8

Building Jerusalem: the Simons' role in housing reform and town planning

Stephen V. Ward and Martin Dodge

> Manchester is a huge overgrown village, built according to no definite plan. … The interests and convenience of individual manufacturers and owners of property has determined the growth of the town and the manner of that growth, while the comfort, health and happiness of the inhabitants have not been considered … Every advantage has been sacrificed to the getting of money.[1]

Great concern for the comfort, health and happiness of Manchester's people was shown by Emily, Henry, Shena and Ernest Simon. The energetic and innovative public work to improve physical conditions in the city through housing reform and town planning by these two generations of the Simon family is considered in this chapter. As the 'shock city' of the industrial age, Manchester posed many challenges and all four Simons actively sought practical solutions to reduce pollution, overcrowding, lack of open space, widespread ill-health and insanitary homes.[2] Whilst Ernest's work was most prominent, we consider the largely unexamined earlier work of Henry and Emily, before examining Shena's concern around housing in regard to the development of Wythenshawe. While the main focus is on Manchester, their work reflects wider reform trends, from the late Victorian beginnings of social housing with small-scale worker tenement schemes, to the Edwardian garden suburb movement and then the inter-war push for large municipal housing estates.

Ernest's public work, firstly locally and then nationally, in housing policy and planning from the 1920s was most extensive. He became an acknowledged expert in these fields; he was awarded his knighthood in 1932 and peerage in 1947 partly for this reason. However, space does not allow a detailed examination of Ernest's Manchester work.[3] Instead, we shine a light on a lesser-known aspect of his career to show how he developed his wider thinking about planning over the later 1930s and

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8.1 Dense Victorian terraced housing around St Mary's Church in Hulme, an inner neighbourhood of Manchester (1920s). Source: MCL ref. m67728.

early 1940s. We examine his research trips to the Soviet Union, the Nordic countries, Switzerland and the USA, and demonstrate how, during the Second World War, he drew on this international learning to propose how to rebuild Britain according to a definite plan.[4]

Henry Simon and the Manchester Labourers' Dwellings Company

In late Victorian Britain, the extent, visibility and dire health consequences of unplanned insanitary housing led to many small-scale 'model' tenement schemes being built for the poor. Medical Officers of Health, newly appointed by city authorities at this time, began documenting the problems but were unable to take large-scale remedial action beyond closing and demolishing the most squalid back-to-back courts and cellar dwellings.[5] Despite new sanitary legislation, many politicians did not want councils building new accommodation themselves, seeing housing as the private market's domain. Instead, numerous charitable initiatives by philanthropists and industrialists in this period provided decent affordable housing for 'workers', including in Manchester and Salford.[6]

Henry Simon was deeply involved in one such housing initiative, leading the formation in 1891 of the Manchester Labourers' Dwellings

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Company and serving for five years as its chairman. The company's primary motive clearly reflected Henry's personal outlook as it sought to support the 'less favoured portion of the community, and not the return of large remuneration upon the outlay, as it is intended to afford the very poorest the opportunity of living under healthy conditions without loss of self-respect and independence'.[7] The company issued 4,000 shares at £5 each, aiming through rental income to be a self-sustaining enterprise and, ultimately, make a modest return of 4 per cent on capital to shareholders.

The company's first scheme, announced in March 1891, involved acquiring and converting a large disused cotton mill into a basic but sanitary tenement, subsequently named Jersey Street Dwellings. The mill adjoined the Rochdale Canal in Ancoats, a dense industrial area in central Manchester.[8] Henry would have known the conditions in the area as the first flour mill where he successfully installed his roller milling machinery in 1878 was nearby.

The six-storey mill building was altered to create 149 separate small, mostly two-room, dwellings. New towers were added at both ends of the building, providing open staircases and shared toilets for each floor. Access to individual dwellings was from newly added external metal balconies; these were divided in the middle because, it was claimed, 'in the case of an [disease] outbreak of any kind it would be possible to isolate one part of the building from another'.[9] Existing adjacent storage sheds were converted to house bathrooms, a laundry and space for a small co-op shop and two club rooms. The outdoor quadrangle, covered in cinders, was made into a children's playground (Figure 8.2). Rents ranged from 2/0d to 4/9d a week, including rates, gas-lighting and running hot and cold water.

The tenement was opened in a public ceremony by the Lady Mayoress of Manchester in May 1892. It was reported that the scheme provided airy, well-lit and sanitary dwellings, a distinct improvement on most cheap accommodation for workers in Ancoats. It was judged a success by the company's directors, with 105 dwellings already let, housing 360 occupants. The tenants' views were unrecorded but many likely appreciated the significantly better facilities than in nearby existing accommodation. Henry Simon made a speech commending the scheme, including a humorous allusion,

> [t]he situation of the building at the junction of two canals ensured large open spaces, and on a fine day, with a bit of convenient imagination, [the tenants] might from their balconies fancy themselves in Venice … (laughter), and from personal experience he [Henry] backed the Manchester canals for sweeter average smells than similar-sized canals during a great part of the year in Venice (laughter).

Yet Henry Simon and the other directors were not simply benevolent landlords. Like many philanthropic providers of housing for the 'working

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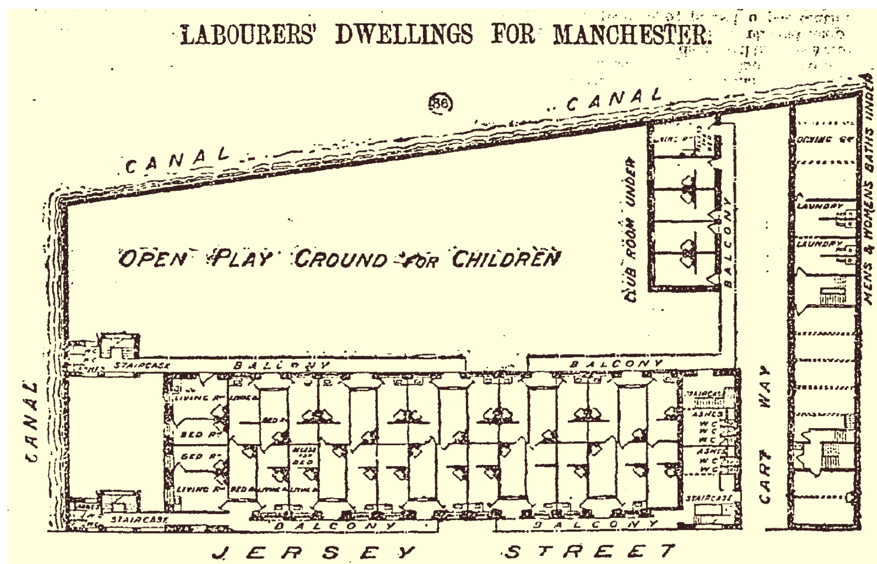

8.2 Sketch plan of the Jersey Street Dwellings. Source: *Manchester Guardian* (17 March 1891), p. 9.

classes' at this time, they had a strongly paternalistic urge to improve the behaviour and moral character of the poor while also providing a secure roof over their heads. As Henry concluded his speech, the company 'sincerely hoped that their tenants might soon come to feel that they form, as it were, one large family, and that every one of them would do his or her best by respectable behaviour to raise the character of the small community, so that to belong to it might gradually become a matter of pride as well as an advantage (applause)'.[10] Such words perhaps reflected something of Henry's approach to his own family. By 1892, Henry and Emily had seven children and Henry sought to inculcate morals in his children in writing, for example, a small book *Rathschlaege für meine Kinder* [*Advice For My Children*] in *c*. 1899.[11] The family's increasing affluence from Henry's business success allowed their life in their large Didsbury home to be supported, according to the 1891 census return, by four domestic servants and a governess for the children.

At the 1898 annual meeting, Thomas Coglan Horsfall, another director (and prominent housing reformer), noted that the:

> experience of the Company had made it clear that it was not enough to put poor, ignorant people into wholesome dwellings, and leave them to work out their own salvation from a social and sanitary point of view. They must be assisted in various ways, and the Company, as well as the tenants, were greatly indebted to Miss Hankinson and her friends for their useful work.[12]

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Annie Hankinson served for many years at Jersey Street as a kind of social worker and educator. Such 'useful work' was not just supportive and educative but helped inculcate codes of 'good' behaviour and 'proper' levels of cleanliness in the poor.[13]

Initially, the Labourers' Dwellings Company struggled to reach financial viability at Jersey Street.[14] Nor did it build any more housing after this first scheme. (The nearby Victoria Square tenements were opened by the City Corporation in 1894.)[15] Yet, in late 1898, the Jersey Street tenement was practically fully occupied, housing 125 men, 118 women and 374 children. From the company's paternalistic perspective, there had been management challenges, with 'twelve families removed in the night, taking their belongings with them, and ten had to be ejected for disorderly conduct and for using bad language'.[16] By then, however, Henry had stepped back from managing the company, likely due to significant health problems; his good friend Charles Behrens now became chairman.[17]

The Company continued into the early twentieth century, and the largely unchanged Jersey Street tenement remained occupied into the 1930s. By then, social reformers saw the tenement as a horribly overcrowded Victorian 'barracks'; a 'model' improvement scheme of the 1890s was by then seen as unfit for use. A 1932 newspaper article on the Manchester University Settlement's work saw it as the city's worst tenement block, a 'gaunt, six-storey structure of unparalleled hideousness'. For all Henry Simon's original philanthropic ambitions, these 1930s housing reformers thought it 'incredible that this insanitary rabbit warren should be the home of 141 families at the present day'.[18] It is unclear when the tenement was closed and the company wound up, but evidence from detailed Ordnance Survey plans shows the block gone by the late 1940s.

Emily Simon and Edwardian garden suburbs

By the Edwardian period, Manchester's worst industrial slums and mean rows of Victorian terraces were slowly giving way to better by-law housing, but the sheer scale of existing problems remained a daunting challenge. However, radically better ways to lay out towns and design good housing were emerging, informed largely by the garden city movement (influenced by Ebenezer Howard's 1902 book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*). The approach sought to combine the beneficial aspects of countryside – natural light, fresh air and green space – with urban living, enabled by collective land ownership and prevention of speculative development. Its planning principles included careful zoning of activities, separation of homes from factories and well-laid-out low-density residential areas with well-built cottages. The first garden city was at Letchworth, Hertfordshire, developed from 1903. Howard's ideas pervaded early developments in town planning and appealed to campaigners, not least the Simons, seeking

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ways to rehouse thousands of working people living in crowded industrial cities in better conditions.

Such efforts to improve Manchester's working-class housing during this period were most palpable in the work of Thomas Horsfall[19] and Thomas Marr. In 1902, they formed the Citizens Association for the Improvement of the Unwholesome Dwellings and Surroundings of the People and published a major report, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford* in 1904. Based on detailed street-level investigations and social surveys, the report called for comprehensive policy towards planning and housing that:

> would provide not only for the demolition of unwholesome dwellings and the statutory obligation to re-house the occupants but would also definitely provide for the growth of the towns, planning roads, streets and open spaces for the new districts long before they are actually required for building.[20]

Ernest Simon strongly advocated this approach decades later in his *Rebuilding Britain–A Twenty Year plan* (1945) book (see below) and it was actually realised after the Second World War.

Edwardian housing reformers, like Horsfall and Marr, contributed to a growing national political debate about the state's role in providing good-quality homes. Government legislation, including the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act, enabled local authorities to intervene more significantly in residential planning and in building homes for rent. Manchester Corporation took small steps to building suburban council housing for the poor in the Edwardian period, starting with a small estate of 150 workers' cottages at Blackley completed in 1904.[21] However, little happened nationally to encourage large-scale municipal housebuilding until after the First World War.

Modest attempts to provide decent homes also came from socially minded architect developers who applied some of the Garden City ideals when building small suburban estates for rent, often operated on cooperative or copartnership (a near variant) principles. Several such 'garden suburbs' were created around Manchester before 1914.[22] Three notable ones were located close to each other in south Manchester, and near the Simons' homes. These schemes in Burnage, Chorlton and Didsbury were all small estates of cottages constructed by cooperative societies, supported by local philanthropic investors. Their specific financial basis and design quality varied, but all provided new family homes with 'vegetation, light, and air'.[23]

The first was Didsbury Garden Suburb Provident Cooperative Society Limited, begun in 1907. Directed by prominent local housebuilder Amos Mason, the Society gained the strong support of Emily Simon early on. It sought to 'to erect sanitary dwellings amid healthy surroundings, at reasonable rents, and on terms that would enable the tenants, who were shareholders, to become absolute owners of the houses they lived in'.[24]

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Tenants had first to pay £10 to become shareholders in the society but, unlike most otherwise similar schemes, it was conceived as a 'rent-to-own' model. The society purchased two and a quarter acres of farmland near the new Levenshulme to Wilmslow railway line in Didsbury. The first phase of thirty semi-detached houses adopted a conventional linear street layout but with generous individual gardens, and land permanently retained for a playground. At fifteen dwellings per acre, its density was slightly higher than other garden suburb schemes but was much less dense than by-law terraced housing being built elsewhere in Manchester before 1914. The society financed construction using loans, a mortgage and funds from tenant shareholders. It was anticipated that tenants would own their house after twenty years of renting. Each house cost about £200, then considered a moderate sum, and initial rents were 7s 6d a week. The first four houses were formally opened in October 1907 with ceremonial tree planting by Emily and other prominent women social reformers in the Simons' friendship circle (Mrs Hans Renold, Mrs Gustav Eckhard, Mrs J. Watt, Miss Margaret Ashton).[25]

Emily remained on the committee running the society, giving the keynote speech at the formal ceremony when all thirty planned houses were completed in October 1909.[26] She stressed that 'tenants must be shareholders, and it is to their interest to see that the property is kept in good repair, for they are part owners'.[27] Local Liberal MP Harry Nuttall also praised garden suburbs, but posed a key question: 'Where do the poorest class of people come in in these schemes?' After the speeches came sports organised for the children and a firework display at dusk.[28]

The garden suburb schemes in Didsbury, Burnage and Chorlton were successfully realised but limited in scope. As was the case with similar housing schemes elsewhere in Britain, their funding model was unable to provide the thousands of new homes Manchester actually needed. Moreover, the size and locations of the houses, and the requirement that tenants invest as shareholders, meant such schemes were unaffordable for most poorer families in inner Manchester. They were occupied by more affluent skilled workers and lower middle-class professionals. Despite their founders' idealism, these estates barely touched the main housing problem. Far more ambitious national government policies and municipal solutions were needed.

Into the 1920s and the Simons' role in the struggle for Wythenshawe

The First World War was a major shock to social norms, indirectly giving new impetus for interventionist urban planning. Its ending also brought major housing policy changes. In 1918, the government's Tudor Walters report was published, much influenced by leading garden city architect

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MRS SIMON ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF THE SCHEME.

Mrs Simon, who had a hearty reception, was then called upon to announce the completion of the scheme. She said: Those of us who knew the village of Didsbury almost half a century ago have seen many changes and a great deal of building, and we could wish that there had been more forethought exercised, and that the idea of garden cities and garden suburbs had arisen before any extension of the village had been planned. The first garden city at Letchworth is such a success that the example is being followed in many parts of the country, and in Manchester we are not lagging behind. The Burnage estate is nearing completion, and this small effort on similar lines in our own village is now practically completed. It arose through the action of a few workingmen, who approached Mr Amos Mason, and with his assistance formed the Didsbury Garden Suburb and Provident Co-operative Society, Ltd. The great advantage this society affords is co-operation. The tenants must be shareholders, and it is to their interest to see that the property is kept in good repair, for they are part owners as well as tenants, and any profits that accrue will go to increase the shares of the tenants until in time they may own their own houses entirely. The rents are very low, no equally good houses with gardens are to be had elsewhere in Didsbury, and this has been made possible through the economy in building. A garden suburb is laid out as a whole on a pre-conceived plan, instead of each lot being disposed of to a different builder, and the result is a pleasing group of houses. This movement was started three years ago, and in October of 1907 the first four houses were completed, and formally opened by Mrs Hans Renold. I have a photograph of a group of friends taken on that occasion, and one was with us then who has so recently been called away that I am sure there is not one here to-day who is not missing Dr Rhodes, for he was a friend alike to rich and poor, and ever ready with sympathy and encouragement in every good work that was started. His work was of national importance, but we are mourning for him as a neighbour and a friend. The first houses were occupied as soon as they were finished, and by the end of December, 1908, 21 houses were occupied, and had it not been for lack of funds the whole scheme would have been completed last year. Now it has been brought to a successful issue, and a happy community is established in this garden suburb. It would not have been complete without some special provision for the children, and they have not been forgotten. The plot of ground on which they have held their sports is dedicated to the use of the children, and can never be built upon or taken from them. The gardens are a most attractive feature of this suburb, and I think every inch of ground is utilised, for they are gay with flowers in front, and full of vegetables and fruits at the back. There seems to be much friendly rivalry as to who shall have the finest display of flowers—it is not only flowers, but babies also that flourish here, for was it not one of the tenants babies that gained a prize at the South Manchester show. (Applause). One of the greatest evils of modern days is the constant flitting from house to house. But when you own your house and are proud of it, you want to take root and make it a real home. I hope that the tenants will take up more shares, and in declaring the scheme completed, I wish long life and happiness to the dwellers in the Didsbury garden suburb. (Applause).

Mr Nuttall, M.P., on being called upon,

8.3 Report of Emily's speech at the ceremony marking the completion of the Didsbury Garden Suburb. Source: *Alderley & Wilmslow Advertiser*, (8 October 1909), p. 8.

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Raymond Unwin. It called for new working-class houses to be well-spaced, well-lit by sunlight, with good ventilation, a garden and a bathroom. It also recommended planned street layouts, favouring cul-de-sacs, stating that new houses should be '[t]wo-storied cottages, built in groups of four or six, with medium or low-pitched roofs and little exterior decoration, set amongst gardens and trees'.[29] After winning the general election in December 1918, Prime Minister David Lloyd George pledged to build 'Homes Fit for Heroes'. His government passed the Addison Act in 1919 which gave local authorities like Manchester City Council generous financial subsidies to build houses for rent on a large scale suitable for working people.

Ernest and Shena Simon had become involved in Manchester municipal politics before 1914, seeking to advance various progressive causes. But it was only after the war that Ernest gained detailed practical experience of town planning on Manchester City Council. In November 1919, he became chairman of the new Housing Committee and began looking beyond mere civic paternalism towards a comprehensive concept of planning that was both effective and democratic.[30] In November 1921, the Simons became Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Manchester, and Ernest used this high-profile platform to press for greater and more effective

59. Medical opinion is unanimous as to the importance of allowing plenty of sunshine to penetrate into the rooms; it is in the winter when the sun is low even at midday that its light and warmth are most valuable. This should be considered when planning the distance between houses facing one another. On southern slopes a shorter distance, on northern slopes a longer distance is required to give equal results. Diagrams showing the height of the sun at different periods of the year and for different aspects indicate that where two-storey houses are concerned, except in regard to main roads where other considerations would increase the distance, a general width of 70 feet between the houses should be regarded as the desirable minimum, otherwise in winter very little sunshine will reach the lower rooms. The closing in of this width to 50 or 60 feet by projections may, however, be justified at times for various reasons and, so long as it is for short lengths, will have only a slight effect on the available sunlight. The following diagram refers to the latitude of London and to a south aspect. Further north, or with an east and west aspect, the results will be less favourable. (*See* Illustration No. 5.)

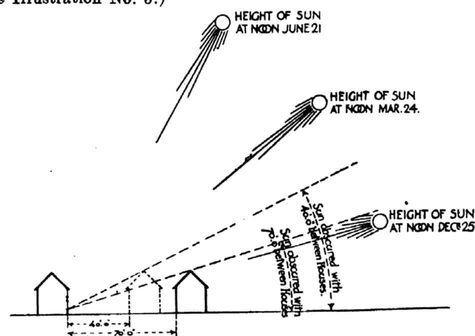

ILLUSTRATION No. 5.

8.4 The practical case for low-density housing to allow daylight made in the influential Tudor Walters report. Source: John Tudor Walters, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the President of the Local Government Board and the Secretary for Scotland to Consider Questions of Building Construction in Connection with the Provision of Dwellings for the Working Classes in England and Wales, and Scotland* (London: HMSO, 1918).

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municipal intervention. In his acceptance speech, he urged extending the city's boundaries 'to develop either self-contained garden cities or dormitory cities … and to transfer to those cities large portions of the population now forced to live in slums'.[31]

To move beyond tentative Edwardian efforts and effectively rehouse tens of thousands, in accordance with the ideals of the first garden city at Letchworth and Tudor Walters standards, required Manchester Corporation to have enough space for low-density residential development. Flat, open farmland just across the Mersey River in Cheshire seemed the ideal choice, provided it could be acquired and developed. Most of it belonged to the aristocratic Tatton estate, centred on the impressive Wythenshawe Hall. The idea of a satellite garden city on this land was strongly advocated by Labour Alderman William Turner Jackson in November 1919, who 'thought Manchester had a good case for the compulsory acquisition of an estate like this'.[32]

The Housing Committee, chaired by Ernest, tasked the city surveyor and leading town planner Patrick Abercrombie with assessing the feasibility of the council developing the Wythenshawe area as a large satellite city. Their reports, produced in December 1919 and March 1920, were strongly supportive, giving powerful political ammunition to Jackson and Ernest in the battle to realise their hopes. The Housing Committee as a result recommended that the council purchase the Wythenshawe estate, yet the birth of Manchester's garden city proved protracted and politically difficult.[33]

It took over twelve years from the initial idea in 1919 before the Wythenshawe area officially became part of Manchester and large-scale house building could proceed. The immediate obstacle was landowner Thomas Egerton Tatton's refusal to sell his Wythenshawe estate to the council. After he died in 1924, however, his heir proved more amenable. The real possibility of acquiring Wythenshawe then triggered serious wrangling within Manchester City Council about the wisdom of purchasing so much land. With no real progress made, Ernest and Shena made a move which would prove critical for the Wythenshawe's future and the shape of Manchester as whole. In early April 1926, the Simons told the Lord Mayor and the council they were privately purchasing Wythenshawe Hall and its surrounding parklands and would donate their acquisition directly to the council as open space for Manchester's people.[34] This was a politically shrewd but personally expensive move.[35] It reduced the financial burden facing the council and galvanised it into action, with the council buying the rest of the Wythenshawe estate the following month. A single paragraph at the bottom of the *Manchester Guardian* frontpage on the 6 May 1926 tersely summarised this momentous decision (Figure 8.6). The council purchased 2,568 acres, mostly farmland, across the north-east Cheshire parishes of Baguley, Northenden and Northen Etchells.[36]

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CORRESPONDENCE.

TOWN-PLANNING FOR MANCHESTER.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir,—The Lord Mayor, on May 18, said of Manchester that "it just happened," and that is true. And things that "just happen" are never done right, and therefore require a lot of putting straight. To this end the proposals for dealing, on the best town-planning lines, with a considerable area around Manchester put forward so ably by Professor Abercrombie on the same occasion are admirable. But I would suggest that to be truly effective such efforts must be supplemented by efforts of quite another kind. Satellite towns on new areas at a distance of 25 miles or so from the city could be designed and built so as to be most effective and economic, industrially, commercially, and from the point of view of health and efficiency, and would greatly relieve the difficulties of Manchester.

Therefore, when the satellite town at Welwyn, within 20 miles of London, is well under way the Garden Cities and Town-planning Association, which is largely responsible for its foundation, will certainly turn its attention to the problem of Manchester, which is perhaps more than equally urgent.—Yours, &c.,

EBENEZER HOWARD.

The Garden Cities and Town-planning Association, 3, Gray's Inn Place, Gray's Inn, London, W.C., May 25.

8.5 Ebenezer Howard commenting on Patrick Abercrombie's report on Wythenshawe. Source: *Manchester Guardian* (27 May 1920), p. 5.

Further purchases of adjacent land parcels by the council occurred over subsequent years.

Yet the city's ownership of the necessary land did not immediately see Manchester's satellite garden city being built. Although owning the land, Manchester City Council lacked administrative authority over the area. The small local district authorities and Cheshire County Council were reluctant themselves to fund the substantial infrastructure, such as drainage and sewers, needed to build so many homes for Manchester people. To resolve

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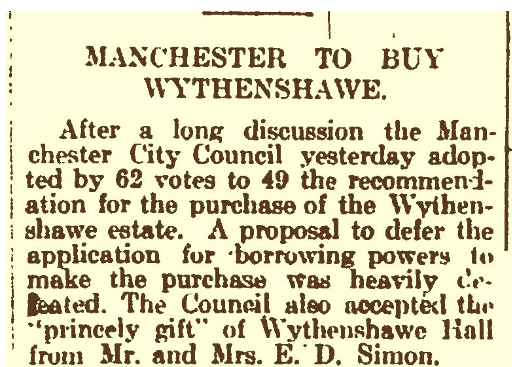
MANCHESTER TO BUY WYTHENSHAWE.

After a long discussion the Manchester City Council yesterday adopted by 62 votes to 49 the recommendation for the purchase of the Wythenshawe estate. A proposal to defer the application for borrowing powers to make the purchase was heavily defeated. The Council also accepted the "princely gift" of Wythenshawe Hall from Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Simon.

8.6 The announcement of the council's decision to purchase the Wythenshawe estate.
Source: *Manchester Guardian* (6 May 1926), p. 1.

this, Manchester sought Parliamentary approval for a boundary extension to give it full control. After stiff resistance, approval came in April 1931, and Wythenshawe was legally incorporated into Manchester. With this additional 5,567 acres of land, the city's area grew by about a quarter, forever changing the regional map.[37]

Shena Simon's active involvement in planning the Wythenshawe estate

From the mid-1920s, Ernest's involvement in housing and planning matters became more nationally focused. It was Shena who took over to help shape Wythenshawe's early development as a municipal garden city. In 1924, she was elected a Liberal councillor for the Chorlton-cum-Hardy ward and joined the Council's Education Committee, beginning her more than four decades of service on this committee. She also joined the Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee in 1926, supervising housing development. Led by Alderman Jackson, the Committee commissioned the leading garden city architect-planner Barry Parker, co-designer of Letchworth, to prepare a masterplan for this new satellite garden city.[38]

Shena became immersed in the practical planning of housing development, at times working closely with Parker.[39] She was especially concerned that community facilities often arrived long after dwellings were built. Shena also showed her wider concerns about urban design, stating in a speech in Manchester Art Gallery in 1930 that town planning and architecture were:

> at a rather low ebb. Not only in Manchester but all over the country we seem to have lost that sense of beauty which presumably we once possessed, as can be seen in our old villages and country towns, that sense of beauty in architecture and lay-out. I suppose it was part of the price – a very large price – that we had

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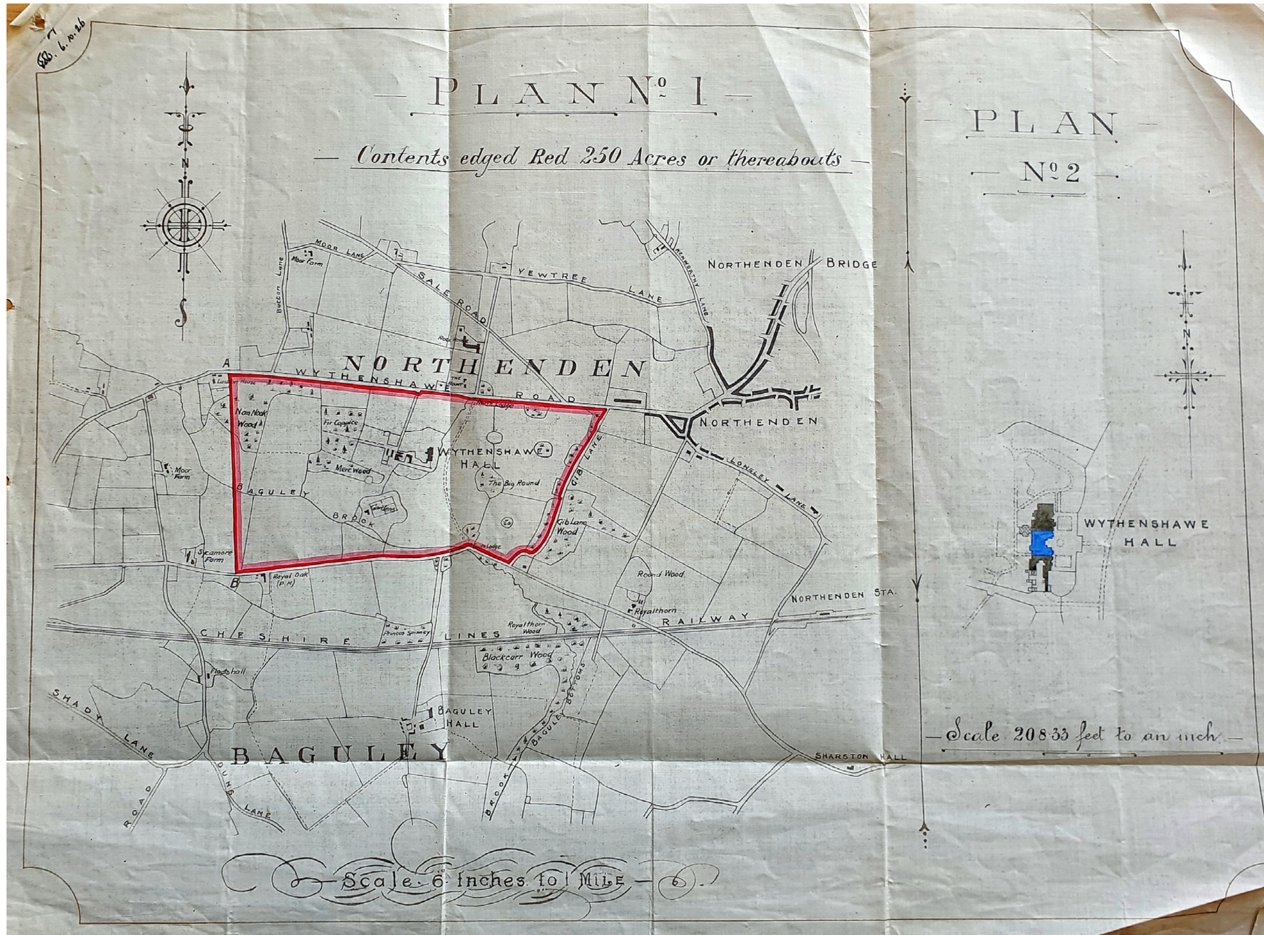

8.7 The deed plan for the purchase of Wythenshawe Hall and grounds by the Simons (1926). Courtesy of Legal Records Centre, Manchester City Council.

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to pay for the great extension of industry commonly known as the industrial revolution. What is depressing is that we still go on paying that price.[40]

The objective for Wythenshawe was to create a self-contained satellite town for Manchester, housing around 100,000 people and surrounded by an agricultural green belt. It would be built in phases over decades, comprising several distinct neighbourhoods of more than 10,000 people, with each neighbourhood having its own local shopping facilities and schools. Housing density would be no more than twelve dwellings to an acre, contrasting with forty to fifty homes per acre in inner Manchester. To achieve these goals Parker's masterplan for Wythenshawe zoned separate areas for specific purposes (Figure 8.8).

Residential neighbourhoods would comprise clusters of houses around small greens and in geometrical patterns of cul-de-sacs. Parker favoured hexagonal layouts to maximise land use. In reality, however, few were actually built in Wythenshawe. The planning also preserved existing local place names and country lanes. Many ponds and spinneys were also retained. The design of early houses reflected the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement, with each family home designed with open space at the front and a substantial back garden.

Another important Parker contribution was to knit the satellite town together, using major roads similar to American parkways, with wide, planted verges containing separate pedestrian footpaths. The goal was to visually soften the transport corridors and reduce traffic noise for nearby dwellings.[41]

Shena strongly supported Parker's vision for Wythenshawe. In a BBC Radio broadcast in 1930, she described her vision of a utopian city, believing, like Ebenezer Howard, that the Wythenshawe garden city could harmoniously combine the urban and the rural,

> Slums and overcrowding will be regarded by the citizen of the future as something which they can barely imagine. Above all, the houses will be beautiful outside as well as convenient inside. I am afraid that some of our housing estates have not added to the beauty of the country in which they have been placed, but this will not happen in Utopia. I think each house will have a separate garden.[42]

In November 1931, Shena took over from Jackson as Wythenshawe Estate Special Committee chair, just as growth was quickening. In February 1932, Princess Road was extended, with a new bridge over the River Mersey into Wythenshawe providing a fast road connection to the city. Despite the economic depression, housing construction proceeded quickly in several different neighbourhoods. Over 4,600 new council houses had been completed by 1934, seeing Wythenshawe's population swell from 7,000 in 1931 to 25,000 by the mid-1930s.[43] It was intended that the estate would have owner-occupied properties as well as rented homes to provide

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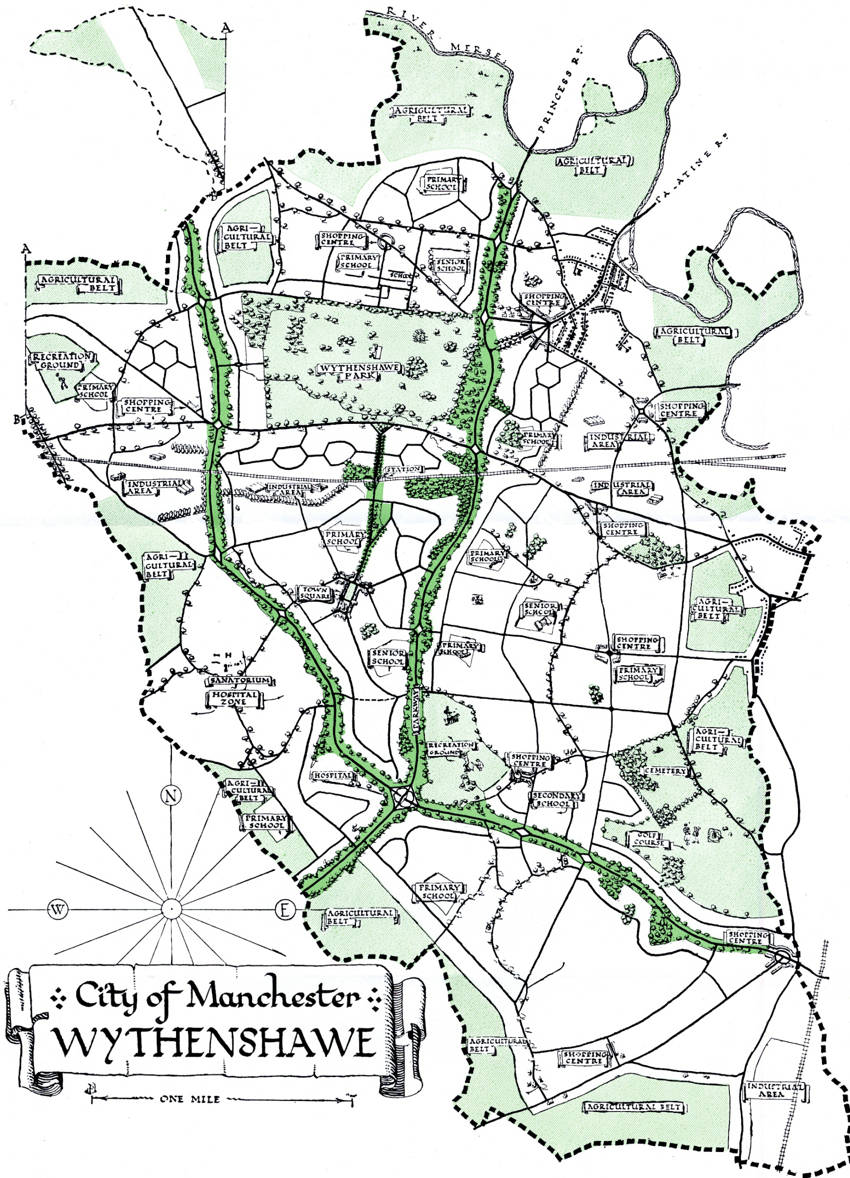

8.8 Parker's sketch plan of the estate (1931). Source: Dugald MacFayden, *Sir Ebenezer Howard and the Town Planning Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1933).

a social mix that was part of the garden city ethos, but relatively few were built. Even with new housing going up in Wythenshawe, there were still acres of slums across inner Manchester in the mid-1930s, as starkly mapped in Ernest's book *The Rebuilding of Manchester* (1935) (Plate 6).

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SPADE WORK.—The building of houses by private enterprise on the Manchester Corporation estate at Wythenshawe was inaugurated to-day by Lady (Ernest) Simon, here seen cutting the first sod on land taken over by Lord's Estates, Ltd.

8.9 Shena Simon captured in a press photo of the ceremonial digging of the first sod on the site of the first privately constructed homes in Wythenshawe. From the *Evening Chronicle* (16 February 1933), p. 10. Source: SSP M14/6/10.

Ernest Simon's international planning 'quests', 1936–43

An important progressive reformist concern in Britain in the 1930s, and one of particular interest to Ernest Simon, was finding an effective and democratic approach to planning. It grew from the widely perceived inability of liberal democracy to tackle the major challenges of the interwar years, contrasting with the seeming decisiveness of totalitarian regimes. Some with these concerns themselves shifted to the extreme left or right. But more democratically disposed reformers sought a middle way, between unfettered capitalism and the centrally planned approach of the dictatorial regimes.[44] There were differing versions of this progressive 'middle opinion' in the 1930s, but each wanted their notion of planning by the state to play a larger role in shaping wider economic and social development.

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The Second World War heightened the significance of these ideas, especially those variants wanting more state intervention.

A specific aspect of this wider concern, one that especially engaged Ernest's interest, also involved a bolder and more comprehensive town and regional planning, closely integrated with social and economic development. His own experience was based in Britain, particularly Manchester, but he also investigated several international cases. This wider knowledge was gained on research fieldtrips made in a voluntary capacity to the USSR (1936), the Nordic countries and Switzerland (1938) and, in an official capacity, to the US (1942–43). Although especially concerned with housing and town planning, his foreign fact-finding often had a wider scope, as in the case of the Nordic countries and Switzerland where he investigated their democratic government.

The first trip to Moscow in 1936 was similar to other Western visits to the Soviet Union during these years.[45] Lasting four weeks, it was arranged by the Society for Cultural Relations between the British Commonwealth and the USSR, an Anglo–Soviet friendship society sympathetic to the Soviet Union. Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, also gave additional support. VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) and the Soviet travel agency Intourist assisted at the Moscow end, identifying many interviewees and sites to visit and providing interpreters. Ernest was joined by Shena, William A. Robson, a constitutional law and local government expert from the London School of Economics, and John Jewkes, an industrial and regional economist from the University of Manchester. Ernest knew Robson as a fellow Fabian Society member and Jewkes (not a Fabian adherent) from university life in Manchester. The group examined the work of the Mossoviet, the Moscow City Government, under the great 1935 general plan to reconstruct the Russian capital. It was an approach dominated by Fabian thinking, especially that of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who also gave encouragement and made many detailed suggestions.[46]

The party arrived at Leningrad on 28 August 1936 and thence to Moscow. After some sightseeing, several weeks of intensive interviews and visits began on 31 August.[47] Ernest's loose leaf Moscow diary records meetings with approximately thirty-eight people. Additional information came from inspecting and observing activities at schools or housing blocks. Opinions of anonymous Russians (mainly supervisors) at these sites were often sought. The visitors also saw a little of Soviet life for themselves. Its rigid inflexibilities were obvious even at the opulent Metropole hotel where they stayed – and far more so beyond it. Thus, their public note-taking during street walks often drew challenges from security personnel. Inflexibility also took more draconian forms, directly restricting what the visitors saw. Thus, when they saw construction sites on the Moscow–Volga canal using prisoner labour, under armed guard, requests to stop were denied.[48]

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Other distortions were more subtle. For instance, although Ernest reckoned to have inspected fifty flats of various types, they excluded the most seriously overcrowded families.[49] He estimated that about 50 per cent of Moscow's families lived at below 3 square metres per head in so-called grade IV accommodation. However, 'I did not see any of these grade IV houses; they are not normally shown to visitors'.[50] Nevertheless he observed the worst overcrowding in other ways, including on evening walks in poorer districts. Through lighted windows, he saw barrack-style worker accommodation where many shared one large dormitory room.

Effective but undemocratic planning in Moscow

Despite its poor housing record, many things excited Ernest about Moscow and the bold way its development was planned and managed. He noted his overall impressions in his unpublished diary in breathlessly unpunctuated sentences. The visit was, he thought, the '[m]ost thrilling 4 weeks of life at intervals quite carried away – wonderful opportunity build fine city'.[51] He was also impressed by the 'enthusiasm devotion unity of aim' and that the Soviet Union offered a 'good life for mass of people'. He saw that implementing the 1935 plan represented an 'immense construction job' because machines, houses and experienced workers were all lacking. Yet he envied the absence of opposing vested interests or conservatism and greatly admired those leading Moscow's reconstruction efforts.

More specifically, he saw how public ownership of land removed a prime obstacle to effective planning.[52] He also admired the commitment to keep Moscow's population (then about 3.67 million) below 5 million.[53] Admired too were schemes to control the Moskva river, raise its level and improve the banks; the Moscow–Volga Canal; the new Metro subway and the effort and resources focused on social services.[54] Above all, however, it was the foresight, energy, resolve and leadership behind the whole venture that most inspired Ernest. Concluding, he felt Moscow was far better able to address metropolitan planning than London or any other major city in the world. In ten years, he believed Moscow would be well on the way to being 'the best planned great city the world has ever known'.[55]

Unlike many other 1930s Western visitors, however, he had few illusions about the USSR's dark side. Despite Soviet minders, the group learned something about the repressive system. Shena saw, for instance, how mass indoctrination occurred within education.[56] The group had arrived immediately after the executions of Zinoviev and Kamenev, once Bolshevik revolutionary heroes yet now, after a show trial, reviled as traitors.[57] Ernest was downhearted that even intelligent Soviet citizens apparently believed all accusations of treason unquestioningly.

Moscow in the Making, a substantial volume of findings and reflections on the visit, appeared in 1937. In the penultimate chapter, Ernest

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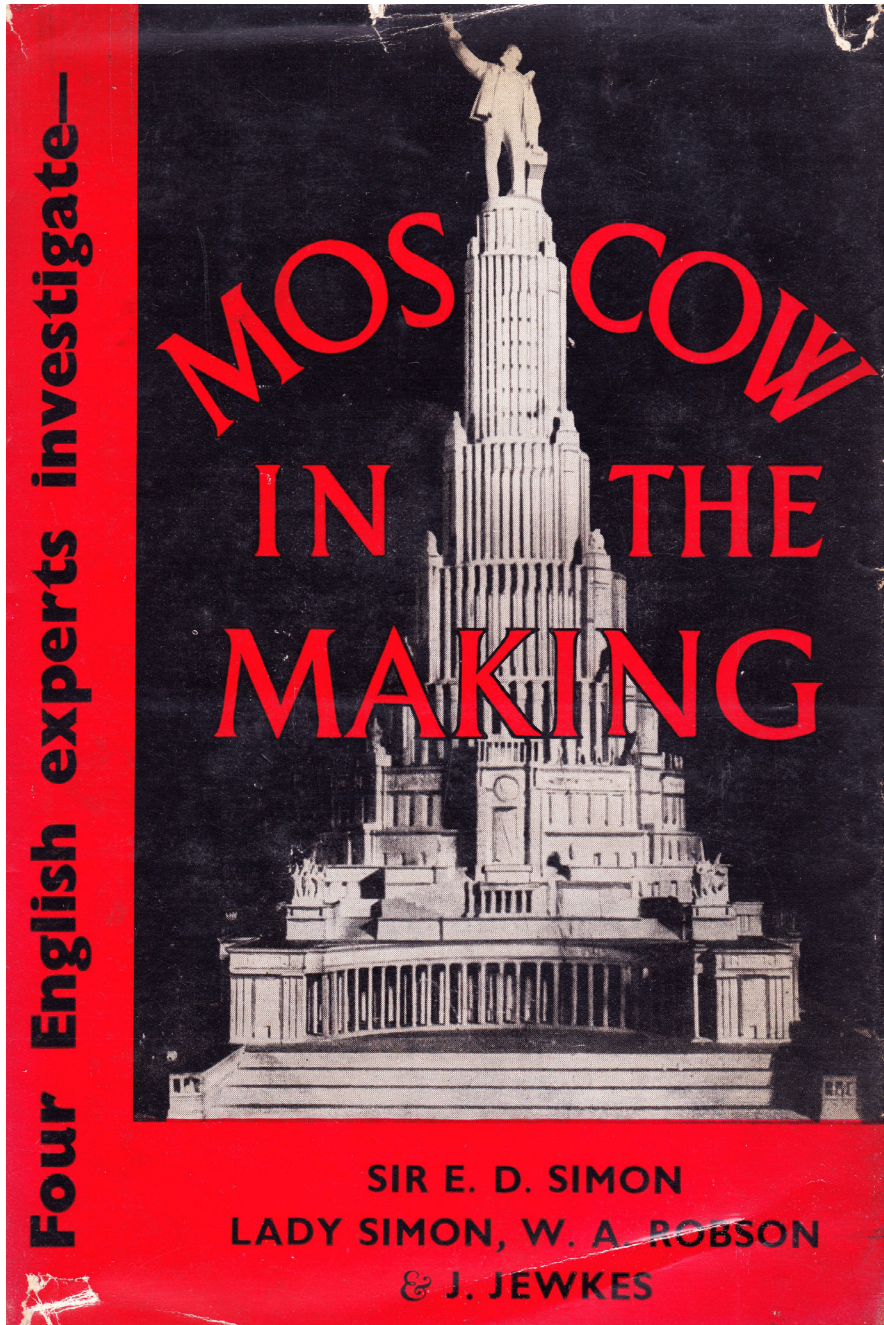

8.10 The cover of *Moscow in the Making* (1937). From Sir E. D. Simon, Lady Simon, W. A. Robson and J Jewkes, *Moscow in the Making* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1937).

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considered whether the benefits achieved under the Soviet system outweighed its negative features. He concluded that, in the Russian context, it might do, provided this one-party dictatorship soon became more democratic and less brutal. But he was clear that Soviet methods would be utterly unthinkable in Britain.[58]

To Stockholm and Zurich

The dangerous expansionism of totalitarian states during the late 1930s only heightened the urgency of Ernest's quest for forms of governance that could effectively tackle the serious problems of those years without sacrificing their democratic character. In this respect, he admired those smaller European democracies, the four Nordic countries and Switzerland, which seemed to be successfully striking this balance. Originally, Ernest intended Switzerland as his primary focus, following James Bryce's firm endorsement of its robust democracy and his own prior awareness of it.[59] However, Victor Gollancz, the publisher of *The Smaller Democracies* – Ernest's book on these investigations – had suggested expanding the Swedish section to examine unemployment policies.[60] In fact, Ernest was already thinking along similar lines. Both he and Gollancz were influenced, like many others, by the American author Marquis Childs's notable 1936 book, *Sweden: The Middle Way*. This did much to cement Sweden's growing image as a near utopia that avoided both the evils generated by American capitalism and the brutal authoritarianism of the Soviet Union's repressive state-led dictatorship. Ernest realised that Childs's picture was too good to be true, but it spurred his interest so that, in the end, the biggest section of the book examined Sweden.[61]

From the outset, Ernest had wanted to examine Stockholm's housing and town planning.[62] Here was a case study within his own field of the perceived success of Swedish democracy. He also gave some attention to urban planning in Zurich and, to a lesser extent, Bern. But Switzerland eventually accounted for a much smaller part of the book, mainly focusing on rural local democracy. The other countries were examined in less detail which, in the end, did not include urban planning. Nevertheless, Ernest's diaries show a typically rigorous round of interviews with key figures in each country to garner information. The book's eventual Swedish focus was reflected in the approximately thirty-five people he interviewed there, mainly during August 1938.[63]

For both Zurich and Stockholm, Ernest noted how their attractive qualities reflected their natural settings and that city planners were careful to protect these.[64] He also observed that factories and railways had far less damaging impacts than in larger British settlements, largely reflecting greater electricity use. The greater British reliance on coal generated

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serious problems of urban smoke. As in Moscow, Ernest admired the willingness and ability of both cities to take land into public ownership. In Stockholm's suburban fringe 80 per cent of land was municipally owned and values were kept low as a result, but he thought the council too timid in pursuing this policy in the inner city (only 28 per cent municipal ownership); a further 41 per cent was also state owned but, despite that high public ownership, inner-city land values remained very high.[65]

The clearest single lesson he drew was how much money both Zurich and Stockholm devoted to city planning.[66] Although both were smaller than Manchester, each spent more on their planning departments. He also admired Zurich city council's willingness to spend on cultural projects and Stockholm's to buy nearby tracts of attractive coast for recreational use.[67] Yet his praise was not universal, and he felt that British cities performed better on the quality and quantity of new social housing. Admittedly, housing needs in British cities exceeded those of Zurich and Stockholm. But he judged the Stockholm new suburb of Bromma inferior to Manchester's new garden city satellite at Wythenshawe.[68]

The origins of the American visit

By September 1939, Ernest Simon had established from his trips to Stockholm and Zurich that some democracies could plan their cities effectively. They might not be perfect, but then neither was Moscow. The key difference was that, in robust democracies like Sweden and Switzerland, governments could be challenged and changed in a consensual way. What was still unclear, however, was if bigger democracies, especially the largest of all, could govern and plan their cities effectively. At best their record, like that of Manchester, was patchy.

Meanwhile, Ernest's experience and talents were being put to good use by the wartime government.[69] At the Ministry of Works, he was soon thinking about postwar reconstruction. The experience of his prewar visits, to Moscow especially, took on a new relevance, even though his knowledge was now a little dated.

The appointment in January 1941 of the Uthwatt Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment by Lord Reith, the Minister of Works, was another spur. Uthwatt sought to prevent private land ownership, especially fragmented ownership, frustrating public efforts to comprehensively plan urban reconstruction. Again, Ernest's Moscow and, less completely, Stockholm and Zurich findings underlined the value of public, or at least unified, land ownership, rather than the multiple piecemeal holdings typical of British cities. By March 1941, he was pressing the Deputy Prime Minister, Labour Party leader Clement Attlee, to act, arguing that nationalisation was the only practical step.[70] Ernest understood the political difficulties but felt that war had created a fluid situation. But Attlee, a key

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member of the Conservative-dominated wartime Coalition government, thought it politically impracticable.[71]

Meanwhile, apart from Ernest's work at the Ministry of Works and Planning (as it became in early 1942), he was actively raising public awareness about postwar reconstruction.[72] The Simons' public activities prompted the Ministry of Information to recruit them to go to the United States. Ernest would tell American audiences about Britain's postwar rebuilding plans, while Shena would speak about its local government in wartime.[73] The visit would also allow Ernest to learn more about how American democracy was governing and planning its own cities.

Finding some effective planning in democratic America

On 19 September 1942, the Simons flew from Ireland, via Newfoundland, to New York.[74] Coming straight from wartime Britain into a land of plenty, both were, from the first, entranced by the United States.[75] And, this infatuation was warmly reciprocated by everyone they encountered. This made it relatively easy to gather information compared to the greater formality of the other international visits.

The Simons were positive about many things they encountered in the United States. Top of this list was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the New Deal regional development project begun by President Roosevelt in 1933. It had been reported in Britain shortly after by the biologist, Julian Huxley, and in a PEP report.[76] Ernest saw it in late November 1942, describing it as '[t]he most exhilarating thing in the USA. First rate democratic planning ….'[77] As in Moscow, the quality, vision and drive of its leaders hugely impressed him, particularly the chairman, David Lilienthal, who he judged the 'finest type of businessman & citizen'. In April 1943, Ernest published a short booklet about the TVA, amongst the first of several important wartime British publications about it.[78] By then, Ernest rated the TVA as 'probably the world's most successful experiment in large scale and long-range democratic planning'.[79]

For city planning, New York stood out particularly because of its express highways and parks.[80] Ernest was apparently (according to Robert Moses, the 'very powerful personality' largely responsible) the first Englishman to inquire seriously about the city's highways programme. In an unpublished December 1942 report to brief his own and other ministries, Ernest wrote that New York had 'led the way' in the United States.[81] Its highways and parkways were 'so good that it would seem almost essential that England should study them, especially from the point of view of the replanning of London and our other great conurbations'. Overall, Ernest saw New York's efforts as 'probably the outstanding example of large-scale democratic city planning in the world'. Moses, he thought, was 'doing an incomparable job', even though he '[d]oes not listen' and 'knows comparatively little

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Sir Ernest goes 'slumming'

Expert on housing in Britain where Nazi bombs have done effective slum clearing, Sir Ernest Simon tours Chicago "blighted areas" to get first-hand information on slum situation here.

8.11 Newspaper clipping from the *Daily Times* (Chicago) (30 October 1942). Courtesy of Helen David.

outside NY'.[82] He was also shocked by some aspects of the United States, including the prevalence of blight, especially in some cities, quite different to the huge slum problems of British cities. In Detroit, for example, he noted examples near downtown. Deteriorating areas, abandoned by affluent aspirant and mobile suburbanites, were now occupied by poor white and African American migrants from the South.[83]

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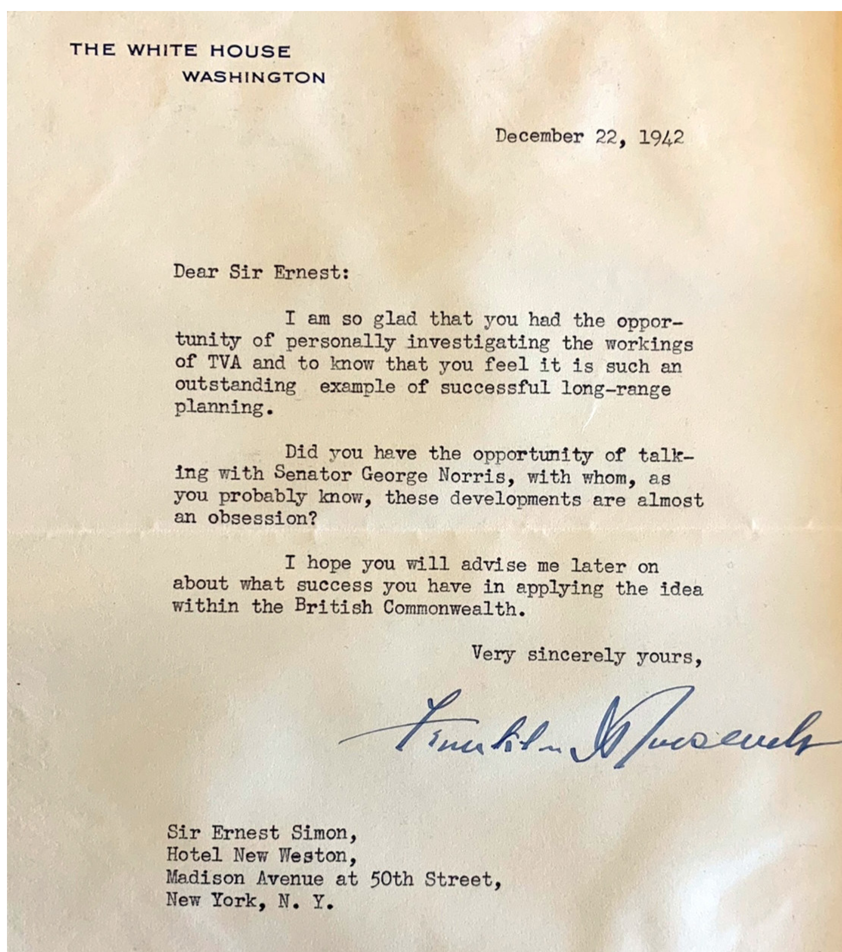
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 22, 1942

Dear Sir Ernest:

I am so glad that you had the opportunity of personally investigating the workings of TVA and to know that you feel it is such an outstanding example of successful long-range planning.

Did you have the opportunity of talking with Senator George Norris, with whom, as you probably know, these developments are almost an obsession?

I hope you will advise me later on about what success you have in applying the idea within the British Commonwealth.

Very sincerely yours,

Franklin D Roosevelt

Sir Ernest Simon,
Hotel New Weston,
Madison Avenue at 50th Street,
New York, N. Y.

8.12 Letter from the President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Ernest, 22 December 1942. Courtesy of Helen David.

Ernest Simon – when British democracy rebuilds

The lessons Ernest drew from America were, though mixed, mainly positive ones. Towards the end of a 100-day American journey during which he had lectured fifty times about rebuilding postwar Britain and discussed planning with many people, he planned another book. He noted that his thinking on rebuilding had become clearer 'as one contemplated Britain from a distance … comparing it with the USA; my opinion of British Democracy grew steadily more favourable! While immensely liking America. A happy experience.'[84] Zigzagging slowly back to Liverpool in January 1943 in an Atlantic convoy pursued by a U-boat, Ernest began to set out his thoughts in greater detail.[85]

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In lectures after he returned to Britain, he referred extensively to his foreign experiences, for example to the Architectural Association in October and the Institute of Landscape Architects in November 1943.[86] Earlier, in July, he had written an article on rebuilding Britain for publication in Moscow.[87] He had also proposed the book, though this only proceeded seriously the following year. After further delays, *Rebuilding Britain – A Twenty Year Plan* finally appeared in January 1945.

In *Rebuilding Britain*, Ernest distilled the mature lessons of his international visits.[88] Some thirty-two pages of 219 were exclusively devoted to foreign examples. Twenty-three pages were on the United States, nine on the TVA alone. However, this numerical balance understates the role of the foreign examples in the book's arguments. Thus Moscow, 'The Planner's Paradise', was invoked in support of his arguments for land nationalisation and the United States for more forward-looking approaches to highways planning.[89] Moscow and Zurich were cited in discussion about ideal city sizes. These lessons were also applied specifically to Manchester. He wanted it to emulate several American and European cities as a fully fledged regional capital with fewer and better main rail terminals, more grand buildings (including a major skyscraper) and a richer cultural life.[90]

Rebuilding Britain was well received, prompting Minister of Works, Duncan Sandys, to appoint Ernest his housing advisor.[91] The book's most distinctive feature was its emphasis, not just on planning, but on detailed implementation.[92] This involved assessing the supply of labour, materials and land, linking physical and economic planning.[93] The approach certainly owed something to his Moscow experience, but this was to be democratic planning. Concluding, he contrasted the abundantly funded command structures that were successfully prosecuting the war, even in democratic countries, with how, under the Soviet system, a similar structure also operated in peacetime.[94] National prosperity and low interest rates would also be needed to fulfil his proposed rebuilding programme, but he thought the critical factor would be public opinion. He ended *Rebuilding Britain* with words expressing these hopes: 'Let us plan and build healthy and pleasant cities, the finest the world has known, and a monument to the ideals and efficiency of British democracy.'[95]

Discussion

Few planners today use such language. Even then, Sir Ernest Simon was unusual in so often explicitly linking urban planning to wider political values and governmental regimes. A few professional town planners spoke or wrote this way in the 1930s and 1940s, but most preferred a more technical discourse where political values remained implicit. Yet Ernest, though widely respected across the built environment professions, was not a professional planner. His grounding as an engineer certainly meant that

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he understood the technical values of the expert. But he had also absorbed the principles of welfare liberalism and a deep commitment to Fabian values. Added to these was an active involvement in public life and a strong concern for urban reform and to empirical research into local governance. These attitudes, competencies and experiences meant he could connect the technical aspects of planning with the political values that underpinned them. He could also articulate that connection in a cogent and engaging manner that transcended specific party interest. His more explicit language on these themes expressed a dominant strand in wartime thinking and had provided the ideological compass for his international journeying.

In visiting these places, however, Ernest did not simply confirm prior expectations. He could extol Mossoviet's effectiveness (while recognising its failure to provide enough decent housing), but be deeply unhappy about Soviet repression. Even Stockholm, superb though its planning was, left him less impressed with its housing policies compared to Manchester. As regards the United States, however, he returned far more admiring than anticipated, seeing it, at its best, as a powerhouse of democracy, actively planning for its future. He obviously grasped that in many places it fell short, where individual city governments (albeit less corrupt than formerly) remained too willing to appease private real estate or other interests. Beyond this, there were other aspects to which he seemed oblivious. The great racial inequality of American democracy passed without comment, a symptom of urban blight but apparently accepted as a fact of nature.

Amidst the very intense circulation of policy knowledge during the later 1930s and 1940s, the specific impact of Ernest Simon's international learning on British policy discourse and action is difficult to isolate. His position within, but not centrally part of, the government machine in the war years allowed easy access to many decision makers. There is ample evidence that he was heard and taken seriously within government, the professions and more widely. In part, of course, this reflected his purely British experience. Yet, by being able also to speak with such authority about key international experiences, he was bringing something unique to the policy debate. Here were cities being more effectively planned than in Britain because greater resources were devoted to planning, land was more effectively controlled for public purposes and there was more decisiveness regarding the key determinants of the efficiency and wider quality of urban life. A part of the postwar drive for a stronger British planning system certainly fed on such knowledge.

Creating that stronger system was to be the work of others, however. Ernest Simon's own active role within planning policy largely ended after 1945. His remarkable talents and commitment to public service were now largely deployed in the University of Manchester and the BBC. Yet, in these and his other campaigning interests such as promoting population

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control in the 1950s, he never lost his habit of seeking and drawing lessons from relevant foreign experiences.[96]

The Simons' continuing connections to Wythenshawe after 1945

Wythenshawe's development continued after the Second World War, although now more as a large municipal housing estate rather than a satellite garden city; ensuring its success was a key element in the influential 1945 City of Manchester Plan.[97] The Simons' connections to Wythenshawe also continued, signalled most powerfully when Ernest adopted it as the title for his barony in 1947.

By the early 1950s, more than 12,000 council homes had been constructed in Wythenshawe, by then accommodating well over 60,000 people. Already it had greatly surpassed the earlier garden cities at Letchworth and Welwyn – and was continuing to grow.[98] Parker's careful zoning of residential neighbourhoods, separated by large access roads, had largely been enacted (Figure 8.13). The civic and larger retailing centres, whilst designated, would only be finished by the early 1970s. Low housing density was maintained generally, despite pressure for more dwellings (subsequently some maisonettes and low-rise flats were built). The 5,500-acre Wythenshawe estate comprised around 3,000 acres for housing and about 1,000 acres for open space, including a large golf course and the 250-acre public park that the Simons had gifted to the city in 1926. There were concerted attempts to bring light manufacturing and logistics jobs to Wythenshawe. Despite advantages of space for new factories, access to the trunk road network and the nearby expanding airport at Ringway, the area struggled to attract businesses.[99]

When Ernest, now Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, received the Freedom of the City of Manchester in November 1959, he reflected on the development and significance of the estate:

> Wythenshawe is far from perfect; a major trouble is that we still have no civic centre. But thousands of families are living under housing conditions so good that if we could provide similar conditions for all our families, the housing problem would be satisfactorily and finally solved. In spite of serious difficulties, Wythenshawe is undoubtedly a very great achievement. It was certainly the best instance of a satellite garden town in the inter-war years. It set an example which had an important influence on the building of new towns; undoubtedly the best feature of the post-war planning development.[100]

Ernest died in October 1960, just shy of eighty-one. Shena kept in touch with developments at Wythenshawe and remained politically engaged, leaving the Education Committee only in 1970. In 1961, she opened Simon Court in Wythenshawe, a nine-storey block of flats for older residents. It was the first system-built multistorey block that Manchester constructed after the war. Although named to honour the Simons, the use of high-rise

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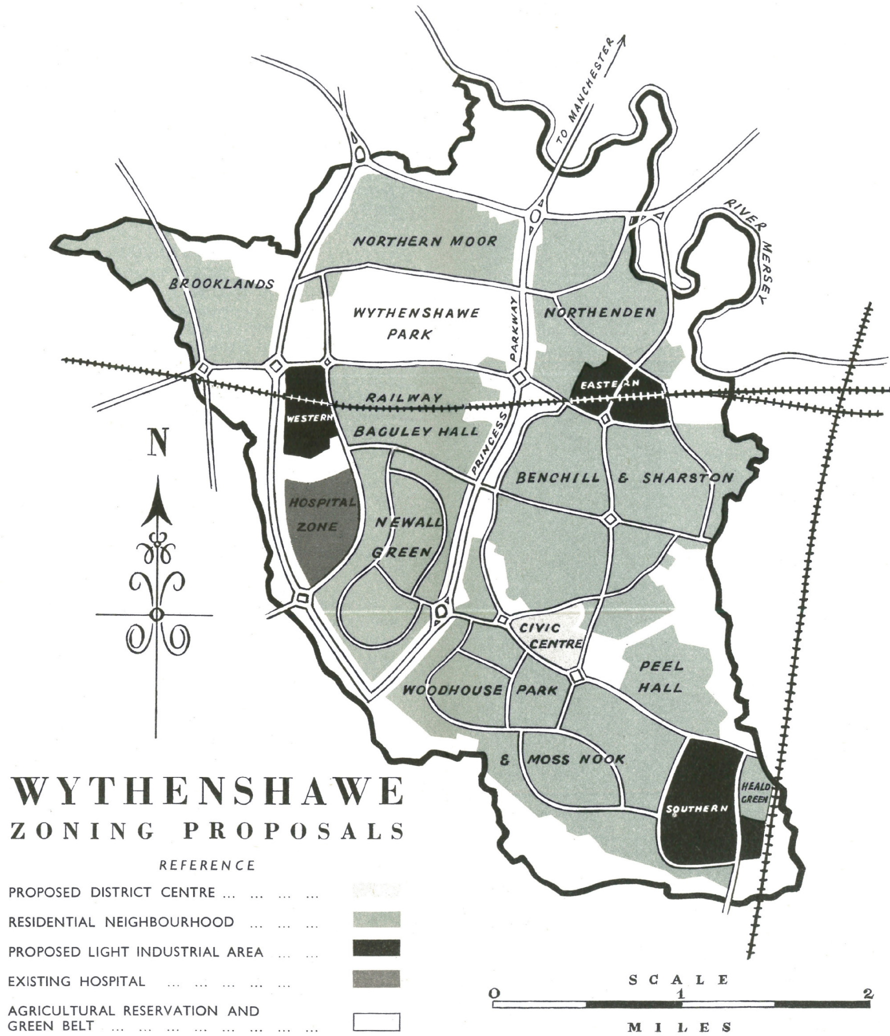

8.13 Zoning plan from *Wythenshawe Plan and Reality*. (Manchester Municipal Information Bureau, *c.* 1953). Source: Martin Dodge.

flats rather than cottages with gardens would have been an anathema to an earlier Ernest Simon.[101] The Freedom of the City of Manchester was granted to Shena in recognition of her public work in 1964. One of her last public appearances, aged eighty-six, was at the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone for Wythenshawe's long overdue civic centre in 1969.[102] Shena died in 1972.

By 1970, around 102,000 residents lived in some 23,000 council homes and 4,400 privately owned houses in Wythenshawe.[103] Subsequently, the area suffered social problems and significant pockets of deprivation such

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that, by the 1980s, it had a tarnished reputation as a municipally mismanaged 'sink estate'. Yet, as the planning historian Peter Hall reflected, 'for all its latter-day shabbiness, it fully deserves the appellation of the third garden city'.[104]

Since the work of these two remarkable Simon generations, town planning and social housing have markedly changed, yet many pre-existing housing problems remain, and new challenges have appeared. The impact of council house sales following the 1980s Thatcher reforms on places like Wythenshawe is marked in terms of social divisions. Former industrial cities like Manchester have also been reimagined, with old mills being gentrified and a marked growth in city-centre living after years of population deconcentration. But there are systemic housing problems in terms of availability and affordability for ordinary families, so while the many new high-rise apartment blocks are creating a 'MancHattan' skyline, homeless numbers on the streets are growing.[105] There is also renewed suburban sprawl and a battle over Manchester's green belt reminiscent of the 1920s. More widely, governments again struggle to effectively deliver the important projects and programmes that society and the economy needs while maintaining democratic principles. Sadly perhaps, this account of the public service of two remarkable generations of Simons continues to have a profound relevance for the housing and planning issues facing us today.

Notes

1 Dr John Roberton, a Manchester surgeon, in evidence to the Parliamentary Committee on the Health of Towns, 1840, pp. 221–2. Available from the Wellcome Collection, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/zfykg69p (accessed 1 September 2023).
2 Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968); Mark Crinson, *Shock City: Image and Architecture in Industrial Manchester* (London: Yale University Press, 2022).
3 This has been well documented elsewhere – including in his own extensive writing. See: E. D. Simon, *A City Council from Within* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1926); E. D. Simon and J. Inman, *The Rebuilding of Manchester* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1935). Also, see Mary Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963) and Chapter 4 of this volume by John Ayshford and Brendon Jones.
4 This section draws upon material originally published in Stephen V. Ward, 'Searching for Effective and Democratic Town Planning: The International Travels of Sir Ernest Simon, 1936–1943', *Planning Perspectives*, 32:3 (2017), 353–71.
5 The first Medical Officer of Health appointed by Manchester Corporation in 1868 was John Leigh and his first annual report was published in 1869.
6 John J. Parkinson-Bailey, *Manchester: An Architectural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
7 'Model dwellings in Manchester', *Manchester Guardian* (31 May 1892), p. 9.
8 Ancoats was the first dedicated industrial area laid out for cotton factories in the 1800s with the coming of the Ashton and Rochdale Canals into central Manchester. By the 1890s, the Ancoats ward had one of the highest death rates in the city. Michael E. Rose, Keith Falconer and Julian Holder, *Ancoats: Cradle of Industrialisation* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2011).

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9 'Some Model Artisans' Dwellings at Manchester', *British Architect* (20 May 1892), p. 381.
10 'Model dwellings in Manchester'.
11 See Chapter 2 in this volume by Janet Wolff.
12 'Joint-Stock Companies: Manchester Labourers' Dwellings Company, Limited', *Manchester Guardian* (20 December 1898), p. 9.
13 Hankinson became a well-regarded social worker and sanitary reformer in Manchester and went on to found the Manchester Housing Company, which followed Octavia Hill's model of social housing; 'Obituary: The Late Miss Hankinson', *Manchester Guardian* (10 April 1929), p. 12.
14 'The Jersey-Street Dwellings', *Manchester Guardian* (12 December 1895), p. 4.
15 This was its first council housing comprising a large five-storey tenement block of 522 dwellings and located on Oldham Road. The building still stands and was Grade II listed in 1988.
16 'Joint-Stock Companies: Manchester Labourers' Dwellings Company, Limited', *Manchester Guardian* (20 December 1898), p. 9.
17 For details on Henry's network of close friends and associates in his public work, see Janet Wolff's Chapter 2 in this volume and Brian Simon, *In Search of a Grandfather: Henry Simon of Manchester 1835–1899* (Leicester: The Pendene Press, 1997).
18 'Tenement dwellings survey', *Manchester Guardian* (21 June 1932), p. 14.
19 His book *The Improvement of the Dwellings and Surroundings of the People: The Example of Germany* was published in 1904. Also, Horsfall's daughter Edith married into the Simon family, marrying Henry's third son Harry, and had four children. See: Brian Simon, *Henry Simon's Children* (Leicester: The Pendene Press, 1997), p. 85.
20 Thomas R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester & Salford* (Manchester: Sherratt and Hughes, Manchester University Press, 1904), p. 5.
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22 'Garden Suburbs: Five Schemes Around Manchester', *Manchester Guardian* (26 June 1912), p. 9.
23 'Housing Reform: A Didsbury Garden Suburb', *Manchester Guardian* (21 October 1907), p. 12.
24 'Didsbury Garden City Scheme: Celebration on Completion of Buildings', *Alderley & Wilmslow Advertiser* (8 October 1909), p. 8.
25 'Housing Reform: A Didsbury Garden Suburb'.
26 Reports of the society show that Ernest Simon also served on the management committee, perhaps one of the first examples of him taking on a role in social reform. At this point in his life, a great deal of his time was taken up in running the two family engineering businesses.
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28 'Co-operative Housing. A Garden City Scheme at Didsbury', *Manchester Guardian* (4 October 1909), p. 14.
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31 'A Greater Manchester: The New Lord Mayor on the Need for Wider Boundaries', *Manchester Guardian* (10 November 1921), p. 9.
32 'Wythenshawe Estate: Manchester & Compulsory Powers', *Manchester Guardian* (28 November 1919), p. 8.
33 Sir Ernest and Lady Simon, 'Wythenshawe', in E. D. Simon and J. Inman, *The Rebuilding of Manchester* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1935), pp. 36–8.

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