

# Political Landscapes – Governing and Defending the Land

**The post-war decades saw unprecedented investment in public building. But how much of that legacy will survive into the 22nd century?**

The actions of government, the state, authority and order are clearly imprinted on England's landscape, embracing education and health authorities, political and military wards. These spheres are configured by three interrelated yet independent bodies: parliament (the Houses of Commons and Lords, the elected and unelected lawmaking body); the executive (to put those laws into effect); and the judiciary (to adjudicate the law). The state's organs are institutional, symbols of authority, recognisable tools of state power (government offices, judicial courts, houses of correction, army installations), and channels of social welfare (schools, hospitals), all arterially joined by channels of movement (roads, corridors, pathways, broader networks). Buildings and infrastructure reflect the legal and administrative organisation of government ministries, from Health to Transport, from Rural Affairs to Culture, Media and Sport, and their contribution to the way England looks and works. Public understanding of the state is shaped by engagement, interaction and familiarity with the physical facets of government. It is through its physical manifestation, its design and presentation in the political landscape, that state power is most clearly understood by the majority of the population. In many ways, the extent and range of responses to this political landscape indicate its impact on public consciousness. ■

Dungeness, Kent. Here the early 1960s Magnox and later Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor dominate their surroundings.  
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## Recreating London: post-war place-making

Philip Davies

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Only twice in the last thousand years has London suffered catastrophic damage – in the Great Fire of 1666, when virtually the entire City of London was levelled, and again during the Second World War, when one in six of its buildings was damaged or destroyed by enemy action. Much has been written about the speed at which London was rebuilt post-Fire. Grand schemes by Wren, Hooke and Evelyn for a newly designed Italianate city were set aside in the face of the commercial imperative to rebuild. Ironically, much less is understood about the varying approaches adopted for the reconstruction of post-war London, and the cultural, political and social tensions these raised. It remains a subject ripe for further research.

### Post-war rebuilding

In many parts of Europe there was a national cultural consensus in favour of rebuilding blitzed historic towns and city centres to replicate as closely as possible what had been lost, but in London, and in Britain as a whole, no such consensus prevailed. A range of expedients was adopted from patchwork repair via authentic reconstruction to comprehensive redevelopment.

After the First World War many of the devastated towns of Flanders and north-east France were reconstructed with great sensitivity – authentically recreating whole areas as well as major landmarks. Ypres, with its spectacular Cloth Hall and streets of historic buildings, is perhaps the most notable example. Although recreated virtually in its entirety in the 1920s, rebuilding recaptured the spirit of the original Flemish town with remarkable success.

This deep cultural commitment to the reconstruction of lost buildings and places resonated in many European countries as a focus for national renewal after the Second World War. The entire historic centre of Warsaw, for example, was rebuilt as a symbol of national pride, using surviving

pre-war photographs and drawings to replicate whole streets of historic buildings. Indeed, it was such a spectacular success that today it is a World Heritage Site – in part, at least, because it is a recreation, and for what that tells us about post-war Polish culture of the period. Elsewhere, as recently as 2005 the Dresden Frauenkirche was reconstructed as a symbol of reconciliation between former warring enemies.

### Rebuilding London

In Britain many different factors dictated the form and pattern of post-war reconstruction – not least radical social idealism coupled with an unprecedented opportunity to create a socially engineered New Jerusalem.

But in pluralist Britain, equally, there were many who stood against the tide of comprehensive redevelopment in favour of a more delicate form of urban surgery and place-making. The great landed estates of the West End that exercised freehold control – the Crown, Grosvenor, Portman, Bedford and Howard de Walden, for instance – by and large carefully stitched back the fabric of their buildings and streets to their pre-war appearance.

Nowhere was this tension between the desire for modernity and traditional values more evident than in the Inns of Court, where the issues raised go to the very heart of our current concerns about architectural integrity and place-making. Today it is difficult to comprehend the extent of destruction of London's historic fabric in 1945. Holborn and the Inns of Court were devastated. One particular raid on 10–11 May 1941 caused huge damage, and fires ravaged both the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn. George Edinger, a Bencher of Gray's Inn, described walking through the area in 1947:

Until the outbreak of the second World War ... for the whole mile I would be enclosed by the unbroken sequence of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century buildings whose bland façades of mellow brick made up what was, to my mind, the most gracious harmony of town architecture in any capital ... I cannot do that now. The phenomenon that was my Georgian mile is swallowed up in dust and rubble. It was not the greatest tragedy among the lost treasures of Western Europe. But it was something unique.

He went on to ask:

Can we restore Gray's Inn with all the intangibles that went to make it up? Can we ever convey again the sense of serenity that the old walls of the chambers grouped so charmingly in the old setting used to give? And, if we cannot, is it wise to try?

### Place-making

Today, many would agree that it was not only wise, but also surprisingly enlightened to try. The decision to restore the Inn to its previous state had already been taken before the end of the war. Sir Edward Maufe was appointed to prepare designs for the new Library, Great Hall and Chapel, and the rebuilding of South Square, and by the late 1950s reconstruction was virtually complete.

It was a remarkable achievement. What could have been fragmented into a series of piecemeal developments 'of their time' was quietly reinstated as a single whole in a sophisticated and elegant piece of post-war place-making. The single, rather gauche attempt at an overtly contemporary building for the School of Law at Gray's Inn Place in 1964 highlights what so easily could have happened to the main courts. The classical

A scene of devastation: the Inner Temple after the bombing of 10–11 May 1941. © The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, reproduced with permission of the Treasurer and the Masters of the Bench of the Inner Temple.





Phoenix from the ashes: Crown Office Row, Inner Temple. Post-war placemaking at its best.  
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tradition continued into the 1970s when Quinlan Terry completed the last major piece of rebuilding with an ingenious new neo-Georgian block between South Square and Field Court that is knitted seamlessly into the wider whole.

The same subtle contextual approach was adopted for the Inner Temple. Here the Temple Church, Hall, Library, Master's House, Crown Office Row and Harcourt Buildings were also wrecked on the night of 10–11 May 1941. As early as the summer of 1944 plans were drawn up for a new Inner Temple Hall and Library, although reconstruction was not completed until 1958.

The principal reason for this delay lay with the architect, Sir Hubert Worthington, whose procrastination led to serious disagreements both with the Inn and the building contractors. Even the War Damage Commission lost patience. In October 1953 Worthington was sacked and replaced by his assistant, T W Sutcliffe, and Sir Edward Maufe was brought in to design and oversee the work. The restoration of the Temple Church was assigned to Walter Godfrey, who supervised a major reconstruction of the exterior and interior between 1947 and 1957. Worthington and Maufe shared responsibility for the Master's House, which was completed in 1955, and Maufe and Sutcliffe took over responsibility for the Hall, which was completed with a simple, understated neo-Georgian interior and opened by the Queen in the same year.

Many of the most attractive and historic areas of London owe their survival to enlightened decisions to repair, restore and rebuild the fabric and grain of what was lost in the war. It is instructive to compare how well they have worn compared with areas like Paternoster Square, where the decision was taken to rebuild a radical new layout and design which failed within 30 years.

Today it is possible to walk from the Embankment through the Inner and Middle Temple, past Street's magnificent Law Courts, through Lincoln's Inn, across High Holborn to Gray's Inn and beyond into Bloomsbury and still appreciate the qualities which so captivated George Edinger and his pre-war contemporaries. The primary reason for this is the unfashionable approach adopted by the Inns of Court in insisting upon recreating the qualities which made the place special, based on a deep understanding that the importance of the place transcended the sum of its component parts. While the intrinsic architectural quality of the post-war ranges may vary, the overall unity derived from a common classical vocabulary deploying traditional materials and details confers a very distinct and serene sense of place.

This was achieved in the face of intense opposition by the local authorities, and of scorn from the modernist architectural establishment of the day, who strongly favoured the Paternoster approach. Yet with the benefit of hindsight who was more progressive in their approach to placemaking? ■

### Artists and airmen: documenting draw-down and closure at RAF Coltishall (Norfolk)

John Schofield

*Characterisation Team, English Heritage*

It seems fitting that defence sites that encapsulate the pace of technological and strategic changes in the 20th-century also require new and innovative investigation methods. That is the case with RAF Coltishall (Norfolk) where English Heritage is creating a characterisation of the base that involves conventional photography, an historic landscape characterisation and, unusually for us, the involvement of three visual artists – Gair Dunlop, Louise K Wilson and Angus Boulton. This collegiate and inter-disciplinary approach seems appropriate for documenting such a complex landscape over time, and capturing both process and place in a way that engages the base's wider public and the service personnel who worked there.

#### Documenting defence sites

Since the early 1990s, English Heritage has documented many defence sites after the withdrawal of service personnel. We typically experience these as derelict, lifeless places, with stripped buildings devoid of meaning after their personnel have left. Uniquely, in the months leading to the closure of

RAF Coltishall, the RAF granted English Heritage unprecedented access to record the base's drawdown and closure.

This project set out to visually characterise the airfield's last operational months until closure in November 2006, capturing the sense of community that existed there, the administration of draw-down, and the rituals and ceremony that marked the base's closure. Most historic photography of airfields is heavily weighted to views of aircraft, on hardstandings or in hangars. Yet airfields the size of Coltishall are also communities of a few thousand people, whose task is to keep aircraft ready for immediate deployment. The intention of the project was to focus on the wider community and to record the processes of change as well as rarely seen, sometimes mundane, everyday activities.

### Engines and parachutes

Working in the month before the last squadron flew out, aircraft were photographed in their hangars, revealing also how these internal working spaces were organised. Air-traffic controllers were photographed at work; when we returned a few months later the control tower had been stripped bare, leaving the empty spaces we usually encounter. Much of the airfield's work involved light engineering, including the assembly of the Jaguars' Rolls-Royce engines, engine testing, the servicing and repair of electronic components, paint shops and stores. More specialised tasks included the fitting and maintenance of flying clothing, much of which was specifically fitted to individual pilots. In other buildings aircraft brake-chutes and the pilots' emergency parachutes were inspected and packed. Other sections were devoted to missile storage and maintenance. To maintain the Jaguar force at maximum readiness, the pilots constantly trained for their combat roles. In a specially constructed building a large and elaborate model was constructed to simulate

diverse missions and emergency procedures. More recently, a complex computer simulator has replaced this physical model. All of these buildings and activities were recorded as part of our documentation.

### Home

But an airfield is more than a working place; it is home for the personnel. The oldest houses on the base date from the late 1930s and many still retain traces of wartime camouflage. The end of conscription and the reduction in the proportion of single personnel led to enlargement of the housing estates, but without the symmetry of the original design. The distribution of housing was strictly zoned and allocated according to rank. Differentiation by rank was most visible in the messes. The officers' mess had the appearance of a country club or country house, with elegant reception rooms used before mess functions or as sitting rooms. The sergeants' mess was arranged on a similar layout, but with less space devoted to reception. Both also contained accommodation for single personnel or temporary visitors. In contrast, the airmen's institute comprised two floors of large open rooms, in its latest phase laid out as a contemporary cafeteria and with a nightclub attached. With a requirement for many hundreds of meals per day in all three messes, catering was on a semi-industrial scale. For single non-commissioned personnel barrack accommodation was typical, but as social expectations have changed, their interiors have been modified to create single rooms.

Other aspects of the social life of the base included the supermarket, a chapel with stained glass and embroideries with air-force themes, the families' centre, and a children's playground. During our investigations we also discovered murals, including some on hangar doors painted after the First Gulf War (1990–1). Around 1970,



End of an era: rehearsing for the closing ceremony of RAF Coltishall, Norfolk. Established in 1938, the base played a front-line role throughout the Second World War and the Cold War, but in 2006 it finally became surplus to defence needs.

© Angus Boulton



Gair Dunlop filming on the airfield perimeter in November 2006.  
© Andrea Bradley

in the cellar and former air-raid shelter of the officers' mess, the Lightning squadron created a private drinking club, the Spitfire bar, decorated with playing-card murals. All of these aspects of the base have now been recorded.

### Art and landscape

But it is our close collaboration with three sound and video artists, Angus Boulton, Gair Dunlop and Louise K Wilson, that sets this project apart from other work in this area. The involvement of the artists brings a very particular dimension to this project, capturing in new and innovative ways some of the essential characteristics of the base (such as its auditory landscape), as well as the rituals and ceremonies associated with closure, and the administration and management required to oversee this process of change in an appropriate and efficient manner. Together with our characterisation map and the stills photography, these complementary pieces of documentation will provide a lasting record of what RAF Coltishall was like, and what it meant to those that lived there and in the surrounding area. When completed, the artworks will present a complex intervention to address the site's evolving history: exploring and commenting on its attendant frictions without sentimentality. ■

*This is a collaborative project, and this article is effectively co-authored by all of the participants. Those involved are: Wayne Cocroft and Steve Cole (English Heritage), Andrea Bradley, Tony Lee and Sefryn Penrose (Atkins Heritage), Angela Weight and the artists: Angus Boulton, Gair Dunlop and Louise K Wilson.*

## Hidden heritage: military Command & Control organisation bunkers of the Cold War

Paul Francis

*Archaeological Consultant*

Before the beginning of the Second World War, the government had real fears about being bombed. For that reason a number of underground bunkers were constructed. Many of these continued in use through the Cold War, a period during which additional sites were built. A new study is assessing these structures to help reach sustainable decisions about their future.

### Origins

Before the Second World War secure underground bunkers were constructed for the Cabinet in Whitehall, and for the Air Ministry, Admiralty, and a reserve Cabinet war room in north-west London. The core governmental and military staff, however, preferred to remain close together in central London, hence the Harrow and Neasden establishments were never used in any capacity. Later a semi-underground citadel was built for the Admiralty in Whitehall; and with a new threat from the 'V' weapons, disused gas-holders in SW1 were converted into two-level underground command bunkers and use was also made by the US Army of the deep-level underground air-raid shelters. The gas-holders were called Rotundas and the Cabinet component was christened 'Anson'. A network of deep tunnels constructed at great expense during the 1940s connected all the Whitehall establishments.

There were other secure military strongholds in use by 1945: Bomber Command and the USAAF had underground centres codenamed 'Southdown' and 'Pinetree' respectively, near High Wycombe. Maritime Joint Operations used bunkers at Pitreavie Castle (Rosyth), Mount Wise (Plymouth), Eastbury Park, Northwood (Middlesex), and Dover Castle. Fighter Command's two principal operations centres were at Bentley Priory (HQFC) and Uxbridge (11 Group HQ) with facilities being constructed in the Bath-stone mines at Corsham for 12 Group – RAF Rudloe Manor. The Battle of the Atlantic was won beneath the ground in the navy's Western Approaches Command HQ under Derby House, part of the Exchange Buildings in Liverpool.

### Cold War

The arrival of the Cold War ensured that most of these underground and semi-underground

structures continued to be used into the 1950s, with significant extensions and modifications being carried out on the majority. However, apart from the civil Regional Seat of Government bunkers and the army's Eastern Command's Headquarters at Wilton Park (Buckinghamshire), no further major military-command bunkers were built during this period. The RAF's ROTOR air defence system, which started in 1950, resulted in the construction of some 60 hardened operations rooms for control of early-warning radar in all areas of the UK. These were of 10 distinct types and ranged from single-storey surface, to three-storey (two underground) buildings, the former being used mainly in the west of the UK. The aim of the network was to detect Soviet aircraft encroaching from the east, and all stations reported to RAF Fighter Command at Bentley Priory. Owing to significant leaps in technology ROTOR was declared obsolete within a few years, though the bunkers continued to be used for other defence purposes. Some 35 Royal Observer Corps Group Headquarters surface blockhouses were built between 1961 and 1965, of which about half are now demolished.

A major casualty of progress was the Pitreavie Castle underground HQ, which was demolished by the Royal Engineers in 1996. This establishment had been responsible for all operations of the northern sector of the UK for almost 50 years. The future of other similar historical sites is now in the balance – in particular the Battle of Britain Command Centre at Bentley Priory. This study will provide national context for such sites and ensure that conservation decisions, including heritage protection where appropriate, is based on a thorough understanding of this unusual and usually hidden category of site. ■

## Architecture for the Welfare State

Elain Harwood

*Research and Standards, English Heritage*

While it is important to recognise the broad appeal of post-war buildings, only designation – in 2007 still with the distinction between listed buildings and scheduled monuments – offers statutory protection. We have been able to list post-war buildings for exactly 20 years, yet they are still regarded as 'difficult' and extra consultation procedures have hitherto made the process slow and painful. Here, the architecture of the 1950s to the 1970s is assessed.

One of the difficulties with assessing post-war listed buildings has been hinted at in other articles in this *Bulletin*, that of the scale of post-war building, with the priority given to housing estates and whole new towns, in which planners and landscape architects assumed an equal role with that of architects. Designation is often more appropriate for individual buildings such as churches, but it can identify the landmark status of an elegant block of flats or the innovation of a small group, such as prefabs, and give recognition to the landscape. A very high proportion of the buildings erected in the years 1945–75 were wholly or partly funded by local or national government, and in the past we have been wary of referring to the welfare state and socialism that inspired them. However, there is now a younger generation of architects and conservationists for whom Thatcherism and post-modernism are equally historic terms, and for the past decade modernism has enjoyed a revival. It is time to recognise that the 1950s and 1960s are back in fashion.

### The 1950s: Beveridge's 'want'

It is hard to visualise now the consequences of six years of war and nine more of shortages on any building stock, particularly one that had already suffered from twenty years of under-investment before 1939. The culture of DIY had yet to be invented. The burst of colour made by new buildings, and the Festival of Britain, is still remembered by those who lived through the war. It is equally easy to ignore the innovations of those early post-war buildings, as we take details like good daylighting in schools for granted. Then lighting, plumbing, even paint colours, were explored from first principles in a new spirit of collaboration between architects, engineers and artists, who, having won the war against Hitler, turned to that on William Beveridge's 'want' (his umbrella term for Britain's social ills of poverty,

The preserved control room of the 1970s at the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, Neatishead, Norfolk. This was one of the Cold War's electronic frontlines, and it was from here that the interception of Soviet aircraft over the North Sea was co-ordinated.  
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The Lawn, Harlow, England's first 'point' block, opened in 1951; architect, Frederick Gibberd. © Elaine Harwood



homelessness and lack of education), defined in a report published in December 1942. From old people's bungalows to new towns, universities and the first public theatres, the range of building embraced in the 1950s and 1960s is remarkable.

Beveridge's built legacy is still with us, but only just. In July 1987 the government listed its first post-war building, Bracken House, and a national competition was launched to find other 1950s' buildings of architectural or historic interest. Back then the stock of post-war buildings seemed – and was – enormous. Inflation in the 1970s and government spending restrictions in the 1980s had ensured that almost everything built in the post-war years survived in use, albeit often run down. Twenty years on we have the legacy of that neglect. There are few schools or housing estates that have not been overlaid, radically remodelled or entirely rebuilt – save for those few listed examples, where change has been embraced more thoughtfully. The pace of change is demonstrated by the town of Harlow, planned and partly built by Frederick Gibberd, whose involvement there from 1946 until 1980 gave it greater homogeneity and more good buildings than the other new towns designated in the 1940s. Yet his civic centre and technical college from the early 1960s have been demolished and there are proposals to redevelop his theatre, while the shopping centre has

undergone many changes. Gibberd's listed water gardens have been rebuilt and a factory delisted and demolished; today Harlow's only listed buildings are The Lawn (the first 10-storey 'point' block of flats in England), two terraces of houses, a church and some sculptures.

### Controversy

The controversy of designating buildings of great quality that are large and innovative, and therefore expensive to repair, has been exemplified by the furore over Plymouth Civic Centre, one of the few post-war town halls both elegant in its design and the artistry of its fittings, built in 1958–62 by Geoffrey Jellicoe and Partners. The building was listed in June 2007 to a storm of protest from local MPs, while the council says the building needs millions of pounds spent on it in repairs – although it remains fully occupied for its original purpose. It is an interesting litmus test of how modern civic architecture is either loved or hated.

Actual numbers of post-war listed buildings are hard to give accurately, as the computer system counts every facsimile rebuild of an older structure, and separately listed kerbs and pool surrounds. One housing estate may contain several items: Byker in Newcastle has 82 items covering 1,999 addresses. Approximately, there are 700 items, including 62 sculptures and war memorials, relating to 330 distinctive building projects. These include private houses, a few office buildings and a very large number of churches, as well as expressions of the welfare State. There is only one structure erected for a nationalised industry: the headstocks at Clipstone Colliery in Nottinghamshire. This is remarkable, since in the years 1945–65 as much money was spent on building power stations as on local authority and university buildings put together, and far more than on buildings for defence. The number of post-war listed buildings is likely to remain small, as examples worthy of designation simply do not survive.

### Schools

There are two areas where new research, evaluation and appreciation are just beginning. The first is schools. Since 1997, some £34 billion has been spent in a programme that has seen more than a thousand new schools and many more substantially remodelled. More are proposed with the government's Building Schools for the Future programme, aimed at all secondary schools and about half our primaries. Authorities like Nottinghamshire and Islington are rebuilding all their unlisted schools. This is a delicate area: is a



Intake School, Mansfield, 1956, Nottinghamshire County Council Architect's Department. Called the 'Rock 'n' Roll' school for its ability to ride mining subsidence, this was the first school to be built using the CLASP system and is the only post-war school in the county to be listed.

© Elaine Harwood

new school always the best way of reviving education standards? The costs of maintenance versus rebuilding, and the availability of budgets, are important. Elsewhere architects are looking at converting listed modern schools into housing, as at Oaklands College in St Albans, a refinement in 1958–60 of Hertfordshire's innovative steel-framed building system developed to meet post-war exigencies. Hertfordshire's building achievement is well known; research is needed into other countries before a generation of school building is swept away.

Alexandra Road Estate, Camden, 1972–8, by Neave Brown. The flagship of Camden's public housing programme, the Alexandra Road Estate offered an alternative to the tower block. It is one of the few 1970s' buildings to be listed.

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### The decade 1967–77

The other subject of research, following on from the work of English Heritage's former Post-War Steering Group, is the decade 1967–77 when the excesses of welfare state provision and of modernism were rejected amidst growing economic decline. Yet the era produced models of low-rise, high-density housing in brick, new open-plan forms for schools, and experiments in unusual structures and materials such as fibreglass. This was the decade of the first 'high tech' buildings as well as the first 'Po-Mo' ones, and we need to understand their significance as they too reach the age of 30 and become eligible for listing. ■



## England's atomic age

Wayne Cocroft

*Research and Standards, English Heritage*

During the early 20th century the increasing scientific and technological nature of warfare led to a new relationship between the government, industry and workers. The state took control of factories and the labour force, and directly engaged in the manufacture of armaments and scientific research. This pattern persisted into the immediate post-war period as the Ministry of Supply continued to exert control over the allocation of scarce raw materials. A national study is currently reviewing the architecture of England's atomic age to better inform conservation decision-making for a category of sites increasingly seen to have historic significance.

### Cold War imperatives

British scientists had played a key role in developing the atomic bomb. However, partly due to the enormous cost of the Manhattan Project – four times the cost of the German V2 missile programme – the industrial infrastructure for the programme was built in the United States. In Britain, the government funded ICI to research the industrial production of nuclear materials. Birmingham University's Archaeology Field Unit has recently investigated the experimental isotope separation site at Rhydymwyn (Clywd), which, as one of the world's earliest nuclear installations, may be preserved within a proposed country park.

Sixty years ago, after the cabinet decision in January 1947 to proceed with the development of an atomic bomb, a vast scientific and industrial

infrastructure was required to manufacture this novel and complex device. In a country still subject to rationing, the programme was given the highest national priority.

Initially the bomb project was housed in existing defence establishments at Fort Halstead (Kent) and the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, with additional space quickly acquired at Foulness (Essex). Elsewhere, redundant ordnance factories and airfields provided sites for the construction of large and innovative industrial plant. The political imperative was the nuclear weapon's development. In the research establishments to accommodate their rapidly expanding workforces, utilitarian and often prefabricated structures were hurriedly constructed.

### Power from the atom

Power derived from splitting the atom represented the final break with the smog-producing coal of the first industrial revolution. The early post-war coal-fired power stations, such as Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's Bankside (now Tate Modern), housed in monumental brick edifices of cathedral-like proportions, represented throwbacks to a pre-war generation. During the 1950s as Britain emerged from wartime rationing and standardised utility goods, the country's scientific and technological prowess was celebrated as ushering in a prosperous new Elizabethan age. The novelty of the nuclear power stations' technology was distinguished by their modernist architecture. They are typically steel-framed, clad in moulded asbestos cement or pressed metal sheets, and in some the external pipework was left exposed. In the headquarters building of the Calder Hall power station modernism was tempered against local stone end

Orfordness, Suffolk. The construction of the 'pagodas', vibration test laboratories, in about 1956, coincided with Britain's push to develop the hydrogen bomb. The National Trust now owns the site.

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## MODERN TIMES

walls. In contrast to the old smoke-blackened industrial buildings and drab wartime camouflage schemes, colour played an important part in their industrial design, often serving the practical purpose of colour coding different sections of the plant, while adding visual interest to the buildings.

### New landscapes

The new nuclear power stations also represented a distinct shift in the geography of power generation. Previously electricity had been generated within a factory, town or city, or close to the coalfields. Safety concerns and the need for large amounts of cooling water pushed the new nuclear power stations out to remote coastal sites. Here these uncompromising monuments to a technologically dependent society dominate their localities within new late 20th-century designed landscapes.

Great care was taken over the design of the new stations and leading contemporary architects were engaged as consultants to advise on the buildings and landscapes of the new plants. Sir Frederick Gibberd, the chief architect of Liverpool's Roman Catholic cathedral and Harlow New Town, advised on Sizewell A (Suffolk), and the buildings and landscape at Hinkley Point (Somerset). Outside England, most famously at Trawsfynydd (Gwynedd), Sir Basil Spence collaborated with the landscape consultant Sylvia Crowe to blend the station into the landscape of the National Park. Yet, the anonymous in-house design teams of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority produced some of the most iconic structures of the era – such as the dome of the fast breeder reactor at Dounreay (Caithness), or the 'Pagodas' of the former Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Orfordness (Suffolk).

### Legacy

Unlike many industries that have been quickly wiped from the country's landscape, the hulks of the nuclear-reactor fleet will perhaps remain for the next century, the exact timetables for their final demolition as yet undetermined. The new establishments also changed their surrounding social landscapes through the influx of skilled scientists and well-paid power-station workers to remote rural areas. Housing estates and communities created to accommodate these workforces, and new 21st-century high-technology parks will remain while the primary reason for their existence is disappearing. ■



Calder Hall, Cumbria, commissioned in October 1956, was the world's first industrial-scale nuclear-power station connected to a national electricity grid. To the rear is the Windscale plutonium factory.

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## OPINION

Those who operate in the contentious territory of protecting post-war sites and buildings need to cultivate friends. While good-quality research is essential it is not enough in itself to win the day. As conservation practitioners – in local authorities, amenity societies, English Heritage – we have to confront the challenges that our heritage designations create. The post-war listing programme, carried out in the 1990s by English Heritage and many partners, augmented systematic research with active publicity, and helped create a climate where (by the year 2000) 75 per cent of people thought that the best of our post-war heritage should be preserved (rising to 95 per cent of the 16–24 age group). But such high levels of support cannot be guaranteed without sustained campaigns and public dialogue. It's high time for another heave on this front, urgently so, as long as people misread statements about the whole environment being historic as meaning everything in it should be preserved. Most of us enjoy exploring the unknown and the recent past is a surprisingly little-understood place. Hats off to English Heritage for striding off towards that particular horizon. But it behoves us all to recognise the risks and anticipate the pitfalls. Attitudes such as those of one leading conservationist recently quoted – 'we can't go looking to make friends' – simply won't do.

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