

The 'Pevsner 50': Nikolaus Pevsner and the listing of modern buildings

by

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The 'Pevsner 50' became an informal label for the first group of buildings of between the wars to be placed on the Statutory List, generally believed to have been the sole choice of the eminent architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1901-1983). Welcomed at the time as a progressive step¹, the criteria were soon felt to be too narrow; further twentieth century listing that followed adopted different principles and the 'Pevsner 50' became embedded in a much larger and more disparate list. This essay examines the character of Pevsner's original selection and the thinking behind it. The list consisted almost entirely of Modern Movement buildings, chosen on a predominantly stylistic basis. Despite its limitations, it was of considerable importance as the first move toward evaluating which buildings of the recent past deserve protection and as a catalyst for the further study of the period between the wars.

Although the listing of twentieth-century buildings was announced in 1970, the story of the selection starts rather earlier, and to understand its background fully one needs to investigate the place which Pevsner had come to occupy in the field of twentieth century architectural interpretation. Already an established scholar in his native Germany, specialising in Mannerist and Baroque painting and architecture, Pevsner declared his interest in the twentieth century with his first books to be published in England, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936) and *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (1937). However neither of these grapple with the character of modernism of the 1920s and 1930s; *Enquiry* surveys the nature of manufacture and the artistic inadequacy of industrially produced artefacts, but the virtues of good modern design are implied rather than analysed, whereas *Pioneers* traces only certain aspects of the pre-history of modernism, stopping at 1914. A number of minor articles followed on subjects related to contemporary design,

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mostly published in the *Architectural Review*, but shortly before the war Pevsner became involved in a much more ambitious project, a special issue of the *Architectural Review* which was to be devoted entirely to British architecture of the twentieth century. An outline proposal for this emphasised that 'a revolution in architecture has taken place, due to the infiltration of 'modern' ideas and their adoption, consciously or unconsciously, by all kinds of architects'. The special issue, planned for December 1939, was to provide an analysis of the various styles, followed by a 'classified section' which would 'begin with 'modern' architecture as the style whose influence we are observing in all the others'. The outbreak of war prevented its realisation but essays drafted for the purpose survive in typescript among the Pevsner papers at the Getty Centre². They provide a remarkably detailed and dispassionate coverage of the earlier twentieth century, with sections on the legacy of the nineteenth century, on various strands of the Edwardian Imperial style, and on the development of the Modern Movement, stressing the variety of expression possible within its canon, with particular emphasis on the recent brick-faced buildings of the later 1930s which were seen as sympathetic to English architectural traditions. The objectives stated in the introduction were to provide 'a clearer vision of the Modern Movement in its architectural elements, and a clearer vision of the British national character in its architectural expression' so that 'it should not be impossible to arrive in the end at a vista towards a wholly British and wholly contemporary style of the future whose first examples are perhaps already in existence'.

The recent architectural progress that was to have been celebrated by the special issue was interrupted by the war and Pevsner became involved in other matters. By the 1960s, established in a teaching post at Birkbeck College, London, and lecturing as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge, he had become known for his ability to present a broader spectrum of interests, not only to academic audiences, but to a wider public, demonstrated by his best selling *Outline of European Architecture* (1942), his Reith lectures of 1955 published as *The Englishness of English Art* (1956), and the growing corpus of county volumes in *The Buildings of England* series, published by Penguin from 1951, whose compass embraced 'all ecclesiastical, public and domestic buildings of interest'... 'from prehistoric times to the present day'.³ The assumption that a general readership would (or should) be as interested in exploring architecture of the twentieth century as in investigating earlier periods was something of a novelty at the time, and here Pevsner could pursue his earlier interest in the contemporary scene.

The inclusion of recent architecture in *The Buildings of England* was emphasised by the chronologically arranged sequence of photographs gathered together in the centre of each book, which when possible ended with a twentieth century subject. In the earliest volumes these dated from the 1930s (then only 20 years distant), for significant post-war architecture was still thin on the ground. So the 1951 *Middlesex* and *Nottinghamshire* volumes ended with Charles Holden's Sudbury Town station and Owen Williams's Boots factory, and *Cambridgeshire* of 1954 with Gropius and Fry's Impington Village College. Although his appreciation of the clean uncluttered forms of such buildings was made clear, there were wider issues as

well. At Impington there is implicit sympathy for the social purpose of the village colleges, and a welcome for the aesthetic of placing modern buildings sensitively within an older picturesque landscape, which he saw as 'the pattern for much to come'.⁴ Holden's Sudbury Town and the other Piccadilly line stations are dealt with only briefly in *Middlesex*, an early volume which was austere in its explanations. The focus is firmly on aesthetic analysis: the stations are 'examples of how satisfying purely by careful detailing and good proportions such unpretentious buildings can be'.⁵ This is a more measured version of the ecstatic praise they had received in his draft pre-war essay for the *Architectural Review*: 'practical without any modern engineering romanticism, impressive but not fussy, self-certain but not boisterous, dignified but not overbearing – in short British in every respect' and 'amongst the highest achievement of modern British architecture, the best buildings of their kind in Europe and worthy to be placed side by side with the best of London brick houses of about 1700'.⁶ The stations were the only pre-war British buildings to be included in the *Outline of European Architecture*.⁷ Here he emphasises another factor; the significance of the patronage of Frank Pick, managing director of the London bus and underground companies, described as 'the prototype of the twentieth century patron'. It is followed by Pevsner's vision of this democratic (but not wholly egalitarian) century where 'the new Maecenas is an administrator, a worker himself, with a house not much bigger than yours and mine, a cottage in the country, and a car far from spectacular'.⁸ Other examples of individual patronage of modern architecture were also singled out: the De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill, by Mendelsohn and Chermayeff, illustrated in *Sussex*, was described as 'the bold move of an enlightened client',⁹ while the arrival of the modern style for the school buildings and houses built for the Elmhursts at Dartington was seen as 'a symbol of enlightened internationalism'... 'concrete plastered white, and as appropriate to Devon as they would be to California or the river Hudson'.¹⁰ The Headmaster's House is illustrated in *South Devon*, but there is a revealing fudge over the chronology: in the caption the house is described as 'Modern Architecture' and dated c. 1935. It follows 'Victorian and Post-Victorian: Cockington, the Drum Inn, by Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1934'. Picturesque thatch is seen to give way to the crisp geometry of modernism. In fact the two contrasting developments appear to have taken place more or less simultaneously, with Dartington slightly in the lead, as William Lescaze's Headmaster's house dates from 1931.¹¹ The continuation of a pluralism of styles in the 1930s after the advent of modernism was something which Pevsner, with his belief in the historical progression of styles, was reluctant to accept. It could however have a certain curiosity interest, and his wry comment on Cockington is characteristic: 'a standard afternoon trip for visitors to Torquay, and there is complete harmony between the sight-seeing townsman, the cottages ready to be admired and the DRUM INN by Lutyens, 1934. This has very tall thatched roofs, but is otherwise in its detail not Devonian'.¹²

In the 1950s the inclusion of twentieth century buildings in *The Buildings of England* provided the occasional diversion for the reader, but the subject that attracted more public attention was the rehabilitation of the hitherto generally

reviled Victorian period, as Pevsner became increasingly interested in the architecture of the nineteenth century. The subject was explored not only in *The Buildings of England*, but in articles in the *Architectural Review* and in his radio talks for the general public.¹³ Concern for the fate of Victorian buildings in the face of neglect or post-war redevelopment transformed the academic scholar into a campaigner and a founding member of the Victorian Society. So it was as a Victorian expert that Pevsner was invited in April 1959, together with John Brandon-Jones and Mark Girouard, to join a new subcommittee of the advisory committee to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on Buildings of Special or Historic Interest, then chaired by Lord Holford, which was to have the role of advising on the listing of Victorian architecture. By August Pevsner had proved his worth by submitting a list of London buildings for consideration, and a year later he was invited to join the full committee.¹⁴ Progress in expanding the scope of listing to include important nineteenth century examples was at first gradual, owing to lack of interest by the Ministry and a shortage of inspectors, although a more sympathetic government speeded the pace of change in the later 1960s.¹⁵

With hindsight it may seem obvious that as time passed, the boundaries of listing were likely to continue to move forward, but in the early 1960s listing of nineteenth century buildings was considered daring enough, and twentieth-century architecture was still beyond the pale as far as the government and some members of the committee were concerned. The committee nevertheless began to make a few hesitant suggestions. The first was the radical modern icon of the Isokon flats of 1934 in Lawn Road, Hampstead, proposed in April 1961 by Sir John Summerson on behalf of friends of the architect, Wells Coates. There is no evidence that Pevsner played a role in this, but the committee agreed that while the building was likely to be listable when the period became eligible, it would be premature to single it out at present.¹⁶ At the October meeting it was Pevsner who drew attention to the threat to the early twentieth century Hampstead Garden Suburb, then in urgent need of protection after it had been acquired by a property developer; this resulted in a survey and the listing at grade II of the principal buildings. A more debatable case came up in December 1961, when the pioneering private house, High and Over, Amersham of 1929-31 by Amyas Connell, was proposed for listing by Buckinghamshire County Council because of threatened redevelopment.¹⁷ As justification there was a reference to Pevsner's comments on Connell and Ward's houses at Amersham in the *Buckinghamshire* volume published in 1960: 'very valuable documents of the courage and boldness of a client and his architects',¹⁸ an illuminating example of how the influence of *The Buildings of England* was beginning to make itself felt. The committee was divided, on principle reluctant to recommend the work of living architects, and decided against listing, although Pevsner supported the secretary's view that threatened buildings might constitute a special case, arguing that 'if a modern building of architectural significance were threatened it would sometimes be better to give it the benefit of the doubt rather than to decide that it was of great value twenty years after it had gone'.¹⁹ The warning was salutary; even relatively recent buildings were vulnerable (in 1960 High and Over was only

thirty years old), and the logical approach might be to extend the listing process to include them.

At the time there were more urgent conservation priorities to preoccupy Pevsner in his role as Chairman of the Victorian Society. The early 1960s was the time of many great conservation battles, among them the hard-fought campaigns to save the Euston Arch and the Coal Exchange (both demolished in 1962), the more successful efforts to protect the Victorian suburb of Bedford Park, and the continuing debate over the future of St Pancras Station (eventually listed Grade I in 1967). But Pevsner had an extraordinary ability to deal with many subjects simultaneously. At the same time he was reviewing his approach to the development of twentieth century architecture. His pre-war philosophy had taken for granted the spread of the type of modernism espoused by the Bauhaus, 'the style of our time', an architecture of service appropriate for a democratic society, which he anticipated would continue as the right and proper style of the post-war era. These were the types of buildings which had been selected as the final, triumphant illustrations in the *Buildings of England* volumes. But in 1961 he acknowledged that the modern movement, internationally, not just in Britain, was not developing in the way he had anticipated. Some early post-war buildings had seemed promising. The *Buildings of England* had described with enthusiasm, and illustrated, for example, the Royal Festival Hall,²⁰ work by Yorke, Rosenberg & Mardall on the Team Valley Industrial Estate, Gateshead,²¹ and a Yorkshire house by Peter Womersley.²² The Roehampton flats of the LCC built in the 1950s, had seemed to him a vindication of his hopes for the integration of modern architecture and the picturesque with its tall flats in spacious parkland.²³ But later buildings demonstrated trends which he found disturbing, as he acknowledged in his article of 1961, 'The Return to Historicism',²⁴ and which he discussed for a wider public in two radio talks 'Architecture in our Time' published in *The Listener* in 1966-7.²⁵ Here he frankly acknowledged how when he wrote *Pioneers* (1936) 'what I thought I described was the coming of a millenium'; he now recognised both that it had been a mistake to dismiss post World War One Expressionism as a brief and insignificant episode, and that post World War Two architecture was exhibiting similar and to him, alarming trends, in its interest in 'self expression of the artist-architect, a fervent avoidance of lightness, ... elegance ... and anything that could be accounted for purely rationally, and forms of overpowering – what shall I say – yes, brutality'. He did not personally like these trends but as a historian he acknowledged their existence, recognising that such buildings were in 'the legitimate style of the 1950s and 1960s'. His broader view of twentieth-century developments now led him to rewrite parts of the last section of his *Outline of European Architecture*, and to acknowledge a wider range of styles current in the earlier twentieth century. This led eventually to the publication in 1971 of *The Anti-rationalists*, a book of essays, which he edited together with J. M. Richards.²⁶ The *Buildings of England* volumes of the later 1960s reveal his doubts about aspects of the contemporary architectural scene, most clearly expressed in the comments on recent architecture in the revision of *Cambridgeshire*, where he described James Stirling's History Faculty Library of 1964 as 'anti-architecture' and 'actively ugly'.²⁷

In the confusion of the changing standards of the 1960s those more straightforward early examples of the modern movement must have seemed all the more valuable.

The opportunity to reopen the question of twentieth-century listing took place against the background of the new energy and enthusiasm brought through the election of a Labour Government.²⁸ Under the sympathetic direction of Richard Crossman, Secretary of State for Environment from 1964 and the active intervention of Lord Kennet, Parliamentary Secretary from 1966, a more unified and proactive approach to conservation developed, drawing in the Historic Buildings Council, previously responsible to a different department. The listing committee, retaining the same membership, became a subcommittee of the HBC in 1966.²⁹ As attention focused on the urgent need to rescue historic towns from unsympathetic redevelopment, the limitations of current statutory protection were recognised. Much of the new energy was directed toward developing the concept of conservation areas, but listing itself was viewed more positively, a resurvey of the existing lists was planned, and the staff of the listing branch increased.³⁰ The subject of twentieth-century listing was introduced at a meeting on 6 March 1967 and a paper by the secretary, B. D. Ponsford, with arguments for and against, was discussed on 15 May.³¹ The suggestion was that fifty to 100 buildings dating from between 1914 and 1939 might deserve consideration, on the grounds that 'architectural and historic interest does not stop at 1914', that buildings of this period were threatened, and that the task would be small. Arguments against were more numerous, questioning the need for such action as any threats could be dealt with by spotlisting, and expressing doubt whether objective assessment was possible for recent architecture. The minutes record characteristic reactions by the two most esteemed experts. Summerson opposed the proposal on the grounds that 'the quality of a building could only be properly judged from the viewpoint of an age based on a different technology and a different economy'.³² Pevsner took an opposite view, stressing the threats, and cutting through the argument about the lack of investigators qualified to do the job, by offering to do it himself. He felt that there would be no difficulty in drawing up a list of about fifty to 100 buildings which would generally be accepted as worthy of listing. He explained he would be working during the summer on a project from which he could easily produce a preliminary list as a by product.' Holford as chairman opted for the compromise of accepting Pevsner's offer but deferring a decision on whether the 'tentative list' to be produced would be recommended for listing or only circulated for guidance to local authorities.

The project to which Pevsner referred was an article on the period 1924-34 in a special issue of the German periodical *Bauen+Wohnen* devoted to twentieth-century English architecture, which gave him cause to scour the earlier twentieth-century numbers of the *Architectural Review*. Pevsner duly produced his list in December; Lord Kennet attended a meeting on 11 March 1968, which did not object to the inclusion of the work of living architects and welcomed the prospect of the new list.³³ Further pressure was exerted by a question in the House of Lords from Baroness Llewelyn Davies (28 March 1968). The list was considered item by item at the meeting of 11 June and a revised list circulated for the July and

September meetings. The final list was agreed by the committee in September 1968, although the official listing was not announced until February 1970, near the end of the Labour government's reign.

So what were included in the so-called 'Pevsner 50'? Pevsner's original list had three categories – his A list with twenty-three, a B list labelled 'doubtful' with twelve, and a C list described as 'more doubtful' with six, a total of only thirty-eight (see Appendix). The final list, after committee tweaking, had forty-eight entries. Pevsner's list has no comments, simply the names of the buildings, the architects, and a reference to the relevant contemporary article, almost all from the *Architectural Review*. Most of them were subjects which he had already assessed in print, in *The Buildings of England* or elsewhere, but the selection has some surprises. Characteristically, the Pevsner A list is chronological. It starts with a few precursors: Clough Williams Ellis at Bishop's Stortford, Burnet's Adelaide House, City of London, and Behrens New Ways Northampton, then, together with High and Over, comes the other very different landmark of 1929, Charles Holden's London Transport Headquarters at No. 55 Broadway. On the final list this is supplemented by a selection of the smaller underground stations which Pevsner admired so much. Why did he initially prefer No. 55 Broadway? Probably because of the significance of its controversially daringly modern sculpture, by Epstein, Moore, and others (as is suggested by the note 'including sculpture'). It would be a caricature to think that Pevsner was only keen on ruthlessly plain buildings. His interest in other arts is also shown by the next suggestion on his original list, which is a rather curious mistake, because it refers to the mural paintings by Eric Ravilious and Edward Bawden at Morley College, implying that he was unaware that these had been destroyed in the war. Early 'white' buildings, and the De La Warr pavilion were obvious candidates, but commercial and industrial landmarks such as Boots and the Daily Express were also included, as was Peter Jones (originally on the B list). The variety of all these makes the point he had wanted to stress in the unpublished *Architectural Review* issue; that the modern style need not be repetitive or monotonous. The wayward inventiveness of the Russian émigré Berthold Lubetkin, working with the group of architects known as Tecton, clearly intrigued him, as can be seen from his tongue-in-cheek comments on Highpoint 2 in *London except the Cities of London and Westminster*:³⁴ 'the porch at Number 2 is unmistakably Lubetkin... the idea of using reproductions of two of the Erechtheum caryatids is significant. It is a case of surrealism in architecture, that is of the familiar made fantastic by a surprise setting. It is a most sophisticated effect particularly since even spatially the figures are deprived of their original meaning. Instead of all turning one way, one of them seems to have decided on an independant Right Turn'. From the end of the 1930s, as well as Impington and Easton & Robertson's New River waterworks laboratories in Finsbury, there is James & Pierce's Norwich City Hall, all representing the late 1930s interest in brick surfaces. Pevsner had described Norwich Town Hall in 1962 as 'likely to go down in history as the foremost English public building of between the wars'.³⁵ On private houses both Pevsner's selection and the committee's decisions appear more arbitrary. Several of Pevsner's suggestions were rejected by the

committee, including Patrick Gwynne's house (The Homewood) at Esher, described in *The Buildings of England* as 'one of the best private houses in the modern style built in England between the two wars'.³⁶ A committee addition was Goldfinger's Willow Road terrace, Hampstead, a building with which Pevsner was certainly familiar, and had defended with unusual heat in *London except*: 'Here is the contemporary style in an uncompromising form, yet by the use of brick and by sheer scale the terrace goes infinitely better with the Georgian past of Hampstead than anything Victorian'.³⁷ (The echoes of the local conservationists' objections were still reverberating after the war.) But he did not originally include it, perhaps because he considered it important as townscape rather than as an individual building. Nor was social housing included on any of the lists.

Almost all of the A list were accepted; so was much of his B list including Goodhart-Rendel's decorative Hay's Wharf warehouse (1932), and Emberton's nautically inspired Royal Corinthian Yacht Club at Burnham on Crouch (1930). The Royal Institute of British Architects Headquarters of 1933 was also included, rescued (perhaps by others) from the 'very doubtful' C list. Pevsner's suggestion of Battersea Power Station was rejected, although another work by Giles Scott was substituted, the classical Chester Place house in Paddington (annotated in the committee papers as 'not known to NP'), an outsider compared with the eleven other houses all in a modernist style.

Compared with some earlier publications on interwar buildings (for example Country Life's *Recent English Architecture 1920-40* (1947), the modernist bias of Pevsner's list could hardly be denied. No criteria were stated – in contrast to the principles advocated for Victorian buildings at the same time.³⁸ Pevsner's list offered variety, but it was a selection made on aesthetic or stylistic grounds, rather than one inspired by novelty of building type. It concentrated on 'firsts', paying rather less attention to the brick-faced buildings of the late 1930s than had the draft essay for the *Architectural Review*. And what of alternative styles? Here one must note what Pevsner wrote at the bottom of his initial list: 'This list leaves out the generation of Lutyens, Sir G.G. Scott, Dawber, Newton even Reilly. But we must watch that we don't neglect it in the end. Also that we don't leave out 1901-14 i.e. Cresswell, Reilly, Heals, Kodak and of course the columnar ones of Sir F. Burnet. Finally I have not listed churches. If meant to be included I can provide Velarde, Cachemaille-Day et alios'. So he saw this only as a beginning of a more comprehensive approach to listing that would provide representative coverage of the earlier phases of the twentieth century. His first objective, however, was to protect the buildings that he considered most important and vulnerable, buildings which he had found inspiring when he first came to England and had been shocked to find how old fashioned the country was in artistic and architectural matters.³⁹ It was these to which he felt it important to draw attention, at a time when the younger architects of the 1960s were looking to different sources of inspiration. At the request of the listing committee Pevsner also provided a list of buildings up to 1924, but it was decided not to give them special treatment because it was felt these more traditional buildings would be listed anyway as different areas were covered in the

Resurvey by the Listing Inspectors, as indeed came generally to be the case.

The aftermath of the 'Pevsner 50' was complicated and the confused period of 1970-80 cannot be examined in detail here. Growing interest in the period between the wars culminated in the foundation of the Thirties Society in 1979. Already by the time listing was announced in 1970 there were rival factions demanding attention for different types of interwar buildings. Pevsner's focus on the modernists inevitably spurred on protagonists demanding similar treatment for alternative styles and for building types hitherto not considered eligible. Among these were cinemas, discussed in 1970 by the listing committee, as a result of suggestions by the Council of Industrial Design.⁴⁰ The committee concluded somewhat grudgingly that 'perhaps the work of the outstanding cinema architects could be investigated'.⁴¹ Other proposals for listing emerged individually, such as the Manchester Daily Express building, requested by the City Council, (agreed 1 March 1971) and the Stratford Memorial Theatre, proposed by the local CPRE (agreed 3 May 1971). Some of the suggestions were totally at variance with the spirit of Pevsner's lists: at the meeting of 27 November 1972 the committee advised that the Tudor parts of Liberty's shop in Regent Street were 'a clever imitation and merited inclusion', and on 29 August 1974 the Hoover building in west London was recommended 'because of the importance of the building in relation to the history of architecture in the 1930s'. This was the building which had been dismissed by Pevsner twenty years earlier as 'perhaps the most offensive of the modernistic atrocities along this road of typical by-pass factories'.⁴² Revision of the Lists for different areas also produced twentieth-century additions, particularly so in the case of Westminster. Further suggestions came via the RIBA, whose special London committee drew up a list in response to the Greater London Development Plan of 1969. Their selection aimed at a balanced cross section of the styles current between the wars. It included some of the original Pevsner choices rejected by the Listing committee, but also gave prominence to the classical tradition and the work of such firms as Mewès and Davis. The committee's publication, *The Battle of Styles*, was produced to coincide with Architectural Heritage Year in 1975. But by then government acceptance of committee recommendations was reluctant and official attitudes to listing were unenthusiastic as increasing numbers of uncoordinated proposals continued to flow in. On 31 July 1975 the committee agreed to postpone discussion of further twentieth century recommendations. Spotlisting was proving unpopular, particularly with commercial owners, and during the later 1970s the government responded by reducing the staff available to carry out listing.⁴³

Pevsner, by this time in his mid seventies, had continued to attend the committee meetings fairly regularly. In early 1976 he proposed a new approach in a letter to Jennifer Jenkins, chair of the Historic Buildings Council.⁴⁴ His comments are revealing, and show that just he had come to accept in the 1960s that the earlier twentieth century history of European architecture was more complex than he had previously realised, he now acknowledged, as an objective historian, that a more inclusive approach to listing of buildings from between the wars was valid, even if it did not accord with his personal preferences. Referring to his original list

he comments that it

‘consisted entirely of what I call ‘serious’ buildings. John Summerson, I think, did not quite like that term. What I meant was that they were designed with a sense of responsibility, and that there was nothing gimmicky, nothing sensational, and nothing phantastical about them. However I have to admit that buildings to which I would apply these adjectives are also part of history and the most characteristic of them ought to be listed. But which are they? And how many ought to be listed? We have already had a cinema campaign and now some people want to include the Hoover factory’.

His suggestion was to invite new lists of fifty, covering all types of buildings, from two outsiders, Dennis Sharp whose name had already been mentioned by the committee, and Tim Benton of the Open University. This was put in hand, although the results were still being awaited in November 1979, and when they were finally submitted, were overtaken by events.⁴⁵ By late 1979 it was recognised that there was a need to provide a new start. This task was undertaken by the Assistant Chief Inspector Brian Anthony. His proposals, discussed by the committee in March and July 1980, offered the options of analysing the period by style, by building type and by principal architects. The strategy adopted was to categorise by building type. This was used to bring order to the accumulating proposals coming from a variety of sources, which were presented in batches to special meetings of the Historic Buildings Council, as a check to ensure that the buildings were still standing and had not been severely altered.⁴⁶ But it was the notorious demolition of the Firestone factory over the August Bank Holiday weekend 1981 just before it was to be listed that changed government attitudes and resulted in an unexpected but much needed new momentum to the listing programme, inaugurated by Michael Heseltine. A number of pending interwar proposals were listed immediately (including the Hoover factory and Battersea Power Station) and an Accelerated Resurvey concentrating on outstanding rural areas was announced, with ten new Listing Inspectors appointed in 1982.⁴⁷

Developments after 1980 are another story, which can only be touched on briefly here. Pevsner died in 1983, but his legacy remained. In the Accelerated Resurvey the ‘Pevsner 50’ and the subsequent additional interwar lists prepared in the 1970s (a total of c.150 buildings), were used as guiding exemplars for further proposals, although no precise criteria were defined. The reorganisation of the interwar subjects by building types diluted the original emphasis on style that had dominated the original ‘Pevsner 50’, and was to set the pattern for the future, which was to include the expansion of listing to cover the period after the Second World War. After an unsatisfactory episode in 1987, when seventy initial post-war proposals were arbitrarily pruned by the Department to eighteen, funding was made available for a research programme, on which work began in 1992. The principle of selecting exemplars continued, but with criteria more clearly established. The Accelerated Resurvey had demonstrated the potential interest of a very wide range of buildings, but had also revealed the drawbacks of rapid geographically based investigation with no time for comparative study.⁴⁸ The post-war listing research was not carried out by areas, but was based on building types, an approach which was inspiring

increasing interest. It is appropriate to end by noting that Pevsner himself had been in the forefront of such research, with his Mellon lectures of 1970, published as *A History of Buildings Types* in 1976, a study of global breadth, but whose lessons could equally be applied to the narrower scope of England in the second half of the twentieth century.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. 'This splendid news' announced in Parliament on 3 February 1970 was reported in the *Architects' Journal* of 11 Feb 1970, 341.
2. Pevsner archive, Box 18, Special Collections, the Getty Centre for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles, California.
3. Description on back covers of the first volumes.
4. Pevsner, N., *Cambridgeshire*, 1954, 332. In his Gold Medal speech, *JRIBA*, August 1967, 318, Pevsner attributed his interest in this subject to the influence of H.de C. Hastings, his fellow editor on the *Architectural Review*. The merits of combining modern architecture with the picturesque were further explored in Pevsner, N., Roehampton, housing and the picturesque tradition, *Architectural Review*, July 1959.
5. Pevsner N., *Middlesex* (1951) 151.
6. Pevsner Archive, Getty Special Collection, Box 18.
7. Pevsner N., *An Outline of European Architecture*, 1942, 145-6.
8. Pevsner, N., *Outline*, 1942, 145. See also N. Pevsner, Patient Progress One; Frank Pick *Architectural Review*, XCII, 1942, reprinted in N. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, vol 2; 1968, 190-209 The engaging if naïvely optimistic picture of the ideal patron published in 1942, was replaced by a sadly more realistic appraisal in the Jubilee edition of the *Outline* in 1960: 'cases where a committee is headed by a man who is a born patron and in addition has the ability to convince and carry away a stodgy committee are extremely rare. Frank Pick's was such a case.'
9. Nairn, I and Pevsner, N., *Sussex*, 1965, 417, plate 62b. The East Sussex section, including Bexhill is by Pevsner.
10. Pevsner N., *South Devon*, 1952, 100-101.
11. Like some other early modern buildings in England, the Headmaster's House was built of brick, plastered, not concrete; details of construction were always less significant to Pevsner than visual effect. See Gould, J., Architecture in Devon, 1910-1958, in S. Smiles (ed.), *Going Modern and Being British, Art, Architecture and Design in Devon c. 1910-1960*, Exeter 1998, 22-24.
12. Pevsner, N., *South Devon*, 1951, 84.
13. See Rosso, M., *La storia utile, patrimonio e modernità nel lavoro di John Summerson e Nikolaus Pevsner: Londra 1928-1955*, 2001, 192-3.
14. The Committee to advise the Ministry of Town and Country Planning on listing had been set up in 1945. Members in 1959 included G.H. Chettle, W.A. Eden, V.H. Galbraith, W.G. Hoskins,

- Marshall Sisson, A.R. Wagner, Lord Euston, Sir John Summerson and G.F. Webb, with S.J. Garton Chief Investigator, and Anthony Dale, Deputy Chief Investigator. The subcommittee to advise on Victorian buildings was agreed at the 89th meeting, 14 April 1959, when Summerson proposed the cooption of outside experts. Its first meeting took place on 22 June 1959. Pevsner was invited to join the full committee in August 1960. *Committee minutes, English Heritage archive.*
15. On the expanding criteria for listing, see Delafons, J., *Politics and Preservation, a policy history of the built heritage, 1882-1996*, 1997, ch.10.
 16. His assessment of the building is expressed in *London except the Cities of London and Westminster* (1952), 200: 'a milestone in the introduction of the modern idiom into London'... 'a forbidding face toward the street.... all in a spirit of revolution, unaccommodating and direct to the verge of brutality'.
 17. Listing Subcommittee minutes, 4 December 1961.
 18. Pevsner, N., *Buckinghamshire*, 1960, 50.
 19. Listing Subcommittee minutes, 4 December 1961.
 20. Pevsner, N., *London except the Cities of London and Westminster*, 1951 275-6, plate 64.
 21. Pevsner, N., *County Durham*, 1953.
 22. Pevsner, N., *Northumberland*, 1957.
 23. see note 5.
 24. The Return of Historicism, *J. Royal Inst. of British Architects*, 3rd ser LXVIII, 1961; reprinted in N. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, vol 2; 1968, 240-259.
 25. Pevsner, N., Architecture in our time, *The Listener*, Dec. 29 1966, Jan. 5 1967.
 26. Richards, J.M. and Pevsner, N., (eds.), *The Anti-Rationalists*, 1973.
 27. Pevsner, N., *Cambridgeshire*, 2nd ed. 1970, 217.
 28. Kennet, W. *Preservation*, 1972 ch, II; Delafons, op. cit, (note 16) ch.11.
 29. Crossman's responsibilities covered Housing and Local Government, Transport, and the Ministry of Works. The Historic Buildings Council had been set up in 1953. It had originally advised the Ministry of Works, later the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on grants to historic buildings. The principal aim had been to preserve country houses, but the instruction to the committee to assist 'outstanding' buildings made it possible for grant aid to be extended to other types of buildings, a development which gathered pace in the 1960s. The membership overlapped with the listing committee, and included Holford, Summerson, Euston and Pevsner. See H.M. Colvin, The Historic Buildings Council and the Country House, *The Twentieth Century House*, (Rewley House conference papers), 2002.
 30. On the changes, often achieved in the face of civil service opposition, see Crossman, R., *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* vol I, 1964-6, 192, 297, 552, 623. For the results see Robertson M. et al., Listed Buildings, the National Resurvey of England, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, 37, 1993, 24-5.
 31. HBC, Committee on buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest, minutes 15 May 1967.
 32. On Summerson's ambivalent approach to preservation see Rosso, M, *La storia utile, patrimonio e modernità nel lavoro di John Summerson e Nikolaus Pevsner: Londra 1928-1955*, 2001.
 33. Committee minutes 11 March 1968. Summerson did not attend this meeting.
 34. Pevsner, N., *London except the Cities of London and Westminster*, 1952, 379.
 35. Pevsner, N., *North East Norfolk and Norwich*, 1962, 259-60.
 36. Nairn, I. and Pevsner, N., *Surrey* 1962, 142. (the description is by Pevsner).
 37. N.Pevsner, *London except the Cities of London and Westminster*, 1952, 197.
 38. The Victorian Society's recommendations, circulated to the Listing committee in July 1968, emphasised 'special value within special types, whether for architectural reasons.. or as illustrative of social and economic history, innovation or virtuosity in technical fields, historical associations, and group value'. Listing committee minutes 15 July 1968.
 39. Pevsner's article in *Bauen+Wohnen* 1967 starts 'when I moved from Germany to England in 1933 I found building there very reactionary'.
 40. Listing Committee minutes 6 April 1970.
 41. Listing Committee minutes 21 February 1972. The first result of this was the listing at Grade

II* of two London examples, the New Victoria and the Granada Tooting, following a report by David Atwell of the GLC. Continuing pressure from the Cinema Theatre Association, founded 1967, ensured that 29 cinemas in England had been listed by July 1981 (D. Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, 1981, appendix 1).

42. Pevsner, N., *Middlesex*, 1951, 130.
43. Robertson, M. et al, 29 (note 30).
44. Letter from Pevsner to Jennifer Jenkins dated 15 March 1976; copy circulated with Listing Committee papers.
45. Listing Committee Minutes 29 November 1979. Tim Benton delayed handing in his list until after the 1930s exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in 1980 (pers. com.).
46. Brian Anthony, (pers. com.); also Brian Anthony in discussion at Thirties Society conference, November 28 1980; *Thirties Society Journal*, no.1, 1980, 25-6.
47. Robertson et al, 1993, 29,90 (see note 30 above), Saunders, M., *The Inter-war Listings, The Thirties Society Journal* 1981, No. 2, 1-2.
48. Brunskill, R.B., in Robertson et al, 1993, 75-8.

APPENDIX

Pevsner's original lists of 1967. Buildings marked * were agreed by the listing committee in 1968. Buildings added by the committee are listed at the end.

LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST 1918-39

A LIST

Burnet & Dick	Wallace Scott Tayloring Inst.	Glasgow	AR LI 1922
C. Williams Ellis	* Bishops Stortford Memorial Hall		AR LII 1922
Burnet & Tait	* Adelaide House	London	AR LVII 1925
Behrens	* New Ways	Northampton	AR LX 1926
Tait	* Houses, Silver End		AR 1928
Easton & Robertson	* Horticultural Hall	London	AR LXV 1929
Connell	* High and Over 1929	Amersham	AAJ LXXII 1956
Holden	* Underground Building (including sculpture)		AR LXXVI 1929
Ravilious & Bawden	Paintings	Morley College London	AR LXXVII 1930
Connell	* New Farm	Grayswood, Surrey	AAJ LXXXII 1956
Hill	House	North Foreland	AR LXXXI 1932
Ellis & Clark	* Daily Express	London	AR LXXXII 1932
O. Williams	* Boots'	Beeston, (Nottingham)	AR LXXXII 1932
Tecton	* Zoo	London	AR LXXXIII 1933
Coates	* Lawn Road Flats	London	AR LXXXVI 1934
Lubetkin & Tecton	* Highpoint I & II	London	AR LXXXIX 1936
Gibberd	Flats, Streatham Hill	London	AR LXXXIX 1936
Emberton	* Simpson's	London	AR LXXXIX 1936
Mendelsohn	* De La Warr Pavilion	Bexhill	AR LXXX 1936
Fry	* House, Frogmal Way	London	AR LXXX 1936
Gropius & Fry	* Two houses,		
Mendelsohn & Chermayeff	* Church Rd Chelsea	London	AR LXXX 1936

McGrath	Villa	Chertsey	AR LXXXII 1937
Tecton	* Dudley Zoo	Dudley	AR LXXXII 1937
James & Pearce	* City Hall	Norwich	AR LXXXIV 1938
Tecton	* Finsbury Health Centre	London	AR LXXXV 1939
Yorke & Breuer	* House	Angmering	AR LXXXV 1939
Yorke & Breuer	House	Lee on Solent	AR LXXXV 1939
Stanley Hall & Easton & Robertson	* Water Board Laboratories, Rosebery Ave	London	AR LXXXV 1939
S. Chermayeff	* House	Halland	AR LXXXV 1939
W. Gropius & M. Fry	* Village College	Impington	AR LXXXVI 1939

B LIST (DOUBTFUL)

Emberton	Olympia	London	AR LXVII 1930
Emberton	* Club, Burnham	Burnham on Crouch	AR LXVII 1930 LXXII 1932
Etchells & Welch	* Crawford's Holborn	London	AR LXIX 1931
Goodhart-Rendel	* Hay's Wharf	London	AR LXXI 1932
Tait & Lorne	Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt Park	London	AR LXXIV 1933
Howe & Lescaze	* House	Dartington	AR LXXV 1934
D. Lasdun	House, Newton Road, Paddington	London	AR LXXXV 1939
W. Coates	Flats, Princes Gate	London	AR LXXXV 1939
O. Hill	House, Redington Rd, Hampstead	London	AR LXXXV 1939
F. Lorne (Sir J. Burnet Tait & Lorne)	St Dunstan's House	Brighton	AR LXXXV 1939
W. Crabtree, Slater & Moberly & C. H. Reilly	* Peter Jones	London	AR LXXIX 1936
P. Gwynne & W. Coates	House	Esher	AR LXXXVI 1939

C LIST (MORE DOUBTFUL)

Yorke	Villas		
Chermayeff	House, Sussex		
Wornum	* RIBA		AR LXXXVI
W. G. Newton	* Science block, Marlborough		AR LXXIV
Hill	Midland Hotel, Morecambe		AR LXXIV
Scott	Power Station, Battersea		AR LXXV

BUILDINGS ADDED BY THE COMMITTEE TO PEVSNER'S LIST

Holden	Piccadilly line Sudbury Town 1930-1 (the first and W of London) Arnos Grove 1932-4) Southgate (with shopping) or Enfield West (NE of London)	All in	AR XCII 1942
D. Clarke Hall	School 1937-8?	Richmond, Yorks	
Giles Scott	House, Chester Place	London	(not known by NP)