



REPAIRING WAR TORN BATH

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telephone 01225 338727

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Amy Frost
Exhibition Co-ordinator

David McLaughlin Conservation Architect
Guest Curator

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The recorded Defenders of the West

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed a new recognition and concern for the well-being of Bath's eighteenth century architecture and history. The 1905 publication of *The Eighteenth Century Architecture of Bath* by the architect Mowbray Aston Green (1865-1945) firmly established him as the authority on the eighteenth century architecture of the city. The reviews were glowing.

'Mr. Mowbray Green ... puts before our eyes, both with pen and pencil, the material setting and surroundings amidst which all these great people ... lived, moved and had their being. He does this so thoroughly and so artistically that there is nothing left for a successor to accomplish. An able architect and artist himself, he does full justice to the supreme efforts of his illustrious predecessors of the eighteenth century ... as only an architect could.'¹

The British Architect's review of Green's work marks a fundamental turning point in emerging English town planning legislation concerning how buildings were to respect each other.

'The striking quality of Bath as a city has just now been ably set forth in "The Eighteenth Century Architecture of Bath" ... the professor should be grateful to Mr. Mowbray Green for so carefully producing a book on Bath which shows what the possibilities of cities may be if the control of their streets and squares gets into good hands, and it emphasises the terrible lack of artistic responsibility which the autocrats of the Strand improvements are just now exhibiting.'^{2,3}

The review emphasised '...what the possibilities of cities may be if the control of their streets and squares gets into good hands ...'.

This was just what was to emerge in Bath when the 1925 City of Bath Act introduced a clause giving control over the elevations of proposed new buildings and the reconstruction of façades to a Local Advisory Committee consisting of 'An Architect ..., A Surveyor..., A Justice of the Peace.'⁴ The threat of the demolition of the north side of Bath Street in 1909 led to the formation of the Old Bath Preservation Society. Mowbray Green took an active role in the formation of the Society and was its first Treasurer.

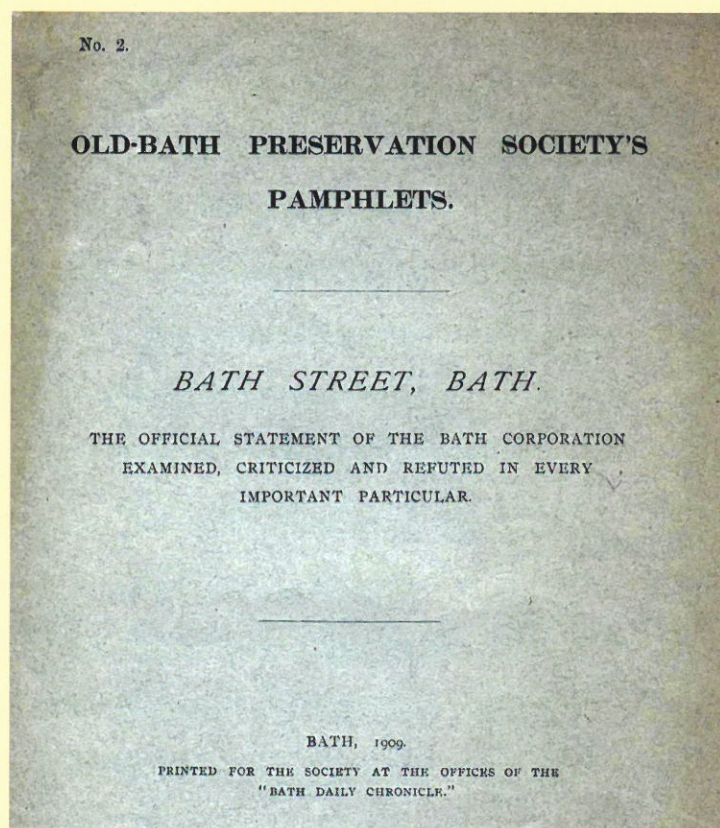


Figure 1

Bath Street, Bath, Old Bath Preservation Society's Pamphlets, 1909, David McLaughlin collection

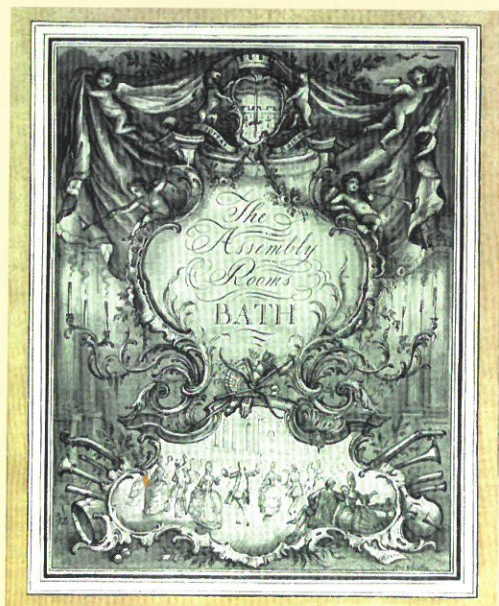


Figure 2 (far left)

The Assembly Rooms, Bath, Rex Whistler, cover of the official guidebook, 1938, David McLaughlin collection

Figure 3 (left)

Somerset Place, Noel Harbutt, Bath Central Library

Thirty years later, and just five months before the cataclysmic advent of World War II, Green was interviewed by the poet John Betjeman (1906-1984) for the BBC's Regional Programme. Instead of referring to the success of his newly completed restoration of the Assembly Rooms, Mowbray Green returned to the topic of the 1909 campaign. Reviewing the significance of the city and its outstanding eighteenth century architecture, Green concluded

'I want you to see that Bath doesn't exist for itself. Intense interest is taken in it by those who travel all over the world and who have the opportunity of seeing many fine things and judging for themselves.

'But there it is – beauty, repose, colour, surroundings, something that carries the mind back 150 to 200 years, and these people ... visitors to the city, say it's something that must not be lost.'⁵

The previous year Green had been asked by the Town Clerk to prepare a list of buildings to be protected under the 1937 City of Bath Act. The Act introduced for the first time a schedule of protected buildings of historic or architectural interest or beauty that were erected before 1820. Any alterations to the external elevation of a building were to be approved by a special tribunal, including any addition to a building; removal or alteration of any architectural features; or, any alteration in dimensions, shape or style of any window, window frame, door or doorway.

A respect and high regard for the architecture and setting of the eighteenth century city and its cultural milieu had been firmly established by 1939. The greatest imaginable threat to that cultural history loomed into view with the danger of impending war.

The threat of another world war brought a renewed determination and urgency to the work of the Bath Preservation Trust. It emerged in 1934 as a successor to the Old Bath Preservation Society that had been rekindled in 1929. The Trust's 1941 Annual Report gave news of an important new initiative.

'An important work now to be taken in hand is the making by a specially qualified committee of a complete "Pictorial Record" of the interesting Eighteenth Century Houses and Buildings already scheduled for "Preservation". Such a "Record" should prove of inestimable use in the problematical and certainly, difficult future.

'It is essential, in view of this "Future", that membership should increase rather than decrease, and Members and non-members are asked to bear in mind that the small subscription of 5s.0d. entitles them to rank as recorded Defenders of our unique and famous Queen City of the West.'⁶

Noel Harbutt's photograph of the centre of Somerset Place (Figure 3) is exactly one such wartime 'Record'. Look carefully at the windows. The 'glazing bars' are tape stuck to the glass in the hope of reducing potential blast damage. Sadly the centre of Somerset Place was to receive a direct hit. Only its windowless front façade would survive the Baedeker raids on Bath.

The foresight of the 'recorded defenders' was very wise. The bombing of Bath in April 1942 caused much loss of life as well as the damage and destruction of many of its historic buildings.

The Baedeker raids on Bath

The two nights and three days of the 25th, 26th and 27th of April 1942 mark a harrowing chapter in the history of Bath – the Baedeker raids on the city. Why was Bath attacked and what were the Baedeker raids?

Bath had been targeted in a series of reprisal raids for Britain's fire bombing of the historic timber built town of Lübeck in Germany. The text underneath the dramatic image of Roy Nockolds' (1911-1975) English propaganda poster **Back Them Up!** reads 'Heavy Stirling bombers raid the Nazi Baltic port of Lübeck and leave the docks ablaze'.⁷ What the poster doesn't say is that this raid also destroyed a major civilian target – the historic timber built town of Lübeck.

The bombing of Lübeck inspired retaliatory raids on some of Britain's most treasured historic towns – Canterbury, Exeter, Norwich, York and, of course, Bath. Key historic buildings in each of the towns were singled out as targets by reference to a well-

established German series of guidebooks of the time – the Baedeker Guides. Any building that received the Baedeker's ultimate accolade of three stars was selected as a target for destruction.

The horrific bombing was a watershed in Bath's history that caused significant damage and loss of life. In the two nights and three days of the Baedeker raids in April 1942 over 400 people died, nearly 1,000 were injured and over 19,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed. Of these over 1,100 homes and buildings were seriously damaged or destroyed, of which 218 were of architectural or historic interest – among them Somerset Place and the Assembly Rooms.

Figure 4

Church of St Mary Magdalen. R F Wills 1942. A42/2364
Credit: English Heritage.NMR⁸



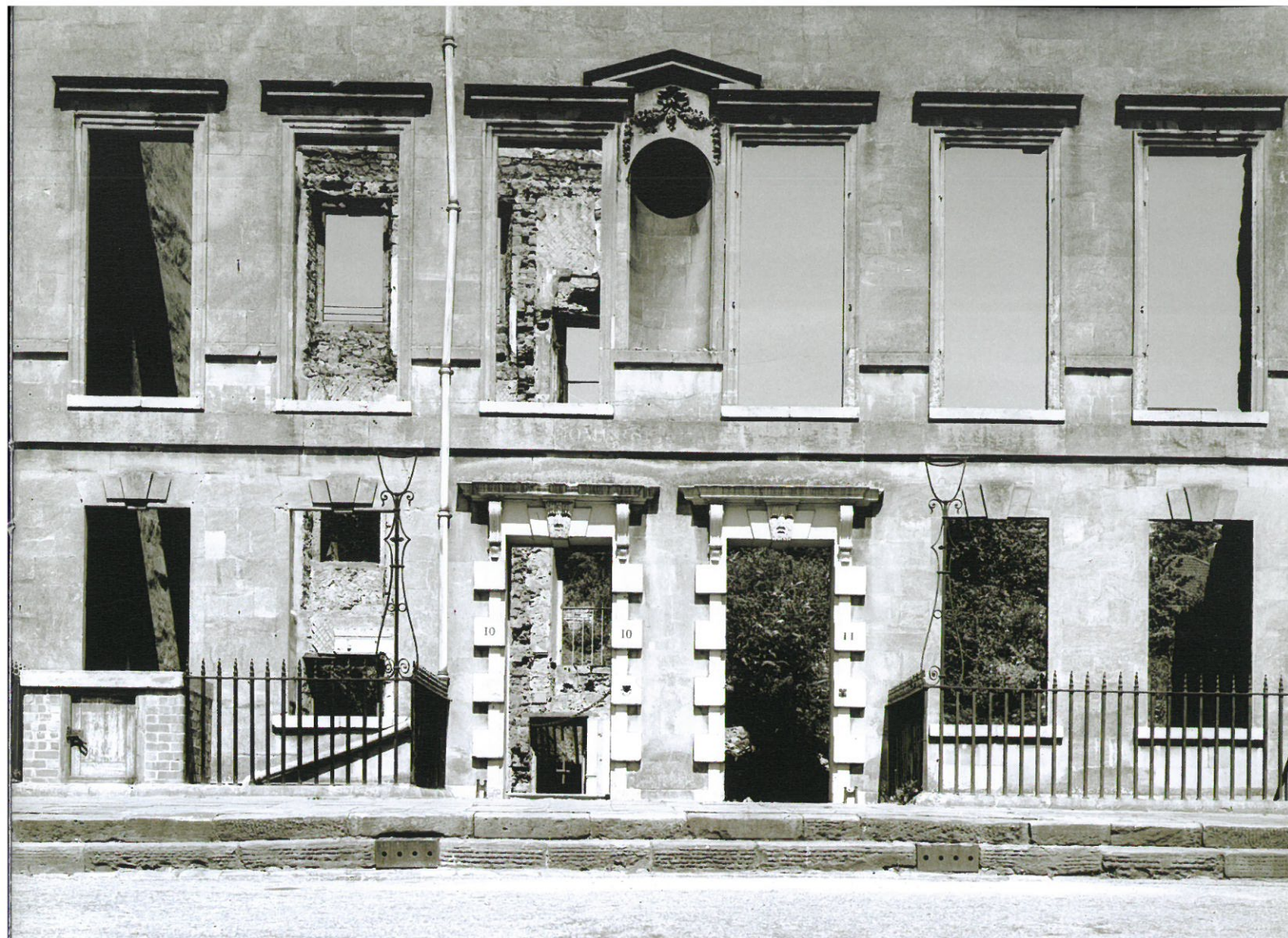


Figure 5

Somerset Place. R F Wills 1945. A45/6945
Credit: English Heritage.NMR

Bath was comparatively undefended. Britain's anti-aircraft installations were limited and not all communities could be protected. There were no anti-aircraft installations in Bath as the city was not perceived to be at risk. Barrage balloons were flown around Bristol but for Bath there were only searchlights at Lansdown scouring the skies.

'But the fighters we had, we used over the Continent and places like that. They didn't have many at that time. But there were searchlights and backgat guns that used to fire, that used to wake us up sometimes because it was one or two quite close. Sometimes they'd catch a plane in the searchlight and it came down the beam, flew down the beam of the searchlight and machine gunned the light and put it out. It was quite exciting.'

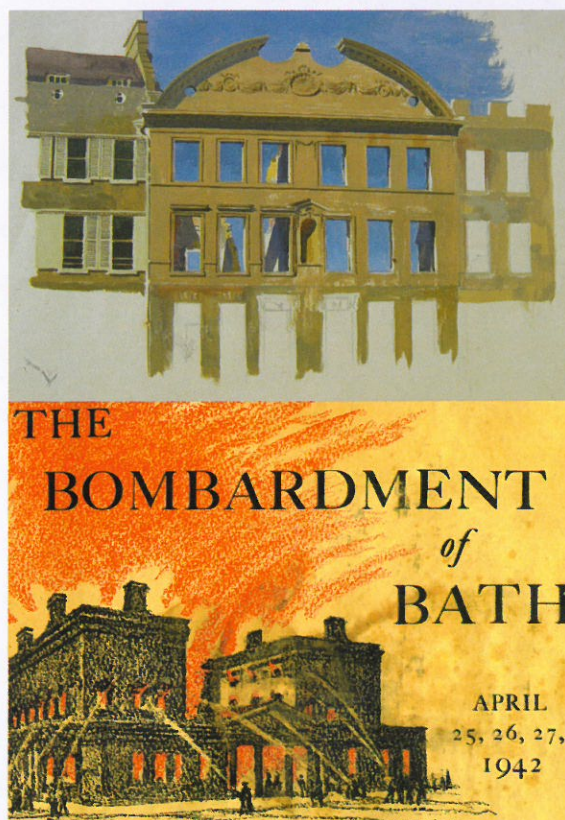


Figure 6

Somerset Place, 1942,
Leslie Atkinson,
Julia Atkinson collection

Figure 7

Bombardment of Bath,
1942, Arthur Cecil Fare
(1876-1958), *The Bath Chronicle*. Firefighters
quell the flames of
Bath's famous
Assembly Rooms.
David McLaughlin
collection



Figure 8

Detail of the Old Labour
Exchange Milk Street elevation,
David McLaughlin, October 2004

A similar incident must have occurred on the edge of the city at the Old Labour Exchange located on the corner James Street West and Milk Street. A searchlight had been located opposite the building on a then small triangle of grass by the Trinity Inn. The Old Labour Exchange bore the brunt of the fire that the ready target of the searchlight drew.

The scars of the shrapnel and the scorching of the oolitic limestone caused by the intense heat of the incendiary bombs flames can still be seen on the Old Labour Exchange. On 24 April 2002 the scarred remains of the building were listed Grade II as a Building of Special Architectural and Historic Interest as a memory of the war.

The historical significance of the shrapnel scarred building led the Bath Blitz Memorial Project to request the building's listing by the Secretary of State. It is the very scars of the shrapnel themselves that give the remains of the building its significance. The architect and architectural historian H S Goodhart-Rendel (1887-1959) wrote

'I hope our British cities will be proud of their scars, as heaven knows they have the right to be, and will not putty up the shrapnel holes and mend all the broken stones without need.

'These battle scars will remind future generations of the first time our cities really came up against it...'.¹⁰

But in 1942 the feeling remained that Bath, unlike Bristol, was not at risk.

'Yes, Bristol was bombed quite frequently.... We used to see the glow in the sky from Bristol, it was about twelve miles away ... we could see the glow and hear ... the thump of the bombs dropping. But in Bath, no one took any notice really cause they said, "Oh, they'll never bomb Bath. They'll never bomb Bath!"...but they did. And until then, no one ... took much notice. They didn't get up and go to the shelter or anything 'cause they didn't feel there was any need to. But that all changed in April of 1942.'¹¹

Even though the city was comparatively undefended air raid precautions in Bath were well established with a series of public shelters and medical and emergency centres.

During 1981 Clifford Ellis was interviewed about his experiences during the Bath blitz in 1942.¹² He recollected

'...we had gone over to dinner with Mrs Sickert. Sickert had died ... in February and this was towards the end of April. And it had got dark and we were walking back. Sickert lived over on the north-east side of Bath. And we lived at the top of Lansdown which is north of Bath. And in between us there was the whole valley.

Figure 9

Here Lived Edmund Burke, Clifford Ellis,
Government Art Collection



'And we'd come back past the lowest part of the valley and we were climbing up Lansdown. And suddenly – I can't tell you what a shock it was because by that time, this was in '42, we'd had three years of chivvying and so on not to show a light and so at night time it was meant to be dark – and suddenly the whole landscape became brilliant. And floating slowly down from the sky there was an enormous chandelier of flares and these bombers.

'I don't know how it worked but it was very extensive. It seemed to be two hundred yards across and some hundred feet or so and these lights. I don't know what the dimensions were. But it certainly had the effect of making the whole of the hollow containing Bath appallingly brilliantly light. And then a few minutes later the first bombs began to come down. Although I believe most of the bombing was with incendiary bombs. That's all that hit our house. They rattled down off the roof. Bath being a rather basin shape with a low central part and then a rim round the edge. And our house was up on the rim. And so the bombers were coming across so low that the bombs hadn't any sort of weight behind them. And so they bounced off our slates and rattled down into the garden where our job seemed to be to squirt cold water on the shrubs and things so they didn't burn and let the bombs burn themselves out.

'But anyhow we came on up. And then when we reached Lansdown Crescent it really was getting very hot because some of the bombers were flying low and machine gunning. And others were dropping incendiaries. And occasionally there were these high explosives which were very much intended for definite places as we found in the morning, Royal Crescent, the Circus and all the landmarks.'¹³

In **Here Lived Edmund Burke** (Figure 9) Ellis records the exact salmon pink of the scorched stonework of the destroyed Regina Hotel in the distance, the gaunt shell of the façade of Circus House and the tortured, twisted remains of the iron railings that had once encircled the Circus lawn. Ironwork was a particular passion of the Ellis's.

'The interesting thing was as you came up ... The best part of Bath – the work of Wood the Elder and the Younger – I think that was fairly substantially built with proper masonry. But when we got to Lansdown Crescent – charming though it is to look at – it was real shoddy building. There was a thin peel of Bath stone not more than six or seven inches thick. And the blast was pulling this off the building and it left behind just rubbish, bits of timber, broken rubble, anything. It was just a marvellous façade.'¹⁴

Figure 10

Lansdown Place
East after the Blitz,
Clifford Ellis,
Victoria Art
Gallery, Bath,
BATVG 1943.108



Ellis records this '... thin peel of Bath stone ...' in **Lansdown Place East after the Blitz** (Figure 10). The façade is literally peeled back at the edges of the blast.

'And this is another aspect of... Some day I took a distinguished Italian architect round Bath. Everybody knows Bath from photographs, you see, from certain views. But when he actually saw what the buildings were like he said, 'sceneography'. This is more contemptuous than you might think because it's a technical term used for film sets. So it wasn't just scenery but it was that sort of scenery. So you have this fairly smart facing wall. But you come to the angle and then you go back and then it isn't architecture at all. It's just a façade.'¹⁵



Figure 11

Lansdown Place East after
the Blitz, Leslie Atkinson,
Julia Atkinson collection



Figure 12

Lansdown Place East after the Blitz, Donald Stride, The Bath Chronicle



Figure 13

Lansdown Place East after the Blitz,
The Bath Chronicle

The National Buildings Record and photographers

The declaration of war in 1939 had given an urgent impetus for the need to record the nation's buildings. Other art works, archives, antiquities and historic furnishings were movable objects and were sent to remote country houses or slate quarries in Wales. The administration of the British Museum was evacuated to Avoncliff near Bradford on Avon. Immovable objects were sandbagged in situ around steel frames.

What defied all measure of protection were buildings. They had to take their chance, to be remembered by posterity, if the worst should happen, either as ruins, ambiguous rebuildings or through such illustrations, graphic and photographic, as had been accidentally assembled and preserved or published over the years.¹⁶

The onset of war led directly to the formation of the National Buildings Record in 1940.¹⁷ Two priorities were identified: the co-ordination of existing records and the photography of buildings in vulnerable towns and cities. R F Wills of Bristol was the principal photographer recording wartime Bath for the NBR although John Summerson (1904-1992), the NBR Deputy Director, photographed a few key sites in Bath.



Figure 14

Somerset Place. John Summerson.
2 May 1942. B3431.
Credit: English Heritage.NMR



Figure 15

Somerset Place, John Piper,
Sotheby's Art Library



Figure 16

Ruins of the Regina Hotel, Donald Stride,
The Bath Chronicle



Figure 17

Regina Hotel after the Blitz, Graham Clilverd,
Victoria Art Gallery, BATVG 1980.83.1

John Piper (1903-1992) was the Official War Artist sent to record the blitzed city. He wrote to his friend, the poet John Betjeman on 15th May 1942.

'I went to Bath to paint bomb damage. I never was sent to do anything so sad before. I was miserable there indeed to see that haunt of ancient water-drinkers besmirched with dust and blast. 3 houses burnt out in Royal Cresc., bomb in middle of Circus, and 2 burnt out there; Lansdown Chapel direct hit, 10 bombs in front of Lansdown Cres, Somerset Place, almost completely burnt out: a shell. No damage to Pulteney St. or bridge or museum. Many dim terraces badly damaged. 326 killed, 1800 houses uninhabitable. Might have been worse but not much. Assembly rooms utterly gutted, and the shell looks like a new building by Louis de Soissons. But the air of Bath still there, and the back alleys and raised voices in courtyards, only all talking about how they'd escaped. Churches not too bad. Scott's behind the Crescent a wonderful ochre & purple ruin: spire near pump-room (18TH C) decapitated; Roman ch. de-roofed and one or two others, but not much more. My mother said on telephone 'I hear Bath has not suffered much – they didn't get the Roman Bath'. My God I did hate that week; made possible by Rosemary and Clifford Ellis who took me in in spite of 12 students evacuated from their destroyed art-school. Bath will survive – Batsford restored, I suppose.'¹⁸

Just as the NBR photographers, press photographers were subject to strict censorship. The Bath Chronicle published remarkable photographs by Donald Stride. Stride's humbling photograph of the ruined Regina Hotel opposite the Assembly Rooms on Bennett Street shows us the full horror of its destruction. Huge piles of rubble remain.

So much material needed to be cleared that a bulldozer had to be used to reveal the site as Graham Clilverd's drawing records (Figure 17). Over fifteen people died in the blitzed hotel as the hotel guests refused to use the same air raid shelter as the staff.¹⁹

Painstaking steps were taken to carefully clear the site and secure the remains of the Hotel as the sequence of figures 18, 19 and 20 show. One person was responsible for co-ordinating the care and repair of Bath's war-torn historic buildings, the Panel Architect, Mowbray Green.



Figure 18

Regina Hotel cleared site,
The Bath Chronicle



Figure 19

Regina Hotel bombed and the shell of the Assembly Rooms, Bath Central Library

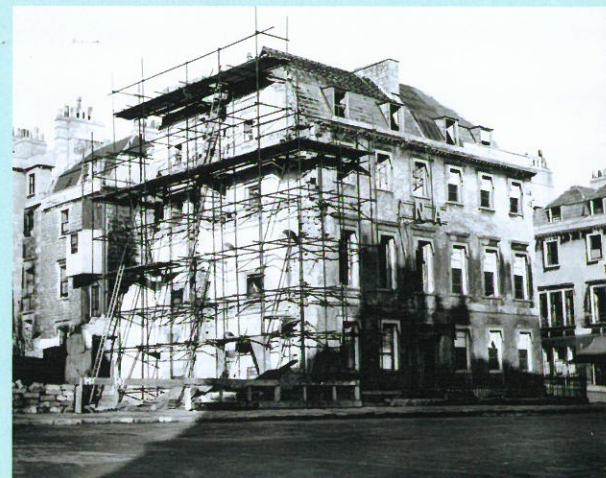


Figure 20

Bennett Street, Regina Hotel.
Ministry of Works 14 January 1944. B3843
Credit: English Heritage.NMR

The panel architect

Mowbray Green remained the authority on the eighteenth century architecture of the city throughout his lifetime. Despite being in his late seventies, Green was to take a new and extremely active and demanding role in the care of Bath's historic buildings during war time. He was appointed as the 'Panel Architect' for the care of Bath's war-torn historic buildings and churches on behalf of the Ministry of Works and Planning.

'In practice it was usual for the panel architect, appointed by the Ministry of Works, to be called upon by the local authority direct, since in the nature of things urgent consultation was often needed. The architect as a practical man... could advise whether a wall could and should be shored or otherwise kept in position or should be taken down, any decorative features being carefully preserved. ...the all-important first consultation, to decide whether a building should be removed at once or whether demolition should be deferred for further consideration, fell to the lot of the panel architect.'²⁰

Bath's City Engineer reported to Mowbray Green, the Ministry of Works' Panel Architect. Green produced a schedule of damage to historic buildings 'with notes of Urgent Protective Works Required' but not including First Aid Repairs...'²¹

'Outhoused at Rhyl in North Wales from the outbreak of war was part of the Ancient Monuments Branch, and after the first heavy raids of 1940 we were involved in setting up the system (of listing buildings) devised by the Ministry of Works and Buildings ... in consultation with the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The National Buildings Record was closely involved from the start.

'The scheme was designed to provide First Aid repairs to Buildings of Historic Interest damaged by enemy action. England and Wales were divided into twelve Regions and each region into a number of Areas, over a hundred in all. For every area a panel of architects was appointed from lists initially drawn up by the RIBA for the localities. Mapping of the regions and areas was done at Rhyl, as each area was defined, and the system was already in operation by March 1941.

'The primary duty of each Panel Architect was to prepare a list of buildings for each of his civil parishes, with sufficient particulars to enable them to be identified by the (Air Raid) Wardens.

'The problem of photography had proved an unexpectedly awkward one. Every Panel Architect on appointment was issued with a permit which purported to authorize photography, but within a few months it was pointed out that in the circumstances of the time (mid-1941) these permits might not be accepted by the police. In fact shortage of photographic materials soon made it impossible for the Panel Architects to provide adequate photographic coverage. When photographic records were essential they were left to the National Buildings Record. Close liaison between the Ancient Monuments Branch (at Rhyl and in Whitehall), the Panel Architects, and the NBR became a normal activity.'²²

Mowbray Green's correspondence with the Ministry of Works amply demonstrates his zealous and energetic care of historic Bath.²³ He made a building-by-building, wall-by-wall, stone-by-stone analysis of the war damage in his determination to retain as much of the original fabric of eighteenth century Bath as possible.

Figure 21

Hope House,
detail of plaque,
David McLaughlin,
July 2005

HOPE HOUSE
DESTROYED BY ENEMY ACTION
25 APRIL 1942
RE-OPENED 23 MAY 1951 BY
HRH THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER



Figure 22

Cavendish Place, Bath,
1942, John Piper,
Mercer Art Gallery,
Harrogate

'In Bath the actual destruction of historic buildings was not as severe as early reports suggested, although the burning of the Assembly Rooms is a grievous blow. Yet, because so much of Bath is of architectural interest, many historic buildings were damaged, several dozen of them too badly to merit repair as houses by the local authority. Some of these have been temporarily repaired by their owners; others, such as Nos. 2 and 17 Royal Crescent, Hope House, Lansdown, and Nos. 6 to 9 Cavendish Place, have been attended to by the Ministry.'²⁴

One instance of Green's consummate care can be seen by contrasting Piper's painting of Cavendish Place with its unsupported towering slender walls (Figure 22) with Green's war damage first aid repairs shown in the photograph of 6-9 Cavendish Place, Bath (Figure 23) and the reconstructed façades shown in Figure 24. Green's recognition of the instability of the slender unsupported walls led to the careful dismantling of the stonework to the second and third storeys while leaving intact the elegant ground and first floor elevations, including the careful propping of one of the first floor balconies.



Figure 23

6-9 Cavendish Place, Bath,
unidentified photographer,
Bath Record Office



Figure 24

7-9 Cavendish Place, Bath,
David McLaughlin, 2 July 2005

Mowbray Green was in his 78th year during the Baedeker raids of April 1942 on Bath. Yet his name and both daytime and night time telephone numbers are listed in the City of Bath Air Raid Precautions Handbook. His care of the city's historic buildings and churches was exemplary.

'An adopted son of Bath, no man did more in his day and generation to preserve its great traditions or to advocate its zealous care by its citizens in a rapidly changing and utilitarian age.'²⁵

The 1942 bombing of Bath had been a watershed in the city's history. Repair and reconstruction were swift. By July 1944 war damage repairs totalling £1,306,495 had been completed. In the following four years £400,000 of further repairs were completed, although the repair of the Assembly Rooms would not be finished until 1963.

Figure 25

The blitzed Assembly Rooms on fire,
The Bath Chronicle

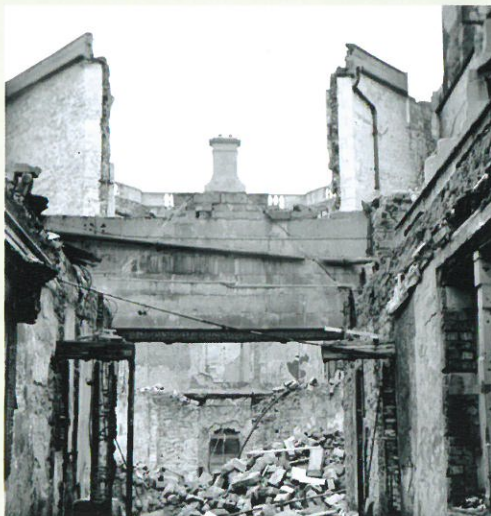


Figure 26

The Assembly Rooms.
Ministry of Works
25 September 1942. B3442
Credit: English Heritage.NMR

A 1949 Ministry of Works booklet records the 'Chief Cultural Losses through Enemy Action' throughout Britain. The loss of the Bath Assembly Rooms ranks among the sixty chief cultural losses of the whole country. The loss must have been a bitter blow to Mowbray Green.

The writer and diarist James Lees-Milne (1908-1998) writing on Tuesday 28 April 1942 commented

'Miss P. told me in the office that the Bath Assembly Rooms had been gutted by fire in the Bath raid on Sunday night. It has upset me dreadfully that so beautiful a building, hallowed by Jane Austen and Dickens, should disappear like this in a single night... This is a reprisal raid for ours over Lübeck. Both raids are sheer barbaric bloody-mindedness, anti-culture and anti-all that life stands for. I positively want not to survive the war when things like this can happen.'²⁶

Controversy raged over whether the Rooms should be rebuilt at all. Local citizens saw it as wasteful when so much else needed to be done in the aftermath of war.

'The predominant voices so far in the controversy on Bath Assembly Rooms have been those of the Georgian enthusiasts. The ordinary citizens of Bath have seldom made themselves heard. They are vastly disinterested in the fate of the Rooms, for they regard them as a useless anachronism... The Georgian days are over. The citizens would like to see the money spent on necessities such as bus shelters.'²⁷

One protestor wrote that the cost of the reinstatement of the Rooms was a 'travesty of social justice'.

'The flame of Georgian architecture is extinguished.... If £300,000 is available from the national purse to erect Elizabethan houses for the homeless of Bath.... To erect a non-utilitarian building at this cost is a travesty of social justice.'

The architectural historian Bryan Little disagreed and considered that '...no Bath caring for its future can afford to leave her Assembly Rooms unrestored....

'Bath's Baedeker raids of 1942 were an unexpected and sharply painful experience. The cost in human tragedy and broken homes was severe. But Baedeker's three-star valuation of Bath none the less remains unimpaired. With two serious exceptions Bath's architectural treasures were only slightly affected.

Figure 27

The Assembly Rooms. Ministry of Works
25 September 1942. B3443.
Credit: English Heritage.NMR

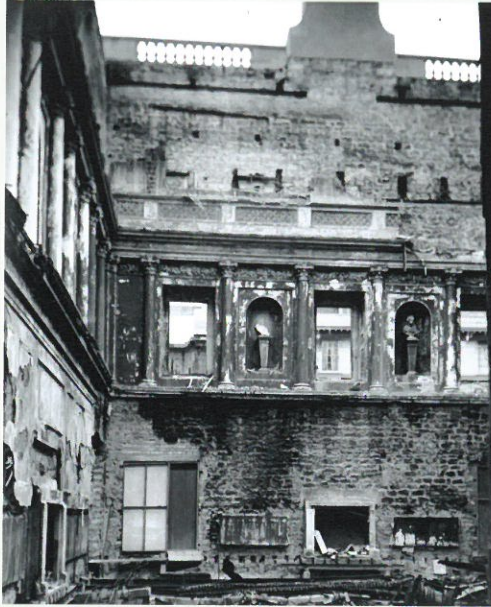
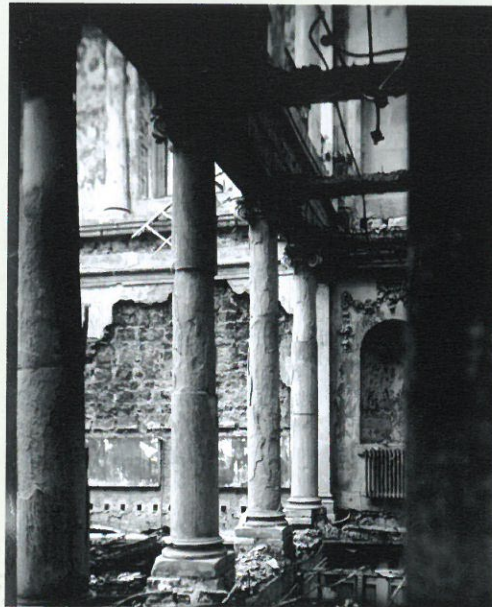


Figure 28

The Assembly Rooms. Ministry of Works
25 September 1942. B3444.
Credit: English Heritage.NMR



'The worst damage is, however, in two other areas. Up Lansdown, Palmer's Gothic All Saints' chapel is now a fragment, a ruin set picturesquely in the trees like many a Georgian conceit built at its beginning as a romantic fragment. It will never be used for worship again, but the residents of Lansdown Crescent above it should have their ruin in perpetuity. A few yards away Somerset Place, its attractive broken pediment decorated with Adamesque garlands, is nearly all gone, though the pediment itself survives and may be preserved.

'Worst of all, the Assembly Rooms, beautifully restored and redecorated only in 1938, were burnt out. The walls yet stand, but the exterior of the block is undistinguished, and if ever the Rooms are restored, even to the old drawings, they will never be fully the same and much worth seeing has gone for ever, though fragments even yet survive. In time something must surely be done, for no Bath caring for its future can afford to leave her Assembly Rooms unrestored, however much else be planned or put in hand. And indeed the planners have been hard at work.'

Figure 29

All Saints Chapel, Lansdown, Leslie Atkinson,
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, VAG 1980.212



Figure 30

Somerset Place. Ministry of Works 28 August 1942.
B3432. Credit: English Heritage.NMR

A Plan for Bath

The planners had indeed been hard at work. Throughout the latter months of the war Patrick Abercrombie and Bath's local authority planning officers had been working on Abercrombie's 1945 A Plan for Bath. The Plan provided the city and its environs with a new outlook on planning that reviewed air raid damage, urgent housing problems and traffic issues.

Building new housing alone was not enough. The Plan envisaged Bath being divided into a series of neighbourhoods each provided with its community centre, shopping areas, churches, schools, parks and playing fields.

The exhibition of the Plan was held at the Bath's Victoria Art Gallery from February 1st to March 3rd 1945. The exhibition was an immediate success. Over 1,200 people visited the exhibition on its first two days. The phenomenal popularity of the exhibition became a safety issue with so many people crowding in to see it. The result was that the exhibition had to be temporarily closed so that timed tickets could be issued to allow visitors to properly see Abercrombie's proposals.



The Rector of Bath Abbey, The Venerable W Marshall Selwyn, wrote to his parishioners.

'The matter in the thoughts of Bathonians at the moment is the Master Plan for the future of their City. Taking the plan as a whole most of us feel ... that it is really a great plan., the work of men who wish to carry on the past glories of our City into the future. They have seen a vision and are planning to make that vision come true.'²⁹

Much of Bath's post war housing and communities are a direct result of this initiative. Populations in existing local communities both within Bath and in its environs were to increase greatly through the provision of new housing. The Moorlands estate was the first new housing scheme to be built after the war. Work began in August 1946. The last house was opened in February 1949 by Aneurin Bevan, Minister for Health.

'As the years go by estates like this will spring up all over the country, and when I come across local authorities that are not paying enough sufficient regard to the design of their houses and the use of materials, I will tell them to visit Bath and see a good example of what they should do.'³⁰

Figure 31

The Blitz in Bath 1942,
Frances Marshall,
Imperial War Museum

Conclusion

Reviewing an exhibition of the work of War Artists at London's National Gallery John Piper considered that

'In all these and in other pictures the war shows itself as a personal thing for each artist, something that has deepened his experience. Such pictures as these are valuable, and will become more so. For after a war the controlled emotional record of actual events – the record made at once from experience and in the heat of the moment – is the only one that counts.'³¹

The recovery and repair of the war-torn city was remarkable. Despite war and post wartime rationing of building materials, many of the city's buildings were quickly repaired. Repairing war-torn Bath allows us to reflect on the work of the wartime Panel Architect and Emergency Response Teams and consider the impact of their response to the devastation of Bath following the Baedeker raids of April 25th, 26th, 27th 1942 in its future reconstruction.



Figure 32

Lansdown Place East after the Blitz,
John Piper, Manchester City Art Gallery

Figure 33

Lansdown Place East repaired,
Bath Central Library



Figure 34

Bath Guide 1963, The
Assembly Rooms rise
phoenix-like from the ashes
of the blitzed ruins, David
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Notes

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- 2 The furore over the Regent Street and Strand 'improvements' is discussed in Gray, A Stuart, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 1988, pp 77-82
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- 8 The photograph of the damaged Chapel shows the distant panorama of the blitzed city. A static water tank is in the foreground, one of many of the air raid precautions throughout the city, and has its sides painted in camouflage patterns.
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