for a 'harmonious' modern rebuilding within the retained shell (Glendinning 2013: 254–6). The cathedral Provost sought Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's advice: he suggested 'not an archaeologically accurate copy but a reinterpretation' (Campbell 1996: 23; see also Scott's papers in the British Architectural Library). Scott was invited to prepare a design, but this was disliked by the newly appointed bishop and the public (see *Coventry Evening Telegraph* 15 February 1944). Despite recasting the design neither the bishop nor the Royal Fine Art Commission approved, the latter feeling that 'as full a use as was possible should be made of the ruins' (RFAC Minutes 12 July 1946 and Memorandum 11 December 1946, TNA BP 1/9). Scott then resigned (citing age and lack of wish for a battle: Scott papers, BAL 88/1/530). The subsequent architectural competition, and Spence's winning design, are well known (Campbell 1996). Personalities, ideologies and arguments over appropriate settings for contemporary worship were key to these decisions; but treatment of the original ruins, evident by the RFAC comments and their prominence in the competition information, was significant. No competitor proposed an authentic replication, relatively few proposed rebuilding on the site, and it is suggested that many who had actually visited the site wished to retain the ruins (*The Builder* 24 September 1951).

Elsewhere in the city, some timber-framed buildings had been damaged (such as Ford's Hospital) or found themselves in the way of redevelopment proposed by the approved plan. In fact the survival of timber buildings which had survived the blitz was poor: 240 survived the war, 10 were recorded by the National Buildings Record in 1958 but only 34 remained when surveyed by the timber conservation specialist F. W. B. Charles in 1965 (Gould and Gould 2016: 76). The regimes of Gibson and his successor, Arthur Ling, were not sympathetic. This is clearly shown by the proposal by Gibson's office to remove some surviving parts of the city wall, which led the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments to write of Gibson that 'it is, of course, quite clear that the Coventry planner, who is a malignant, has paid no attention at all to ancient monuments because he dislikes them' (memo 4 December 1952, TNA WORK 14/1781). One bay of the c. 1529 Ford's Hospital was badly damaged but was repaired by local architect W. S. Hattrell in 1951–53 using salvaged timbers – although this itself seems contrary to SPAB views – but the adjoining and unscathed timber-framed building was removed. There was discussion involving Gibson about moving the hospital, but as a scheduled ancient monument and (from 1955) a Grade I listed building, it remained in situ. The Gibson view was expressed in the *Architect and Building News*:

An unnecessary problem, it seems, is created by Ford's Hospital. It has been bombed and for all practical purposes demolished [but see Figure 2A].



FIGURE 2A Ford's Hospital, Coventry, after bombing. Source: reproduced from Richards, 1947, original photographer unknown.

Part of the facade stands. It has been seriously suggested that this building should be reconstructed ... Here is a building whose sole value is historic. Is it to be allowed to stand in the way of the new plan? (*Architect and Building News* 1941: 188)

This raises a key issue in Coventry's reconstruction: the moving of buildings. Following Charles's survey and, indeed, Gibson's arguments, it was decided to dismantle a number of the timber buildings threatened by redevelopment and re-erect them in Spon Street, along with the restoration of a cluster of in situ survivors there. This was supported in principle by the Historic Buildings Council (this area-based approach pre-dated the conservation areas introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act). This has been supported by extreme phrasing, by campaigners and others: 'as bonfires of ancient timbers blazed in Little Park Street, the *Coventry Standard* actually ran the front-page headline "Demolition recalls the days of the Blitz" ' (Gill 2004: 65).

Gill carefully charts the attitudes and decision-making processes leading to the Spon Street scheme, including its original large scale and subsequent diminution: a 1966 draft 'seems to incorporate just about every endangered timber-framed building in Coventry' (Gill 2004: 69). The 'great and the

good from the HBC' later rejected any possibility of grant aid, though, as an exercise 'involving the large-scale dismantling, removal and re-erection of buildings, would be in the nature of an archaeological exercise of considerable interest and value, but quite outside the scope of [its] proper activities' (letter, HBC Secretary to City Planning Officer, August 1966: Townscape Scheme file, Coventry City Council). Nevertheless, funded by the city and by grants for the in situ buildings, the scheme went ahead.

F. W. B. Charles contributed much to the first part of the Spon Street scheme; he was a 'forceful character' (Gill 2004: 68) and had 'a visceral hatred of the SPAB' (AMS 2016: 47). There has been criticism of the way in which Charles prioritized timber survival and removed later work including chimneys; Ian Nairn said of another of his Coventry projects that it 'seems likely to come out more half-timbered than it has been for centuries' (Nairn 1968: 470). Charles always robustly defended his approach, for example convincing council committees by his 'clear exposition and technical ability' (minutes of joint meeting, Planning and Development, and Estates and General Purposes Committees, 5 October 1970.) The resulting 'Townscape Scheme' is popular, but is a confection; it was always aimed at tourists, and the re-erected buildings tend to be of larger scale than those in situ (Figure 2B).



FIGURE 2B Spon Street, Coventry, restored by F. W. B. Charles, 1970–4. The three-storey building is relocated from Much Park Street. Source: P. J. Larkham.

Terraces in Bath

Bath suffered a ‘Baedeker raid’ in 1942 (Rothnie 1992) which left extensive damage, especially in the south part of the city centre – although much was relatively minor (Bath Record Office (BRO) bomb damage map). Some sites remain unrebuilt (Figure 3A), and one bombed building has been listed for that very reason (the remains are being incorporated into a new structure in 2016). The particular historic value of the city, making it both a target and a specific focus for ‘authenticity’ in reconstruction, was its development as a Georgian resort from c. 1725, and specifically its uniformity in building style, form (especially terraces) and building material. A number of individual buildings within terraces were bombed or burned out, including some in the Royal Crescent and the Circus. The recently restored Assembly Rooms (1769–71) were also gutted.

The approach to reconstructing damaged terraces posed particular problems, as even SPAB recognized. Two copies of its booklet survive in the City Council property files, and in one a key phrase has been highlighted: ‘Frequently a gap is made in a terrace or crescent of an historic group; and replacement is here permissible, in order to maintain the continuity of the design’ (SPAB undated: 4). It is an interesting point that SPAB felt that it had authority to ‘permit’ this (and, by implication, prohibit other



FIGURE 3A Norfolk Buildings, Bath: bombite, still un-redeveloped in 2016. ‘Authentic’ as a recollection of the bombing, perhaps? Source: P. J. Larkham.

responses?). In 1950 the Georgian Group wrote to the Council emphasizing 'the importance of faithfully replacing architectural details when Georgian buildings are repaired or restored' (City Planning Committee minutes, 2 May 1950, BRO).

Bath did commission a reconstruction plan, co-authored by Professor Patrick Abercrombie. The plan was very sensitive to the historic context and the damage to Georgian terraces (Abercrombie et al. 1945: chapter 8). This is hardly surprising given Abercrombie's record of conservation-related work, albeit largely rural (Dix 1981). In one of his earliest plans he explores (although not in these terms) originality and authenticity in the urban landscape of Stratford upon Avon (Abercrombie and Abercrombie 1923). But, for Bath, he was not prescriptive about authenticity or style, indeed suggesting alternative approaches for a new concert hall (Abercrombie et al. 1945: 26): he was aware that

The amateur of antiquarian tastes is apt to ask for reproductions or adaptations of old Bath; the true archeologist [*sic*] will resent a fake: he is frequently a complete modernist in his sympathies for new building; another type will ask for harmony, whatever that term may mean (and it frequently covers the opposite of complete contrast); again, there is the school that proposes a classical structure, stripped of all its normal clothing. (Abercrombie et al. 1945: 22–3)

Terraces formed a particular problem for Bath, not only recognized by the SPAB leaflet but by the admiring before and after photographs of an example in Worskett's influential book on conservation: 'there is little choice but to rebuild any single unit of that design to match exactly the existing façade ... the solution will generally be to rebuild a facsimile' (Worskett 1969: 180).

The urgency of repairing damage perhaps led to some short cuts. A measured survey of c. 1948 for one damaged house in the Circus, by the local architect Beresford Smith, occupies only a standard small sheet of graph paper (Beresford Smith papers, BRO 0529/101/26). In 1946 there was a shortage of sash weights, and Mowbray Green's office suggested that it would therefore be necessary to fit casements to rear elevations (letter, 22 October 1946, BRO). Although minor details, and influenced by urgency and building material rationing, these perhaps demonstrate a concern for action and habitability over exact restoration.

The example cited by Worskett is Norfolk Crescent (begun 1792). The northern part of the terrace was gutted, but by the time of Worskett's first photograph about six bays of the façade had been lost. The façade was reinstated in 1958 by E. F. Tew and the structure converted to Council-managed flats, although the rebuilt section is deeper than the original and 'the rear does not attempt a Georgian reconstruction' (Forsyth 2003: 253) (Figure 3B). The conversion of this and many other terraces followed SPAB advice by the architect Marshall Sisson and others (SPAB 1945). A



FIGURE 3B *Norfolk Crescent, Bath, reconstructed façade (bays 4–9). Source: P. J. Larkham.*

Civic Trust Award plaque commemorates the scheme. The undamaged part of the terrace was listed Grade II* in June 1950 (List description, building identification 1395745). In Queen Square the Francis Hotel's east range was badly damaged. Again, although the façade was rebuilt, by J. Hopwood in 1952–3, to match its neighbours, the new wing is deeper in section. 'As a component part of an outstanding set-piece, meticulously reconstructed in facsimile in 1955 (see inscription on front), these houses remain of great importance' and are part of the Grade 1 listing of June 1950 (i.e. even before reconstruction) (List description, building identification 1394551) (Figure 3C). The two seem to have been treated similarly in terms of reconstruction authenticity, where the public façades had greater significance, yet differently for listing purposes – although Queen Square is undoubtedly a more significant architectural composition.

The Assembly Rooms saga is more complicated, particularly in its ownership and funding issues. The derelict property was purchased by the SPAB in c. 1931 and transferred to the National Trust. It was leased to the local authority, who had it restored by Mowbray Green, a local architect, and used it for local functions. The scale of the damage was such that the War Damage Commission had agreed, 'in the public interest', to make a cost of works payment (undated memo, 'war damage provisions', BRO, CP802 Box

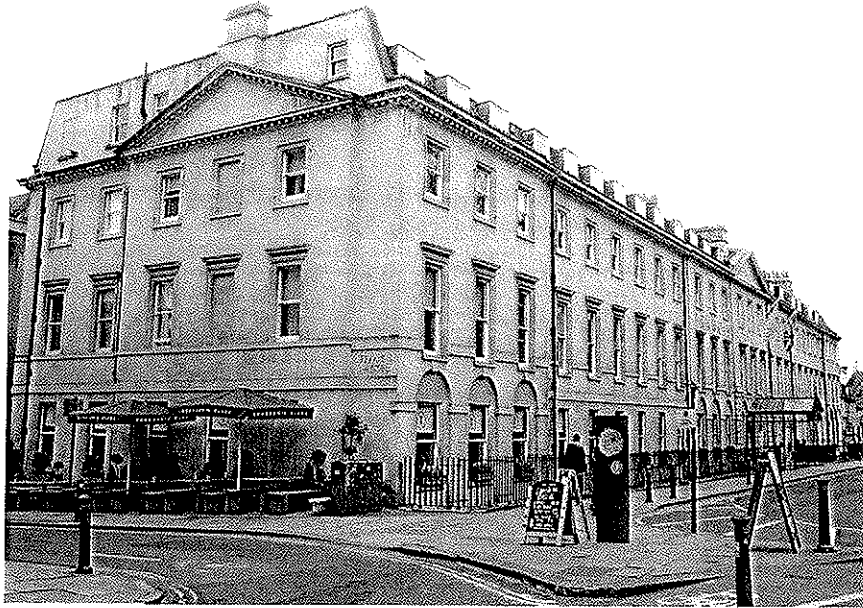


FIGURE 3C *Francis Hotel, Bath, east wing reconstructed c. 1952. Source: P. J. Larkham.*

X). On SPAB advice, the eminent architect Professor Sir A. E. Richardson was involved in reconstruction designs from soon after the bombing. A SPAB and Georgian Group member, his interest in authenticity and originality led to concerns that he could expensively insist on reinstatement as original.

The Council wanted to alter the reconstructed building to make it more suitable for civic functions, especially a concert hall. Indeed it stated that 'in the considered view of this Council, building of the Assembly Rooms as an exact replica of the buildings destroyed in 1942 would serve no useful purpose nationally or locally and would in fact involve a deplorable waste of money for labour, material etc.' (Council resolution, 1 December 1953: 'destroyed' is an overstatement). The National Trust's Executive Committee felt, since the damage, 'that it was the Trust's duty to rebuild the Assembly Rooms as they were before their destruction' (letter from Rathbone, NT Secretary, 19 January 1954, BRO, CP802 Box X) and that the war damage payment 'could not be used for any other purpose except by a breach of trust, an action which could not even be considered' (letter from Lord Rosse to the Mayor, 19 December 1953, BRO, CP802 Box X). Richardson had proposed a compromise and was negotiating permissions and War Damage Commission funding (notes of meeting, 17 December 1951, BRO, CP802 Box X) but there were bad-tempered arguments between Richardson's office and that of the deceased Mowbray Green over plans. Various people involved

with the Trust, SPAB and its offshoot, the Georgian Group, including Lord Esher (one-time SPAB Chairman) suggested a further compromise whereby one room could have 'major internal alterations'. The donor was identified and became involved, and was 'adamant in refusing to consider even a compromise on these lines, and was indeed somewhat upset to learn that we had even gone as far as we had . . . he would regard any compromise on this issue as a breach of trust which he would never forgive' (letter from Lord Rosse, 31 January 1954, BRO, CP802 Box X).

There was long argument, including Counsel's opinions sought in 1956, over the terms of the lease and whether the Council could extricate itself. The question of whether, when restored, the rooms can be regarded as a replica only and not as the original rooms received the response that this question is irrelevant since the new building will be subject to the old lease' (in fact the old structure remained to eaves level) (Counsel's opinion by Denys Buckley, 6 December 1956, BRO, CP802 Box X). Eventually a compromise was reached and the building restored in 1956–63, with the interiors by Oliver Messel. The building was listed Grade I in June 1950, when only temporary repairs had been made to the gutted shell (List description, building identification 1394144). Although there were debates over the restoration's authenticity, these related wholly to the interior (Cornforth, 1964 and subsequent correspondence).

Discussion

Of the examples cited, Birmingham shows absolutely no evidence of concern for authenticity in its reconstruction, even in the very rare historicist styles. The new is paramount, in style, scale and function. The dominant influence was Herbert Manzoni. He felt that the bombing presented a 'uniquely favourable opportunity' (Manzoni 1941). He also had an antipathy to conservation and old buildings. Coventry shows equal initial disregard, particularly on Gibson's part. Again, Gibson saw the bombing as an opportunity: 'in one night the site is largely cleared ready for the regeneration' (Gibson 1940: 41; although, clearly, this is an exaggeration). Battles with conservationists ensued, culminating in the project to move some timber structures to Spon Street (prefigured by Gibson's comment about Ford's Hospital). But the way in which this was done, and the personal style of F. W. B. Charles, showed a disregard for established SPAB approaches. SPAB was much more clearly influential in Bath, despite its evident focus on earlier and ecclesiastical property. Retention of two copies of its booklet in the Council property records is telling, and its influence on the Assembly Rooms case is clear, although indirect. Nevertheless funding, and the Council's wishes for interior alteration, did eventually have greater influence over this delayed restoration. The other terrace restorations were, though, inauthentic in plan, however suitable in façade.

There is, therefore, very little evidence of serious consideration of 'authenticity' per se in English post-war reconstruction. Plans are clearly driven by factors such as the background of plan authors (many of whom were architects, and many of these were trained at the Liverpool School of Architecture or its products, including Abercrombie, latterly at London). European modernism was a growing influence, especially on the younger professionals. Equally, many professionals involved in replanning and reconstruction were aware of, or involved in, emerging debates about conservation, character and related issues, including polemics about urban sprawl and quality (Larkham 2003; Pendlebury 2003). Conservation is an issue in a number of reconstruction plans but the way in which it was treated, seen in a longer continuum (Larkham 2014), differs substantially from other countries' experiences.

In many places, particularly but not solely the industrial cities, damage was overemphasized. Buildings were 'destroyed' even if the walls remained sound to eaves height (the Bath Assembly Rooms, and many churches: Larkham and Nasr 2012). This legitimized plans to demolish, move (as in Coventry) or alter, structures, compromising originality and authenticity.

'Character' emerges as a factor (Pendlebury 2004). A key point is the valuing of structures or places, and the differing weights placed on concepts such as originality and authenticity, especially given the prominence afforded to 'modernism' in contemporary UK architecture and planning. Another factor is the role of memory and commemoration, particularly relating to the reinstatement of wartime destruction. Conservation values did change significantly through the 'reconstruction era' of c. 1945–73.

It is also relevant to consider whether, in these cases, there is a conceptualization of authenticity that applies at the larger scales (street, district or even city). Virtually all discussion has been at the level of individual buildings or even parts of buildings, driven by SPAB's focus on architecture as art. But could the authenticity of an area's character, identity or even function be retained through a replanning that did demolish or move existing structures, whether damaged or not? Cities have always changed over the longer timescale, but we are here considering a short time frame dictated by the catastrophe of war. Yet some of the reconstruction plans explicitly concerned implementation periods of between twenty and fifty years. Many were also dominated by large-scale infrastructure projects that would, over such a period, have resulted in clearance of buildings now valued as historic. Others, though, revealed historic structures through clearance ('disencumbering' in US terms) (Larkham 2014).

Finally, the rise of concepts of conservation have necessarily involved a revaluing of structures and areas. Economic and functional obsolescence has been addressed by finding new uses. Structural obsolescence has been addressed through interventions, materials and technologies that purist SPAB members might regret; but conservation values, including the interpretation and value of 'authenticity', have plainly changed in the post-

war period. The experience of the immediate post-war period, including the examples discussed here, was a key catalyst for this change.

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