



TOWN & TOWNSCAPE:

THE WORK & LIFE OF THOMAS SHARP

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Town & Townscape: The Work & Life of Thomas Sharp is funded
by the Arts and Humanities Research Council





Town and Townscape: The Work and Life of Thomas Sharp is a collaborative project between Newcastle University's Library Special Collections and School of Architecture and Planning and Landscape. It will make a major resource on the town planner and writer Thomas Sharp accessible for scholarship for the first time. The project is funded by The Arts and Humanities Research Council, AHRC.



Thomas Sharp

Thomas Sharp (1901-1978) was a key figure in town planning in the mid-twentieth century. The concepts he developed in his writings and plans have been of enduring significance and influence on thinking about planning and design for both practitioners and academics in the UK and beyond. One of his best known contributions was as a major influence on the development of ideas of townscape.

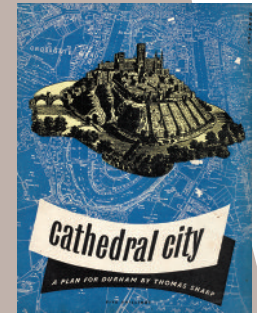
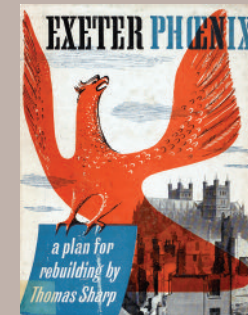
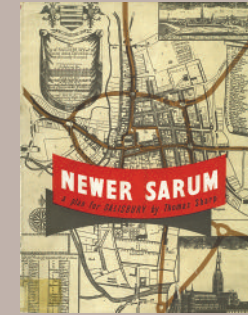
The mid-twentieth century was a period when public and professional interest in planning was at an all-time high. Sharp was a key figure in defining thinking about the forms that town and countryside should take; in reconciling existing and valued character with modernity, and; in making these arguments accessible. His book *Town Planning* is the most widely-read ever on the subject and followed earlier influential polemical works. The plans he produced in the 1940s, primarily for historic cities such as Oxford, Exeter and Durham, were also hugely influential.



The Collection

The major part of the collection was donated by Rachel Sharp (his widow) to Newcastle University and is a substantial repository of the personal papers and plans of Sharp.

- The principal elements of the collection are as follows: Files of information and correspondence on individual texts, including unpublished works
- Files of information and correspondence on individual plans. This includes, for example, work on historic cities, new villages, new towns and overseas commissions and competition entries
- Original plans for many commissions
- Extensive documentation on key planning cases where Sharp appeared as a witness at public inquiry
- Extensive books of press-cuttings on all of the above
- Typescript of an unpublished autobiography and manuscript autobiographical notes
- Typescripts of government information films, radio talks, lectures
- Documentation on unsuccessful commissions
- Miscellaneous personal correspondence
- Creative works of poetry, novels, radio plays etc. – largely unpublished.



The Project

The project will make a unique collection of his personal papers accessible through archival cataloguing and conservation. It will develop a web-site which will include the catalogue, selected digitised items, a biographical essay, an annotated bibliography of Sharp's published writings and plans and a finding aid for other publicly accessible Sharp material.

Cataloguing is being undertaken to international standards based in EAD2002 and ISAD/G with the support of Archives Hub, University of Manchester.

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VISUAL PLANNING AND URBANISM IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

13 - 15 September 2007 Newcastle upon Tyne

The early to mid-twentieth century was a time of intense debate over the future of cities and the form and appearance that they might take. In the UK the Garden City Movement, with a tendency towards lower densities and decentralisation, was an important influence. Internationally the radical reformation of the city was being promoted by Le Corbusier and others. Other radical models were promoted including ideas of linear cities or Frank Lloyd Wright's radical decentralisation of Broadacre City. In amongst these grand concepts we can discern a strand of more practical urbanism, modernist in flavour but historically informed, seeking to recover positive conceptions of the city and town after the perceived deprivations of the nineteenth century. One manifestation of this was the UK townscape movement, with its emphasis on pictorial composition.

This conference will consider some of the key ideas of visual planning and the urban of the period, with a particular focus on the advocates of visual and three-dimensional planning as a means of achieving a reformulated twentieth century urbanism.

The conference forms part of a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, "Town and Townscape: The Work and Life of Thomas Sharp". Thomas Sharp was a key figure in the town planning profession in the mid-twentieth century and a major influence on thought about planning and design and as such his work will be one of the key themes of the conference.

Call for papers

This will be a tightly focused conference, with no parallel sessions, on the themes set out above, and as such we will only have a limited number of presentations. However, we welcome paper proposals within the theme of the conference. If you are interested in giving a paper please email John Pendlebury j.r.pendlebury@ncl.ac.uk by 31 January 2007.

Further details can be found at
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/sharp/>

