

EDWARDS, ARTHUR TRYSTAN (1884-1973), architect and pioneer town planner

Name: Arthur Trystan Edwards
Date of birth: 1884
Date of death: 1973
Spouse: Margaret Meredyth Edwards (née Smith)
Parent: William Edwards
Gender: Male
Occupation: architect and pioneer town planner
Area of activity: Art and Architecture
Author: Raymond Wallis Evans

Born 10 November 1884 in Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorganshire, the second son of Dr William Edwards, one of His Majesty's Inspector of Schools and later Chief Inspector of the Central Welsh Board. He was educated at Clifton school, and Hertford College, Oxford, where he took honours in Mathematical Moderations and in the final Greats Schools. His interests in the visual arts, particularly in architecture, led to his being articled in 1907 to Sir Reginald Bloomfield, R.A. and in 1911 he joined the department of civic design at Liverpool University. In 1915, however, other interests supervened and he joined the Royal Navy as a 'hostilities only' rating. This experience had a profound effect on his sensitive and robust nature as his volume of reminiscences *Three rows of tapes : a social history of the lower deck* reveals (published in 1929 with new versions in 1940, 1972). He enjoyed his life in the navy so much that he spent the next twelve years of peace as a rating in the R.N.V.R. and he considered his naval experiences as one of the principal cultural influences of his life.

When war ended in 1918 he joined the Ministry of Health, then responsible, among other things, for housing policy, and there he remained for six years. Lord Greenwood had vivid memories of is arriving at the Ministry in his bluejacket's uniform to offer his services to Sir Raymond Unwin. In 1921 he published *The things which are seen: a philosophy of beauty* (1948, 1972) and in 1924 he published *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (republished in 1948, 1972) in which he urged architects to respect the neighbourhood in which they designed their buildings. He was ahead of his time, too, in founding the Hundred New Towns Association, but even his energetic and rumbustious campaigning failed to make any significant impression until the Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population, the Committee on Land Utilisation, the New Towns Committee and the Royal Commission on Population showed that at last official thought was moving towards his point of view. He gave evidence before all these bodies and their reports show how far his influence had begun to tell. He prepared valuable plans for an auxiliary inner by-pass at Oxford above the top of Christchurch Meadow and designed schemes for the extension of the Palace of Westminster across Bridge Street, with its fine roof terrace and minimum demolition, all of which could have brought great benefit to the nation. In 1925 the Chadwick Trustees awarded him £250 for research into the question of density of houses in large towns. His report, *Modern Terrace Housing*, was published in 1946 and was much criticised on the ground that his projected density was too high. In 1953 he published his *A new map of the world: the Trystan Edwards projection*, an attempt to solve the problem of projecting the spherical surface of the earth on to a flat surface, a problem which by its very nature is incapable of satisfactory solution, followed in 1972 by *The science of cartography*.

After retiring to Wales and his home town he contributed to the regional studies published by Robert Hale with papers on *Merthyr Tydfil*, *Rhondda and the Valleys*; *Merthyr-Rhondda*, *the Prince and Wales of the future* appeared in 1972. He returned to architecture in 1968 and published *Tomorrow's Architecture: the triple approach*. He continued to write well into old age and in 1970 he published *Second Best-boy: the autobiography of a non-speaker*. Among his other books are *Architectural style* (1925, 1935); *How to observe buildings*, (1972), *Sir William Chambers* (1926), *The second battle of Hastings. 1939-45* (1970), *Fourth of the visual arts* (1972).

His small stature, mercurial temperament, genial presence and sharp wit were proverbial and part of his Welsh background. His fellow architects thought highly of him as a pioneer in town planning and as a man who inspired social developments in Britain which won world acclaim. He was FRIBA, FRTPI, FRGS.

He married in 1947 Margaret Meredyth, daughter of Canon F. C. Smith. She died in 1967 and he led a lonely life until his death at Saint Tydfil's hospital, Merthyr Tydfil 29 January 1973 aged 88.

Author

Raymond Wallis Evans, (1910 - 2001)

Sources

The Times, 30 January, 31 January, 3 February 1973, London

Who was who?, 1971-80, London

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Trystan Edwards](#)

Additional Links

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